



**The Relationship Between Metaphysics And Nihilism
In The Work Of Martin Heidegger from 1927-1940**

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I declare that the following thesis is all my own work.

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*For Gabrielle
And Mary Frances*

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1. Introduction

The question that this thesis addresses is the relation between the overcoming of metaphysics and nihilism in the thought of Martin Heidegger. I explore Heidegger's critique of metaphysics and his attempt to delineate nihilism. For Heidegger, metaphysics and nihilism are interrelated and originate in philosophy's predisposition to think in a language dominated by 'beings'. Heidegger's criticism of the philosophical tradition is that the beings that govern its thought process are presupposed. What philosophy has not generally provided is an account of the unity or ground of its thought, that is, it has not described the origin of beings. Heidegger argues that without an account of the origin or ground of beings, philosophy will necessarily conclude in nihilism.

I approach this topic through what I describe as 'problems of transition'. A problem of transition indicates a difficulty in correlating elements within an argument. For example, traditional dualisms, which insist on two independent elements, invite a question regarding the relationship of those elements. Dualisms reveal transitional problems that concern the unification of parts. Problems of transition are interwoven with the history of philosophy and become especially relevant after the Enlightenment critique of theology. Without the metaphysical elements that go beyond experience and account for the origin of thought and world, philosophy is under pressure to describe the world and the knowledge of that world on its own terms. Heidegger is part of the post-Enlightenment tradition and inherits many of its concerns. He explains the relation of world to origins by way of beings and the condition that makes beings possible: being. A problem of transition is raised when Heidegger attempts to think the unity of being and beings. One of the traditional methods of resolving or accounting for problems of transition is by means of transcendence. Transcendence describes the surpassing of boundaries that occurs when unifying elements in a system. However, theological accounts generally portray transcendence as an act that functions outside conventional human experience, and for this reason theological transcendence is problematic to post-Enlightenment philosophy. I demonstrate that Heidegger employs an account of transcendence in order to account for the transition between being and beings. However, in place of metaphysical surpassing, Heidegger draws upon a description of finitude in relation to a transcendent ground that makes beings possible.

This thesis will analyse Heidegger's arguments and claim that problems of transition are not resolved in Heidegger's philosophy. My account of the problem of transition was developed in conversation with Dr. Nicholas Adams and through Andrew Bowie's engagement with German philosophy.¹

In order to develop the argument, the thesis will consider several key texts which, for reasons of manageability, I have limited to the years 1928-1940. In this period, Heidegger delineates and responds to specific problems within the metaphysical tradition. While these texts have received attention, I contend that the relationship between metaphysics and nihilism has not, to my knowledge, been adequately exposed.

Chapter 2 explores Heidegger's interpretation of transcendental idealism in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*.² I describe Heidegger as identifying a difficulty in Kant's account of the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Logic. A problem of transition is registered when the isolated elements require connection, and Heidegger is not convinced by Kant's attempt to unify his philosophy. Heidegger embarks on a controversial reading of Kant that highlights the finite nature of knowledge production and describes synthesis as a primary condition informed by an ontological understanding of being rather than mathematical logic.

Chapter 3 investigates Heidegger's 1929 lecture *What is Metaphysics?*³ This lecture is renowned for developing an account of 'the nothing' in response to the question 'what is metaphysics?' I outline Heidegger's theory as a productive way of addressing transitional problems that arise when philosophers approach metaphysical conditions. I argue that Heidegger develops a theory of nothingness in order to demonstrate a break with philosophical immanence. Heidegger achieves this through raising the problem of transition and the nature of transcendence. The nothing is used to address the problem of what comes before beings. For Heidegger, the nothing better embodies the condition 'being' than does a metaphysical method of representation.

¹ See Section 3.3 below.

² Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 3: *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (1929), ed. F-W von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1991), trans. R. Taft as *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

³ Martin Heidegger, 'Was ist Metaphysik?' (1929), *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 9: *Wegmarken*, ed. F-W von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), trans. D. F. Krell as 'What is Metaphysics?' *Pathmarks*, ed. W. McNeill (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 82-96.

Chapter 4 focuses on Heidegger's essay, *On the Essence of Ground*, and his investigation into the nature of transcendence and conditionality in connection with Leibniz's rendering of the principle of sufficient reason.⁴ I explain how Heidegger dismantles Leibniz's philosophy into constituent parts in order to expose an ontological ground that is prior to both logical and causal ground. Heidegger aims at opposing the philosophy of the subject and the truth that subjectivity establishes with an ontological version of truth that brings beings in contact with meaning. For Heidegger, meaning does not reside in a metaphysical or material being, but rather resides in an ontological description of unity and transcendence.

Chapter 5 addresses the essay *On the Essence of Truth*, and describes Heidegger's attempt to advance a new description of truth.⁵ Heidegger develops the ideas presented in *On the Essence of Ground* and claims that traditional truth theory presupposes the prior manifestation of beings and the condition for the emergence of those beings in order to posit any truth at all. Both formal logic and truth-as-correspondence require a prior knowledge of being in order to correspond between beings. I explain that Heidegger approaches the transitional problems exposed in traditional truth theories by delineating an 'open region' that makes ontic versions of truth possible. I discuss whether Heidegger's truth theory marks a departure from metaphysical truth and whether Heidegger's truth relations allow beings access to unity and meaning.

Chapter 6 introduces Nietzsche's philosophical themes and their connection with the overcoming of metaphysics and nihilism. I maintain that an understanding of Nietzsche is necessary to prepare for Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche. Nietzsche's work aims at deconstructing metaphysical categories and principles, and I describe Nietzsche's genealogical and nihilistic theories as elements within an overall attack on metaphysics. For Nietzsche, genealogy exposes the historical contexts that metaphysics has relied upon and concludes that there are no external or eternal solutions to metaphysical questions. Consequently, any foundation that is judged by Nietzsche to be necessary is judged on the basis of life and not on metaphysical reason. Nietzsche questions foundational principles and the meaning and truth that those principles support. Nietzsche's thought attempts to

⁴ Martin Heidegger, 'Vom Wesen des Grundes' (1929), *Wegmarken*, trans as 'On the Essence of Ground,' *Pathmarks*, pp. 97-135.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'Vom Wesen der Wahrheit' (1930), *Wegmarken*, trans as 'On the Essence of Truth,' *Pathmarks*, pp. 136-54.

restructure meaning in service of life and not what he considers to be the life-denying capacity of Christianity and Platonic metaphysics.

Finally, I describe Nietzsche's attempt to define nihilism and initiate an adequate response. For Nietzsche, nihilism results from judging the world on metaphysical principles that human beings no longer believe in. He responds by embracing nihilism as a freedom that liberates humanity from illusory metaphysical structures. Nietzsche celebrates this newfound freedom as a power whereby one can set one's own values. The philosopher's task is therefore to create values in conjunction with 'life'.

Chapter 7 examines Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche in his *Nietzsche* lectures of 1936-1940.⁶ Heidegger's method aims at revealing a foundational concept beneath Nietzsche's multifaceted positions. For both Heidegger and Nietzsche, nihilism and overcoming metaphysics are equivalent. The overcoming of metaphysics corresponds to what will come after metaphysics reaches its end. However, in contradistinction to Nietzsche's method, Heidegger provides a foundational account of Nietzsche's nihilism and opposes Nietzsche's support of meaninglessness. This discrepancy is accomplished through an alternative diagnosis of the problem of nihilism. Rather than finding metaphysical categories and transcendent principles to be the origin of nihilism, Heidegger suggests that nihilism is fashioned by a fixation with beings. For Heidegger, metaphysics causes thinking to be directed towards beings, which results in the founding of meaning on human beings. Heidegger interprets Nietzsche as the culmination of a process that, in surrendering meaning over to human subjectivity, devalues the worth of all beings. Therefore, Heidegger contests Nietzsche's diagnosis of the metaphysical tradition. For Heidegger, Nietzsche attempts to resolve transitional problems in metaphysics by supporting immanence and meaninglessness. Conversely, Heidegger explores how meaning can be preserved. As Heidegger closely associates meaning with unity, the *Nietzsche* lectures seek to assess Nietzsche's ability to unify and ground. For Heidegger, unity denotes the ability of existence to 'transcendence' its local state and gain access to being. Through unifying with being

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche I & II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), trans. by D. F. Krell into two volumes, *Nietzsche: Volumes I & II* and *Nietzsche: Volumes III & IV* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991). Additional essays from volume II of the Neske edition are translated by J. Stambaugh in Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). Citations will refer to the volume and page number of the Krell and Stambaugh translations.

existence is given meaning. A philosophy that does not unify results in 'disunity' or 'meaninglessness'.

Chapter 8 summarises Heidegger's arguments and reviews some of the major critiques of Heidegger's thought.

Owing to the limits involved, there are various areas of Heidegger's work that I do not directly consider. One of these themes is Heidegger's association with National Socialism. This has become a major topic and constitutes a separate area of research that I cannot include in this thesis. Another area I that do not address in detail is Heidegger's varied responses to nihilism which include aesthetic theory and language in his later philosophy. This thesis will concentrate on delineating the problems Heidegger encounters when attempting to ground philosophy in truth and meaning. How philosophy responds to Heidegger's understanding of nihilism will be the subject of future research as will the challenge that various religious traditions bring to the debate.

2. Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics

This chapter will take as its central theme Heidegger's interpretation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. I will describe Heidegger's objections to rational metaphysics and the inadequate conception of time and finitude in that tradition. I first introduce the neo-Kantian background that dominated German philosophy in the early twentieth century. I explain that neo-Kantianism intends a critical assessment of German Idealism with the aim of correcting what it sees as errors in the Kantian system. Foremost amongst the perceived errors is the status of the Kantian a priori. I will demonstrate that an attack on the a priori of pure space and time, as detailed in the Transcendental Aesthetic, shifts the emphasis of neo-Kantian systems towards a purely logical a priori. I will introduce Heidegger as a philosopher who aspires to break the dominance of mathematical and logical thinking and ground Kantian metaphysics in an ontological unity that precedes the subject.

2.1 Neo-Kantian Background to Heidegger's Philosophy

As I thought through the theoretical part, considering its whole scope and the reciprocal relations of all its parts, I noticed that I still lacked something essential, something that in my long metaphysical studies I, as well as others, had failed to pay attention to and that, in fact, constitutes the key to the whole secret of hitherto obscure metaphysics. I asked myself: What is the ground of the relation of that in us which we call 'representation' to the object?

Kant, Immanuel, *Letter to Herz*, 21 February 1772

In nineteenth-century Germany, neo-Kantianism developed out of the need to reclaim a philosophical methodology in opposition to the immense success of natural science. Natural science's experimental procedures obtained repeatable results supported by mathematical and scientific diligence that metaphysical systems could not hope to reproduce. Caught in a state of 'unmistakeable bewilderment and uncertainty,' philosophy was asked to choose between 'older metaphysical systems of idealism

and unphilosophical scientific materialism.⁷ A genuine philosophical response was required to tackle the mounting anxiety. When the cry of 'Back to Kant!' was pronounced by Otto Liebmann, it was critical of post-Kantian philosophy and its dogmatic connections with pre-critical metaphysics.⁸ However, a return to Kant initially meant developing a theory of knowledge that was heavily influenced by the scientific procedures of the day and leaned towards a physiology of sensation.

In place of the metaphysical orgy inspired by post-Kantian philosophy, a complete sobriety appears. Logic has abandoned every pretension of reaching to the heart of absolute being and no longer purports to be the 'representation of God' in his eternal essence. But neither is it content with developing formal laws of thought and deduction. What logic seeks to clarify is the problem of knowledge of reality.⁹

It was left to thinkers such as Herman Cohen, Paul Natorp, Heinrich Rickert and Wilhelm Windlebrand to provide a philosophical account of logic and knowledge. Heidegger studied philosophy and completed his habilitation under Rickert, a renowned neo-Kantian of the Southwest School centred on the University of Freiburg.¹⁰ Along with the Marburg School founded by Cohen, neo-Kantianism exerted a significant influence over philosophical practices of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany.¹¹ The two schools shared the Kantian emphasis on epistemology and a transcendental standpoint regarding the problem of reality, that is, the idea that reality cannot be accessed outside of the human subject's cognitive mode of access. However, neo-Kantianism developed a critical attitude to some elements in Kantian philosophy, which were construed as remnants of dogmatic metaphysics.

Chief among these elements was the Kantian description of pure intuition of the forms of appearance, space and time, as detailed in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and the *Schematism*.¹² As pure intuition, space and time constitute pure forms of sensibility that are deemed necessary for the possibility of

⁷ John Michael Krois, *Cassirer: Symbolic Forms and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 33, citing Ernst Cassirer, *The Problem of Knowledge: Philosophy, Science and History Since Hegel*, trans. W.H. Woglom & C. W. Hendel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 5.

⁸ Otto Liebmann, *Kant und die Epigone* (Stuttgart: 1865), reprinted by the *Kantgesellschaft* (Berlin: Verlag von Reuther & Reichard, 1912) p. 216: 'Es muss auf Kant zurückgegangen werden.'

⁹ Cassirer, *The Problem of Knowledge*, p. 4-5.

¹⁰ For a chronicle of the influences on Heidegger's philosophical development see Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), passim, esp. pp. 59-63; John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumours of a Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 49-130.

¹¹ Cf. Ernst Cassirer, "Erkenntnistheorie nebst den Grenzfragen der Logik," *Jahrbücher der Philosophie* 1 (1913), pp. 1-59; Heinrich Rickert, *Zwei Wege der Erkenntnistheorie*, *Kant-Studien* 14, pp. 169-228. For an account of the differences between the Southwest and Marburg Schools of neo-Kantianism see Michael Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* (Chicago: Open Court, 2000) pp. 25-37.

¹² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1973), A19/B34 - A49/B73; A137/B176 - A147/B187. The other significant object of neo-Kantians condemnation was the infamous *Ding an sich*, the thing in itself, of Kantian philosophy which posited a reality 'behind' the appearance of phenomena.

experience in general. Nonetheless, although pure sensibility supports the existence of pure logic (through, for example, the spatial nature of geometry) a potential dualism emerges when Kant describes the faculty of the understanding as originating from a priori logical structures, the categories. In essence, there appears to be a faculty of pure *sensibility* juxtaposed to a faculty of pure *logic*.¹³ In order to avoid a problem of transition between pure sensibility and pure concepts of the understanding, neo-Kantianism contests the veracity of pure forms of sensibility. The condemnation, and subsequent retraction, of a pure sensible faculty inevitably shifts the emphasis of the transcendental analysis wholly towards a priori logical structures.¹⁴ Formal structures unaccompanied by sensibility are hence responsible for the formation of judgements concerning objects. However, a move towards logic as the exclusive centre of consciousness cannot be taken without triggering significant consequences in the Kantian architectonic.

Since space and time no longer function as independent forms of pure sensibility, the constitution of experience described by “transcendental logic” must now proceed on the basis of purely conceptual—and thus essentially non-spatio-temporal—a priori structures.¹⁵

As an ideal non-temporal realm, transcendental logic rejects psychological descriptions that depict consciousness in terms of temporal processes and material impulses.¹⁶ However, one of the key contentions surrounding the rejection of pure intuition is the status of the subsequent relationship between pure logic and the manifold of sensation. The connection between a priori logic and a transcendental logic that unifies the manifold sense data is no longer clear. Kant recognised the potential problem that results from a metaphysical deduction of the formal categories of the understanding out of pure a priori logic. A difficulty presents itself when applying formal logically derived categories to the manifold of sensation that is said to emanate from empirical objects. How are universal forms applied to non-conceptualised intuition? For Kant, it is precisely space and time employed as transcendental principles that permit the categories to exceed their purely formal

¹³ There are in fact two possibilities regarding the discovery of the categories, a deductive method that derives the categories from pure logical forms and an inductive method that seeks to ground the categories in transcendental experience. Additionally, Kant has two different deductive techniques in the first and second editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cf. A98-130/B130-69.

¹⁴ This point must be qualified by noting important differences between the Marburg and Southwest Schools of neo-Kantianism. While the Southwest School, particularly Rickert, defended a view of logic based on traditional principles of identity and non-contradiction, the Marburg School, notable Cassirer, developed a description of pure thought based on relational theories of logical process. Cf. Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways*, pp. 25-37, 87-110.

¹⁵ Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways*, p. 28.

¹⁶ Friedman links the neo-Kantian rejection of psychologism in favour of ‘pure thought’ or ‘pure logic’ with Husserl’s tirade against psychologism and his own search for a ‘pure’ phenomenological realm of thought. Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways*, pp. 28-9.

functions. Formal categories can be said to 'unify' the manifold of sensation through spatio-temporal arbitration. Only through spatio-temporal principles are objects represented to the consciousness as objects of experience. This creates a problem for neo-Kantianism. Through rejecting pure intuition, a secondary, and potentially more severe, dualism enters into consciousness: how does the pure understanding relate to empirical sensation? On the one side, we suppose the existence of pure formal structures and on the other, the chaos of sensation. The state of affairs is described by Emil Lask, a student of Rickert from the Southwest school, as resulting in a 'new gap' or problem of transition between formal and transcendental logic.¹⁷ The point of contention appears to be Kant's deduction of the categories from a metaphysical understanding of formal logic. If a faculty of a priori formal logic, which is sharply distinguished from an empirical world of sense, is subscribed to, then dualism appears to follow owing to the qualitative difference between the logical faculty and the 'real' world of empirical sense. In rejecting pure sensibility, for the sake of disqualifying any incoherence between logic and sensibility, the transition from logic to intuited sense data appears all the more problematic. If space and time are not allowed to affect the subject a priori, then what enables the formal understanding to transcend beyond its purely ideal status? Effectively, neo-Kantianism rejects Kant's schemata and hence the mediating structure between logic and sensibility. One then is obliged to replace the spatio-temporal schema with another account of transition, if the transcendental integrity of Kantian philosophy is to be maintained. The increasingly critical attitude of philosophy, which was set in motion by transcendental idealism, no longer tolerates metaphysical dualisms existing between pure sensation and pure logical concepts of the understanding. Nevertheless, the two schools of neo-Kantianism approach the problem in different ways.

When attempting to unify the realms there are ordinarily two possible approaches: the progressive and the retrogressive. That is to say, from the point of view of a transcendental theorist, one could take a synthetic approach and start with the pure conceptual and atemporal realm of logic and proceed by deducting objects of representation out of pure logical forms. On the other hand, one could begin with

¹⁷ Emil Lask, *Die Lehre vom Urteil* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1912), pp. 23-4. Heidegger mentions Lask in his early works, particularly, 'Das Realitätsproblem in der modernen Philosophie' (1912), *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 1: *Frühe Schriften*, ed. F-W von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), pp. 24ff., 32ff. Lask's influence is also acknowledged through Rickert's teaching of his works in Freiburg, cf. 'My Way to Phenomenology,' in *On Time and Being*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper's & Row, 1972). Also cf. Theodore Kisiel, 'Why Students of Heidegger Will Have to Read Emil Lask,' in *Heidegger's Way of Thought: Critical and Interpretative Signposts*, ed. A. Denker & M. Heinz (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 101-136.

the transcendental objects of experience, if we take it that the chaos of the manifold is not directly accessible to consciousness, and generate the pure understanding by way of retrogressive reasoning. The Southwest school could be said to be experimenting with these possibilities; with Rickert not reaching a firm decision regarding the separation of the formal logical realm from the transcendental and Lask committing himself to the retrogressive procedure. It is Lask that suggests that the necessary link between transcendental and formal logic be broken and the emphasis of judgement formation be placed instead on 'concrete' categories of experience. In a step that will recur in *Being and Time*, formal logic is relegated to an abstract derivative of concrete 'contentful' judgements.¹⁸ However, this creates a new problem, one which transcendental philosophy was originally designed to overcome. If contentful judgements are to be the 'ground' of an interpretive description of human knowing, then concrete consciousness is debarred from using logically derived pure concepts of the understanding as a *foundation* for judgement. On what basis then are we to interpret concrete experience?

The Marburg School appears to approach the problem in a more radical fashion. Cohen, in the search for a new transcendental method based in the priority of mathematical logic rejected all the a priori elements in Kant's system that existed as merely 'given' (*gegeben*). Thus, pure sensibility, the pure concepts of the understanding and the thing in itself are all discarded in favour of a generating procedure based on pure thought or 'purity' (*Reinheit*).¹⁹ The effect is to neutralize dualisms and the problem of transition at source and describe a self-generating form of knowledge production. As a representative of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism, Cassirer is equally disparaging of a dualistic interpretation of representations in consciousness. For Cassirer, problems are created when two idealised realms (rooted in the logical principles of identity and difference) are allowed to stand in legitimate categorical opposition: subject-predicate, value-fact, genus-species, superordination-subordination. The sharp distinction between two contraries, which initially intends a deeper understanding of a problem, results in an entrenched division that requires an additional theoretical

¹⁸ Lask, *Die Lehre vom Urteil*, p. 55; Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 2: *Sein und Zeit*, ed. F-W von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), trans. J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson as *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), hereafter 'BT.' Owing to the inadequacies of this translation, citations will be checked against the original text and modified where appropriate. References will cite the section number followed by the page number of the English translation when necessary. Cf. Heidegger's description of ready-to-hand and present-to-hand where the conceptual nature of present-at-hand is derived from the existential world of the ready-to-hand, §16.

¹⁹ Cf. Hermann Cohen, *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer Verlag, 1871), pp. 93-110; *Ethik des reinen Willens*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer Verlag, 1907) p. 65.

means to negotiate.²⁰ Cassirer attempts to overcome Kantian distinctions such as that between pure logic and the manifold of sensation through a re-description of logic based upon relational mathematical theory.²¹ By means of eradicating pure intuition *and* the manifold of sensation, as well as modifying the traditional logical structures based on identity and difference, Cassirer attempts to describe knowledge as an infinite series rooted in the 'totality of relational structures'. In an infinite series, any conceptual definition that exists is merely a limit point that enables the progression of relational structures. For our purposes, the abolition of absolute sensible forms, such as space and time, enables the unification of knowledge to occur in a pure conceptual realm thus guaranteeing more control over the logical process of knowledge production. According to Cassirer, the problem of transition, which is created through falsely constituted oppositions, is annulled.

The neo-Kantian probing of traditional notions of logic and intuition appears to be well founded in that many of the terms employed are inherited uncritically from earlier schools of rationalism and empiricism. For example, the 'manifold of sensation' is an inheritance from empiricism and is highly dubious owing to there being no independent position from which to judge the reality of a region of unordered, 'pre-conceptualised' sense data. Hence, from a transcendental perspective one could argue that sense data are already conceptualised. However, Cassirer eradicates distinctions in order to describe all knowledge as an extension of pure relational logic. For this reason his philosophy gained the appellation 'logical idealism'. Through unfolding the totality of logical relations, Cassirer can claim to have overcome any dualism inherent in traditional metaphysics. Furthermore, he can also claim to be delimiting a realm of 'eternal truth' by refusing temporal form to logical relations. Logical relations describe the structure on which temporality will hang. A theory of schematisation is not necessary in the Kantian sense, because an extended relational theory also includes asymmetrical relations that might otherwise generate oppositions. Therefore, what would a schematism achieve? Cassirer appears to have promoted the schematic categories that existed as the relational link in the Kantian system and presented them as the totality and 'ground' of all things. At one level, neo-

²⁰ Rickert also acknowledges the problem: 'It must be clear that an investigation consisting essentially in separation is then incapable of re-establishing a connection between object and cognition. And thus this procedure is shown to be in principle one sided and incomplete. It is thereby shown to be in need of supplementation.' Rickert, *Zwei Wege der Erkenntnistheorie*, pp.201-02. Translation by Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways*, p. 33.

²¹ Cassirer draws on Richard Dedekind and Bertrand Russell's developments in mathematical logic and Einstein's theory of relativity. Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Substance and Function*, especially chapter 2. For the opposition to Rickert see pp. 348ff.

Kantian philosophy is attempting to resolve transitional problems in Kantian theory for, we presume, the sake of the consistency of rational knowledge and hence truth. However, the effect of Marburg neo-Kantianism is to subordinate all forms of knowledge to scientific mathematical thought.²²

It is against this background that Heidegger first turns toward Husserl and then toward his own interpretation of Kantian philosophy in order to break the stranglehold of mathematical thinking. Heidegger's Kantian interpretation sparked controversy for the manner of its exposition. Instead of remaining within in a transcendental description of philosophy as epistemology, Heidegger tries to break through to an ontological description defined as 'laying the ground' of metaphysics.²³ I will demonstrate how metaphysics becomes a problem for Heidegger in reference to the Kantian problematic. Heidegger, following on from *Being and Time*, will attempt to delineate a priori structures that are indeed required to exist in order to interpret human experience; however, those structures are not derived from mathematical or formal logic.

2.2 Heidegger and the Problematising of Metaphysics

In keeping with certain branches of neo-Kantianism, Heidegger claims that the Kantian system is not unified. However, in contradistinction to neo-Kantianism, Heidegger attempts to unify the system through the Transcendental Aesthetic and the a priori of space and time. I will show that Heidegger's maintenance of the classic distinction between the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Logic enables him to specify the faculty of Synthesis as the primary or grounding faculty. Heidegger subsequently attempts to link the faculty of Synthesis to an ontological grounding that transforms Kant's transcendental consciousness into a constituent of ontology. Heidegger interprets the faculty of Synthesis as an act of finite human being rather than an atemporal metaphysical faculty of unknown origin. In his account Heidegger employs the term 'transcendence' to describe the transition between finite beings and the unifying structure of being.

²² However, Cassirer was to realise that a theory of logic was not enough to describe the totality of relations that exist in all worlds and he increasingly moved away from the orthodox Marburg position and sought to describe philosophy and human culture in a new 'symbolic language' that overcame the strict rigours of logic. Cf. Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Form*, 3 Vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), Vol. I, pp. 73-114.

²³ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 1.

The neo-Kantian philosophy of the early twentieth century, together with Husserl's inquiry into the pure structures of the (atemporal) consciousness educated Heidegger concerning a priori investigations into human knowing. Particularly through the discovery of intentionality in Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger becomes concerned with what is most essential in human knowing. However, once the inquiry into what is most essential in thinking and knowing is initiated, Heidegger becomes sensitive to the deeper structures in which the essences of consciousness are obliged to stand.²⁴ Knowing and thinking *presuppose* 'knowledge' of what a thing or thought 'is' and a 'space' in which things and thoughts manifest themselves. That is, Heidegger recognised the necessity of a pre-understanding of being for consciousness to comprehend beings. Hence, the inquiry is related to the question of being, which is not restricted to consciousness alone. Heidegger sees his role as wresting 'intuition' and 'knowledge' from their internment in epistemological and rational modes of thought and turning them toward the 'surplus of meaning'. His task in *Being and Time* is to re-write this essential 'grasping' of beings in terms of a 'non-sensuous intuition' of being *in time*.²⁵ Therefore, Heidegger is seeking a non-sensuous intuition that, somewhat paradoxically, is also a temporal intuition: an intuition that is constitutive of every experience. To this end, Heidegger's early work aims at describing the facticity of human life as ontology. That is to say, human life has an ontological priority that is directly related to the knowledge of being: the ground of all possibilities. In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, written after the notorious disputation with Cassirer in Davos, Switzerland, 1929, Heidegger's ontological interpretation of knowledge begun in *Being and Time* comes into direct confrontation with the neo-Kantian tradition.²⁶ Richardson comments that *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* was intended as the first section of an unpublished sequel to *Being and Time*; he therefore advocates Heidegger's readings of Kant as a guide to Heidegger's early ontological project. We are shown, 'how Heidegger's entire effort strikes at the roots of neo-Kantianism.'

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 20, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* (1925), ed. F-W von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1979), trans. T. Kisiel as *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) p. 74.

²⁵ Heidegger takes the notion of 'non-sensuous intuition' from Husserl's discovery of categorial intuition in the Sixth Investigation of the *Logical Investigations*. Non-sensuous intuition is knowledge that is necessary for the experience of sense, and constitutes a phenomenological interpretation of the a priori. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Vol. 2, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 1970) Book VI : 40; also Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, Chapter 2, Section 6.

²⁶ Heidegger's Kant interpretation is built upon his lecture series of 1925-26, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 21, *Logik: Die Frage nach Wahrheit*, ed. W. Biemel (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), and 1926-27, *Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 25, ed. I. Görland (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), trans. as *A Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). The central themes of the Davos dispute will be detailed below.

Therefore, Richardson suggest that ‘more than anyone else, the unannounced adversaries throughout *Being and Time* are the Neo-Kantians.’²⁷ Heidegger seeks to demonstrate that while Kant is concerned with epistemology and the structures and limits of human knowledge, his philosophy aims at the ontological foundation of science in general.

Taking the Marburg interpretation of Kant as a starting point, Heidegger first praises their achievements:

Cohen and Natorp noticed as clearly as no one else before that the *Critique* lacks an ultimate encompassing unity, in the sense namely that this unity and *the ground of this unity of the transcendental aesthetic and logic was not explicitly brought to light by Kant.*²⁸

Nevertheless, although Heidegger announces his interest in unity, he and the Marburg neo-Kantians differ drastically in their responses to the problem. As noted above, the Marburg school sought unity in an extended *logic*, whereas Heidegger is seeking an ontological unity in the *understanding of being*. Consequently, Heidegger’s interpretation resists the reduction of Kant’s system to the inner working of the Transcendental Logic and instead stresses the importance of the Transcendental Aesthetic in his reading. His aim is to re-describe unity as the ‘common and original ground’ that unifies the two faculties of Aesthetic and Logic.²⁹ For this reason, Heidegger’s interpretation will centre on the role of space and time as conceived in the Aesthetic, and the unifying structure of the ‘power of imagination’ that exists as the faculty of synthesis in the Transcendental Deduction.³⁰ However, the radical nature of his reading of Kant is to position these elements in terms of the *finite* nature of human knowing (rather than logic’s propensity to regard itself as atemporal and therefore ‘eternal’). As Kant’s transcendental project seeks to limit reason to what can be known by a human subject and through human modes of cognition, the project details the *finitude of human knowing*. While the finitude of Dasein is one of the principal features of *Being and Time*, the Kant-book makes the essential nature of human finitude more philosophically explicit.

Human intuition, then, is not “sensible” because its affection takes place through “sense organs,” but rather the reverse. Because our Dasein is finite – existing in the midst of beings that already are, beings to which it has been delivered over – therefore it must

²⁷ William Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology To Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), pp. 28-29.

²⁸ Heidegger, *A Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 54.

²⁹ Heidegger, *A Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 54.

³⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 94-5.

necessarily take this already-existing being in stride [*hinnehmendes Bekommens*], that is to say, it must offer it the possibility of announcing itself. Organs are necessary for the possible relaying of the announcement.³¹

Heidegger inverts a reductionist view of the relationship between human finitude and natural science, which is rooted in causality. By placing the emphasis of the analysis on the purposive meaning of human finitude, Heidegger, 'subordinates all the empirical features of its sensuous character (i.e. the operation of sense organs) to its deeper ontological determination in eliciting the manifestness of the object.'³² Human beings are not 'caused' by nature; rather human beings are natural in order to exist *in* nature. Humans have sense intuition because sense is required to fulfil a finite existence that comports itself toward beings. In order to 'hear' the announcement of beings, Dasein is 'granted' sensibility.

Finite, intuiting creatures must be able to share in the specific intuition of beings...The intuited is only a known being if everybody can make it understandable to oneself and to others and thereby communicate it.³³

This interpretation gives the senses a new but evident form of necessity; they are necessary for 'announcing' and 'communicating' beings with the purpose of fulfilling the 'task' of human finitude.³⁴ Heidegger appears to be exploring several paths: why is human being finite, why is a knowledge of being necessary, why do beings need to 'announce themselves,' and what is communicated in these relations?

The nature of human finitude allows Heidegger to include a temporal account of human being, begun in *Being and Time*, into his analysis. Through raising the question of human finitude, which incorporates temporality and an accompanying problematic of the historicity of the human subject, Heidegger is specifically challenging Kant's Copernican Revolution by way of its own 'inner possibilities'. While Kant is unquestionably concerned with the relationship between metaphysics, nature and human freedom, human sensibility is ultimately grounded in eternal laws and the pure (atemporal) concepts of the understanding derived from formal logic. For, to take the proposition of 'objects conforming to human understanding' seriously, would require some form of explanation of

³¹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 19.

³² Frank Schalow, *The Renewal of the Heidegger-Kant Dialogue* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), p.14.

³³ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 19.

³⁴ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 18-19. This 'purpose' or 'mission' does not appear to be a normative moral imperative of the type described in Kant's Second Critique. It appears as a descriptive or assertive account; however, one which aims at exposing the ontological structures to human finitude.

the necessity of human knowing.³⁵ If objects are conforming *to* and solely *for* the understanding, for what reason does human understanding and all its *accoutrements* exist? Thus, Heidegger is not allowing Kant to stand on a purely descriptive, that is, methodological ground. He is extending his interpretation beyond causal and logical descriptions. This reading challenges the veracity of neo-Kantian philosophy that converges on pure reason. For champions of a purely ideal consciousness are required, in addition to justifying the origin of such a consciousness, to explain how formal structures of consciousness are incorporated into existential accounts of concrete experience. To put the question bluntly, on ideal grounds, why are consciousness and the world *necessary*?³⁶ Hence, it appears that, for Heidegger, the word 'concrete' includes a form of necessity rooted in meaning, rather than denoting a thoroughly empirical or transcendental state.

How does Heidegger incorporate the necessity of human finitude into transcendental philosophy? He begins with Kant's description of a priori knowledge. A priori knowledge cannot have experience as its source. It is prior to and, therefore, 'goes before' sensuous intuition. For Kant, knowledge is produced when sensuous intuition is subsumed under a priori concepts: knowledge requires pure reason.³⁷ However, reason as a species of *Metaphysica Specialis* is only possible because of *Metaphysica Generalis*, which is ontology.³⁸ Even a formal description of 'objects in general' requires an a priori understanding of what an object 'is'. Synthetic a priori judgements, 'should bring forth something about the being that was not derived experientially.'³⁹ How does the understanding 'know' what an object is prior to its encounter? It does so through transcendental idealism: 'I entitle all knowledge transcendental that is occupied in general not so much with objects as with the kind of knowledge we have of objects, insofar as it is possible a priori.'⁴⁰ Kant is concerned with the structure

³⁵ Kant does explore a teleological account of human being in his Second and Third Critiques, which accentuate the objectivity of the Good for practical reason and the Beautiful for aesthetic judgement; however, they are informed by the formal structures of the First Critique. A neo-Kantian or scientific explanation of the necessity of human knowing might be the rendering of all nature to mathematical logic through the establishment of empirical science.

³⁶ Husserl's pure consciousness can also be included in this challenge as, for Heidegger, Husserl is no nearer to a description of concrete experience or human finitude than is a neo-Kantian reading. Husserl specifically argues for the atemporal and ahistorical account of philosophy with the aim of preserving an eternal and thus 'truthful' realm akin to a 'rigorous science.' Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, *Logos* 1, 1911, pp. 289-341; *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science, Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, ed. Q. Lauer (New York: Harper and Row, 1965) pp. 122-47. Cf. Heidegger, BT, §72-77.

³⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 11/B 24; cf. *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Preface to First Edition (1790), *Immanuel Kants Werke*, ed. Ernst Cassirer et al (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1912), V, p. 235, translated by J.H. Bernard as *Critique of Judgement* (New York: Hafner, 1951).

³⁸ Cf. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 6-12.

³⁹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 25.

of objects in general, which means, the ‘possibility of a preliminary understanding of being’. For Heidegger, Kant’s inquiry into a priori knowledge, ‘concerns the stepping-over of pure reason to the being, so that it can first and foremost be adequate to its possible object.’⁴¹ This stepping-over (*Übersteig*) of reason to what is outside reason—an understanding of being—is what Heidegger names as transcendence (*Transcendenz*). Transcendence, which relates to the situating of human being within a pre-understanding of being, is included in the problem of transcendental philosophy. For this reason Heidegger can assert,

The Critique of Pure Reason has nothing to do with a “theory of knowledge”....With the problem of transcendence, a “theory of knowledge” is not set in place of metaphysics, but rather the inner possibility of ontology is questioned.⁴²

Kant’s question, ‘how is synthetic a priori knowledge possible?’ becomes newly problematised when finite conditions are brought into the analysis. Heidegger wishes to demonstrate that Kant’s formal account of synthetic a priori knowledge requires a preliminary understanding of what a being is precisely because a transcendental account of consciousness *does not create its own object*. Objects are ‘given’; hence, finite knowledge has to have an advanced preparation to know them. Heidegger specifically opposes ‘transcendental’ with the term ‘transcendence’ to highlight the stepping-over of subjective limits and rational boundaries that is required of formal accounts of identity and epistemology. The problem of transition existing between opposing elements or modal conditions no longer requires superior reasoning to effect solutions. Rather, in Heidegger’s hands, transcendence becomes essential to the constitution of human finitude.

Owing to the manner by which Heidegger broadens the question of human knowing, his interpretation of Kant insists on the fundamental nature of the ontological distinction between being and beings. To clarify: Heidegger is asserting that the ontological distinction is required for human beings to be finite; and that the human being is finite in order to allow the ontological distinction ‘the possibility of announcing itself.’ Consequently, he cannot concur with a neo-Kantian reading of Kantian philosophy (particularly that of the Marburg school), which seeks to overcome distinctions of this kind. It is for this reason that transcendence, the Transcendental Aesthetic, and the unifying role of the imagination feature so prominently in Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant.

⁴¹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 10.

⁴² Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 11.

Heidegger's interpretation is based solely on the Transcendental Analytic, with great attention paid to the Transcendental Aesthetic and the role that space and time play in the Kantian architectonic. In Kantian terms, the Analytic aims at disproving the doctrine of empiricism, while the Dialectic seeks to challenge dogmatic rationalism. This appears pertinent to the methodology we have been describing, as Kant's trajectory in the Analytic is to demonstrate the necessity of *a priori structures* for the ordering and unifying of sense. Kantian *a priori* are converted from conditioning possibilities to necessities by a transcendental proof. Heidegger is alert to the procedure, and his technique aims at destabilising the Kantian theses by uncovering the hidden necessity of the understanding of being for any transcendental account of knowledge and identity. To this end, Heidegger explores Kant's treatment of the pure intuition of space and time in the formation of a transcendental perspective. The prominence of space and time is interesting, as Heidegger does not simply emphasise space as the ontological region that is required for objects to exist in. That is to say, Heidegger does not take a transcendental realist position and advance to the 'reality' of space, and the objects which exist in that space thereby taking sides with empiricism. Rather, he stays within a transcendental idealist perspective and initiates a 'stepping-back' to the ground of the transcendental position. Neo-Kantianism rejected the sensible conditions of space and time in favour of a purely conceptual ground to consciousness. While this resolved a transitional problem at the level of pure consciousness, it left an *aporia* between pure concepts of the understanding and the manifold of sensation, which space and time previously integrated through the imagination and the schematisation of the categories. Heidegger will, therefore, challenge the coherence of pure conceptual consciousness and resurrect the schemata. The Schematism is not, however, the only victim of a neo-Kantian description of the consciousness. If the pure sensible forms of space and time are eliminated, then so too is the Kantian constitution of the subject. Pure sensibility configures the subjectivity of the consciousness through the inner and outer forms of time and space. Indeed, for Kant, outer space and the appearance of objects in that space, function as examples of all 'that is not me' in conjunction with the internal temporal identity of consciousness. Hence, space and time are integral to spontaneity which, we recall, is the positioning of the subject in relation to an object so as to form the 'subjectivity' of consciousness rather than describing the impulsive behaviour of an autonomous subject. Without a means of constructing the identity of the subject, the 'I' itself becomes problematic. If outer space and inner time are removed, then we are asked to produce a non-spatio-temporal account of identity over and above the schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding. Essentially, non-spatio-

temporal accounts of subjectivity and spontaneity risk duplicating a Fichtean version of the birth of the self anchored in the pure intellectual intuition of a self-constituted subject. As previously stated, the problem of transition is reformed at a different level in the argument; the transition between conceptual mind and sensible intuition is not easily dismissed.

Rather than eliminate the opposition between pure sensibility and pure logic, Heidegger asks why this activity appears to be necessary. Why does logic appear to require a sensible constituent and sensibility a logical constituent? In answer to these questions, Heidegger raises human finitude and the nature of sensibility in terms of 'spontaneity'. He is attempting to include the ontological distinction between being and beings into the act of spontaneity. As a result, the principle of identity and the principle of contradiction are also incorporated into his critique. Heidegger finds that a stepping-over or transcendence into that which is not identical to the subject is fundamental to his inquiry.⁴³ However, nor is that which is simply contrary to the subject enough for the formation of a subject. In order for the understanding to understand itself, Dasein must rely on a 'pre-understanding' of what an object is. An ontological understanding of being is, therefore, essential to both the principle of identity and the principle of contradiction. The question of transcendence (which describes the act of stepping-back) is thus inseparable from an ontological inquiry into being for much of this crucial period in Heidegger's philosophical career. Heidegger's account of transcendence becomes intrinsic to the questions of knowledge, identity and being.

However, what transcendence describes is not yet explicit. The meaning of transcendence is lost if it is directly translated into theological language. Transcendence, while containing the notion of stepping-back into another deeper realm, is a structure or activity of unification that is essential for the formation of the subject and the acquisition of knowledge. For Heidegger, the questions raised by Kant's inquiry into the synthetic a priori turn on the nature of the unity afforded to 'synthesis'. The successful isolation of the elements of a priori knowledge, which we again witnessed in the neo-Kantianism of the Southwest School, merely begs the question of the relation existing between the

⁴³ For this project Heidegger draws heavily on early German Romanticism, particularly Novalis' and Hölderlin's criticism of Fichte. Novalis suggests that the 'I' cannot be self-grounded and must rely on an origin that always seems to go before the identity of the subject. Cf. Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Note 3: 'In order to determine the I we must refer it to something. Reference occurs through differentiation – Both [occur] through the thesis of an absolute sphere of existence. This is mere-being – or chaos. The oscillating between the two. – Something inexpressible, and here we have the *concept of life*.'

separate elements. This elevates the notion of synthesis to a privileged position in the Kantian architectonic.

The more radically one tries to isolate the pure elements of a finite [act of] knowledge, the more compelling becomes the impossibility of such isolation and the more obtrusive is the dependency of pure thinking on intuition.⁴⁴

Intuition relates to spontaneity and the synthesis that is required to unify the necessary elements of Kant's system. Heidegger then seeks to describe the essential unity of pure knowledge founded on the unifying structure of synthesis and transcendence. From the perspective of pure a priori knowledge, the elements to be unified are the pure concepts of the understanding (pure thought) and pure intuition, with time serving as the primary universal.

Whatever the origin of our representations, whether they are due to the influence of outer things, or are produced through inner causes, whether they arise *a priori*, or being appearances have an empirical origin, they must all, as modifications of the mind, belong to inner sense. All our knowledge is thus finally subject to time, the formal condition of inner sense. In it they must be ordered, connected, and brought into relation.⁴⁵

Owing to its status as the inner structure of consciousness, it is specifically the pure intuition of time that is required to be united with pure thought. Although space cannot be irrelevant, it serves as the outer determinate of the subject. Heidegger attempts to demonstrate that the unity of these elements occurs 'earlier' than their division; and it is whatever unifies as the 'original unity' that constitutes ontological knowledge. In this sense, the original unity is termed 'pure synthesis,' where 'synthesis' means unity and 'pure' refers to the non-empirical nature of this synthesis.⁴⁶ According to Heidegger's reading, the separated elements, as elements within an original unity, exhibit 'seams' or 'joints' (*Fugen*) that reveal a prior unified state.⁴⁷ Both pure intuition and pure thought display synthetic qualities; time unifies all possible experience and concepts unify the content of experience.

⁴⁴ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 40.

⁴⁵ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 98-9.

⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 43ff.

⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 43ff. This term *Fug* (fittingness) and its associated words *Fuge* (joint) and *fügt* (fit) are significant as they hope to play on the linguistic connections of the German language. A 'join' that originally 'fits' somewhere exhibits 'unity.' The word reoccurs in Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 40: *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1935), ed. P. Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1983), trans. G. Fried & R. Polt as *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 171n where *Fug* is used to translate the Greek term *dikē*, usually rendered 'justice.' The play is extended to *Gefüge* (structure), *Fügung* (arrangement), *fügen* (enjoin, dispose), *Unfug* (unfittingness), *sich fügen* (to comply), *einfügen* (fit into, fit in and *verfügen* (have at its disposal). The word and associates make their way into Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie* of 1936-38. See Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 65: *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, ed. F-W von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1989), trans. P. Emad & K. Maly as *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). For the 'fugal' structure of *Contributions to Philosophy* see Daniela Vallega-Neu, 'Poetic Saying,' and Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, 'Contributions to Philosophy and Enowning-Historical Thinking,' in *Companion to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. C.E. Scott et al (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 2001), pp. 66-80, 105-128.

However, Heidegger hopes to describe the 'pure synthesis' that both unifying possibilities rely on. The pure synthesis will prepare the subject 'in advance' for the empirical intuition that results in knowledge.

However, Heidegger experiences a setback in his argument. Between the First and Second Editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the text underwent revisions and certain key passages were deleted and replaced by others.⁴⁸ Heidegger finds the passage delineating the three original sources or 'faculties of the soul' to be the most crucial of these revisions.⁴⁹ Kant names three structures as constituting the 'conditions of all possible experience': *sense, imagination, and apperception*. Sense refers to the a priori faculty of sense (space and time), apperception is the core of the pure understanding as the conceptual unity of consciousness, and the imagination names the faculty of synthesis. In the Second Edition, this passage is replaced by one explaining the limits of British empiricism, particularly Locke and Hume. For Heidegger, this is highly significant as it replaces the central faculty of synthesis with concerns over psychology. The basic difficulty is that Kant withdraws the faculty of imagination and therefore the area that Heidegger wishes to expand upon. Heidegger explains that '*Kant still believed to have discovered in himself something like psychology*.'⁵⁰ Thus, in the Second Edition the investigation is weighted towards rationality and the transcendental logic as the only tools available to an enlightenment thinker. Heidegger's point is that Kant's transcendental idealism is limited to a choice between empiricism and rationalism. Hence, when Kant detects empiricism undermining the basic rational tendency of his thinking, he periodically turns toward rationalism. As Kant was not aware of the methodology of phenomenology and the 'functional constitution of Dasein' as

⁴⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 94-5/B 127-29. Heidegger bases his interpretation of the text on the First Edition for its focus on synthesis and the imagination, as will become clear below. Cf. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *David Hume on Faith* (1815) in *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. G. di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1994), p. 331n. In note to the 1815 of this work (first edition: 1787), Jacobi urges readers to use the First Edition of Kant's *Critique* when reading his criticisms. He particularly cites the section 'The Synthesis of Recognition in the Concept' (A 103-10) as worthy of attention presumably for its support of Transcendental Apperception as the unchanging unity of consciousness. Schopenhauer, Kuno Fischer and Max Müller are also considered as 'first edition Kantians.' Cf. *Critik der reinen Vernunft* (1787) (London: Routledge, 1994), p. ix.

⁴⁹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 94-5/B 127-29. Cf. Heidegger, *A Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 214-20.

⁵⁰ Heidegger, *A Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 215-16. Lewis White Beck, in an introduction to the reprint of the second edition of the *Critik der reinen Vernunft*, explains that Kant's changes were due, in large part, to the accusations of crypto-Berkeleyan idealism that were directed at him, which he also failed to combat in his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics Presenting itself as a Science*. In the first edition, objectivity of the categories was achieved by an act of potentially subjective synthesis, whereas in the *Prolegomena* and the second edition judgement provided the rule for synthesis. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critik der reinen Vernunft* (1787) (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. v-x. M. C. Washburn reduces the difference between editions to one general principle that contests idealist readings: the priority of outer sense over inner sense in the second edition. M. C. Washburn, 'The Second Edition of the Critique: Towards an Understanding of its Nature and Its Genesis.' *Kant Studien* 65 (1975), pp. 277-90.

transcendence, his philosophy remains in confusion.⁵¹ The three basic confusions of the Transcendental Deduction Heidegger lists are: (1) the isolation of the categories from pure intuition, (2) the opinion that pure intuition alone can yield objects, and (3) the thesis that the a priori resides in the isolated subject.⁵²

Heidegger states that all three points result from Kant misconstruing the problem of transcendence. In one sense, Heidegger is correct. If we take his diagnosis to be accurate, the uncertainty appears to collect around a single point: an uneasiness concerning isolation and hence an awkwardness regarding origin and unity of the a priori. As Heidegger notes, 'The problem of transcendence is usually...initiated as a problem by putting the subject at one side and the object on the other as two extant beings.' The question becomes, 'How can representations in the subject "come together" with their object?'⁵³ For Kant as well as for Heidegger, the separate elements are already prepared for each other and it is this sense of preparation that is understood as pure synthesis.

Space and time contain a manifold of pure a priori intuition, but at the same time they are conditions for the receptivity of the mind—conditions under which alone it can receive representations of objects, and which therefore must also always affect the concepts of these objects. But if this manifold is to be known, the spontaneity of our thought requires that this manifold first be gone through in a certain way, taken up, and connected. This act I name synthesis.⁵⁴

Synthesis mediates the relation between the elements. Hence, synthesis cannot be purely sensible (time-bound) or purely conceptual (unchanging); the unifying synthesis is required to incorporate both of these components. It is for this reason that the power of the imagination becomes central to the argument.

Synthesis in general, as we shall hereafter see, is the mere result of the power of imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever, but of which we are scarcely ever conscious. To bring this synthesis *to concepts* is a function which belongs to the understanding, and it is through this function of the understanding that we first obtain knowledge properly so called.⁵⁵

While the power of synthesis is given over to the somewhat mystical and ungraspable power of imagination, for Heidegger, Kant's attempt to unify sensibility and thought constitutes a ground of

⁵¹ Heidegger, *A Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 216.

⁵² Heidegger, *A Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 213.

⁵³ Heidegger, *A Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 216.

⁵⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 77/B 102.

⁵⁵ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 78/B 103.

sorts. Although the grounding procedure is drawn toward the conceptual nature of the understanding, the ‘necessity’ of synthesis for any act of unification breaks the separate elements out of their isolated spheres. Accordingly, neither the Transcendental Aesthetic nor the Transcendental Logic alone can provide the resulting unity. For Heidegger, the pure synthesis of pure intuition and pure thought moves the essential nature of the categories beyond the a priori justification of the concepts of the understanding.⁵⁶ The necessity of synthesis and unity for the existence of knowledge undermines both the centrality of pure sensibility and pure thought. If, according to Kant, the power of imagination and thus pure synthesis is the ‘ground’ of knowledge, then transcendence or the unifying act is placed at the heart of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction. However, transcendence—the unification that is a stepping-back into being—also incorporates spontaneity which requires an opposing procedure or ‘determinate’ to allow the subject to ‘identify’ itself. Again drawing upon transcendental idealism and its romantic opponents, Heidegger demands the opposition of beings for the constitution of identity.

A finite, knowing creature can only relate itself to a being which it itself is not, and which it also has not created, if this being which is already at hand can be encountered out of itself. However, in order to be able to encounter this being as the being it is, it must already be “recognized” generally and in advance as a being, i.e., with respect to the constitution of its Being.⁵⁷

Fichte’s version of transcendental subjectivity argued that it was possible to experience the self as *both* subject and object. In a ‘spontaneous act’ the intellect constitutes itself through an ‘*immediate unity of being and seeing*’.⁵⁸ Hence, the act of spontaneous identification is produced purely through the activity of an absolute subject. The subject is thus regarded as ‘free’ in the sense of self-caused, resting on no other cause before coming into being. In disagreement with a Fichtean and other non-spatio-temporal accounts of spontaneity, Heidegger attempts to position spontaneity upon the ontological distinction between being and beings. The pure inner conditions of sensibility (time) and thought also require the outer sense of space and the beings which exist in that ‘play-space’ (*Spielraum*). To constitute the self, finite human receptivity requires opposing beings existing in space; similarly, the act of unity requires distinctions to serve that unity. Rather than describing an immanent process that, following Spinoza, disallows the coexistence of finitude and the infinite, Heidegger repositions the notion of transcendence corresponding to the spontaneity of the Kantian

⁵⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 84-5/ B 116-17.

⁵⁷ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 50.

⁵⁸ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, trans. Heath & Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 17. The immediate unity of subject and object is named *Tathandlung*, or ‘fact-act.’

subject. An immanent solution to the problem of transition unifies elements within a single structure: finitude or infinity. Heidegger could not be said to be immanent in this strict sense. He is maintaining the necessity of transcendence and opposition *for* unity, and arguing that opposition is not self-caused by isolated elements (although it may originate from synthesis itself). However, Heidegger departs from a Kantian reading in that the opposition in question is no longer founded on intellectual categories. Once the internal conditions of sensibility are thought through, metaphysical unchanging truths flounder upon the obstacle of time. The unchanging infinite truths of metaphysics appear as intellectual solutions to finite problems. Rather than seeking infinite rationalisations or relying on self-caused causes, Heidegger is opposing finite being with the *necessity* of difference and unity *for* finite being. Once the intellectual foundation of the categories is radically questioned, the logical opposition between finite and infinite no longer functions as an answer to the question of ground. The intellectual grounds of infinity or the absolute are left behind. Heidegger is forcing the traditional provisions of spontaneity (interior-exterior, identity-contradiction) to convey the deeper problem of transition between being and beings, while all the time demonstrating the limits of traditional lines of thought. His response is founded on transcendence as *necessary unity*. However, it is not a Hegelian process of absolute identity that results, but something like the necessity of finite life:

If however, the possibility of ontological knowledge is grounded in pure synthesis and if ontological knowledge nevertheless constitutes precisely the letting-stand-against of...(*Gegenstehenlassen*), then the pure synthesis must be revealed as that which complies with and supports the unified whole of the inner, essential structure of transcendence. Through the elucidation of this structure of pure synthesis, the innermost essence of the finitude of reason is then unveiled.⁵⁹

In Kantian terms, the transformation of a possibility into a necessity constitutes a transcendental proof. It is something of this nature that Heidegger wishes to bring to transcendence; synthesis is a necessary act of unity for finite reason. As such, the act of unity involves opposition by beings against the human being, and Heidegger characterises this reliance on beings as a ‘holding oneself out into the nothing’. As spontaneity entails the opposition of ‘something-that-is-not-me,’ that is, objects (*Gegenstand*, literally ‘stand-against’), a preparation for ‘standing-against’ beings which it itself did not create (and, therefore, does not yet ‘know’) has the structure of offering without yet receiving: ‘holding oneself out into the nothing’. The question of nothing is dealt with in detail in the essay *What*

⁵⁹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 48.

is *Metaphysics*? and for this reason we will not dwell on the topic here.⁶⁰ However, it is important to note that as a component of spontaneity, 'nothingness' is essential to unification. The offering of finite sensibility towards an external space (a procedure that Heidegger will name a 'look') is part of the 'taking in stride' of finite being. It prepares the subject for the beings that it will be in concordance with. When sensibility is met by beings, those beings 'stand-against' sensibility as an act of opposition, and make knowledge of those beings possible. The whole process is reliant on the act of unity. Hence, the concordance that we, as finite creatures, have with beings incorporates a necessary discordance as a 'primal activity' of the understanding.⁶¹ The attempt to ground consciousness in sensible oppositions pursues a description of consciousness that does not rely on the domain of formal logic for its foundation. Without the orientation provided by the subject 'standing-against' objects, the subject could not become Dasein, and vice-versa. It is this orientation procedure informed by ontological knowledge that is, quite literally, Heidegger's way of 'schematising' the Kantian elements: he is making Kant's conceptual world 'sensible,' which is the function of schemata.

As Heidegger appears to be packing the entire Transcendental Deduction into the synthetic power of the imagination founded upon transcendence, the activity of unification that provides for both the sensible and conceptual elements needs a more exact description. Indeed, it is here that Heidegger locates a problem. Heidegger still has to develop the transition between the faculties of sensibility and logic: how are the pure concepts of the understanding, which describe objects *in general*, made sensible for intuition? Heidegger's account of the subject's 'standing-against' beings does not detail the exact procedure of the sensible intuiting of beings for the consciousness. This process is described by Kant's Schematism, which Heidegger dubs the activity of 'making-sensible'.⁶² As Kant's association of intuition with concepts occurs in the act of judging whereby an intuition is brought under a concept, judgement is 'the faculty of subsuming under rules'.⁶³ In this act, the intuited image must be 'homogenous with the concept'. However, this is only possible through a separate faculty that is 'homogeneous' with *both* concepts and the intuition: the schemata. The schemata are unifying

⁶⁰ See chapter 3 below.

⁶¹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 52.

⁶² Heidegger's reading of the Schemata is recognised as controversial. For less contentious readings see H. J. Paton, *Kant's Metaphysics of Experience: A Commentary on the First Half of the 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft'* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1936), Vol. 2, book VII; Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, chapter. 8; and Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), chapter 6.

⁶³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 132/B 171.

activities that exist in advance of intuited sense and have the characteristics of rule application. Kant, in order to link the conceptual to the sensible, uses the pure sensible a priori of time to make the categories presentable for the understanding. The transcendental schemata connect the categories to sensibility *in time*.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, while the requirement for unification is clearly appreciated, the schemata work under somewhat murky regulations that are described as ‘an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover.’⁶⁵ Kant does not provide any firm conditions that make possible the schemata but moves from a general introduction to the schematised categories themselves.⁶⁶ As the synthesising nature of schematicism is performed in the understanding through the power of the imagination, which is likewise ‘a blind but indispensable function of the soul,’ Heidegger has a certain amount of freedom for his interpretation. His intention is to link the pure sensible form of time with the regulatory function of the schemata. If this is achieved, he believes that he has described the link between the conceptual and the sensible through the unifying nature of the imagination.

As the function of the schemata is to produce an image (*Bild*) for the concept, schemata necessarily correlate to both concept and sensible image. However, as this occurs prior to empirical intuition the schematism has a pure non-empirical quality. Schemata offer ‘sensibility’ before the ‘sensible’ is encountered, thus Kant recognises something called a ‘pure image’ that correlates to the general structures of the schemata. Yet, conversely, ‘All our knowledge is thus finally subject to time, the formal condition of inner sense. In it they must be ordered, connected, and brought into relation.’⁶⁷ We are offered two forms of pure structure: the regulation of schemata and time as the formal condition of inner sense. In Kant the two forms are brought into relation: ‘The pure image...of all objects of sense in general, however, [is] time.’⁶⁸ Heidegger interprets time as both the pure image (rule for the concepts) of the schemata and pure sensible intuition (the condition for the rule). Essentially, time conditions the sensible regulation of intuition, thus unification is achieved through the ‘image of time’. The activity of forming this sensible horizon or ‘look’ prepares finite sensibility for the encounter with beings in time. As a unity that traverses boundaries, time is revealed as the

⁶⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 138/B 177.

⁶⁵ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 141/B 180-1.

⁶⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 142-45/B 182-84.

⁶⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 98-9.

⁶⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 142/B 182.

inner essence of transcendence. That is, transcendence (the possibility of unity) prepares the horizon for knowledge of beings (intuition) by making the sensible accessible through rule giving in time.⁶⁹

‘The schemata are nothing but a priori determination of time according to rules.’⁷⁰

In this sense, Heidegger unifies the acts of knowledge with an understanding of ontological structures, particularly time. ‘Thus it is time, given as a priori, which in advance bestows upon the horizon of transcendence the character of the perceivable offer [the sensible horizon or ‘look].’⁷¹ As the unifying structure upon which the horizontal constitution of finite being is founded, transcendence exists as the highest synthetic principle whose essence is time.⁷² Hence, Heidegger succeeds in describing an ecstatic-horizontal structure resembling the ecstatic form of Dasein in *Being and Time*. The ecstatic transcendence of the subject, which is necessarily a ‘going-out-to’ beings and a ‘letting-stand-against’ of beings, is unified as a standing-out-from: ‘Ecstasis’. ‘Transcendence makes the being in itself accessible to a finite creature.’⁷³ One of the outcomes of this procedure is the inseparable nature of transcendence, spontaneity and ontology for finite human beings.

⁶⁹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 72-6.

⁷⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 145/B 185.

⁷¹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 76.

⁷² Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 154-58/B 193-197. Cf. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 81-4.

⁷³ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 84.

2.3 Preliminary Assessment: Cassirer vs. Heidegger

Cassirer was the first to raise public protest to Heidegger's reading of Kant at the Davos lectures of 1929. As outlined above, the substance of Heidegger's public lecture was the unity of Kant's system. In contrast to the neo-Kantian suppression of the Transcendental Aesthetic, Heidegger awarded both the Transcendental Aesthetic and Logic necessary roles in the Kantian project and then demonstrated the unity of these elements through the transcendental power of the imagination: the third basic source of the mind.⁷⁴ The third element is not to be thought as a 'mediating' faculty between the two primary elements, 'but rather it is their root.' By way of Heidegger's systematic inquiry into the Kantian problem, he situates the imagination as the synthetic faculty that *makes possible* both the logical and the sensible. The creative power of the imagination assumes the role of primary condition as regards the Transcendental Aesthetic and Logic. Therefore, Heidegger trusts that 'The point of departure in reason has thus been broken asunder.'⁷⁵ Heidegger, however, explains that Kant had to 'shrink back' from the implications of this discovery.⁷⁶ The 'imaginative' grounding of consciousness in the faculty of pure synthesis, as fashioned in the First Edition, implies the destruction of the rational basis of Western thinking. For this reason, according to Heidegger, Kant repositioned the ground of the transcendental method in the (conceptual) unity of apperception in the Second Edition.

Cassirer criticises Heidegger for misunderstanding the holistic essence of neo-Kantianism, at least as practised by Cassirer. He points out that, although the synthesis of the imagination is central to the Kantian system and informs the rendering of the formal problematic, Kant's system aims at explaining the role of human freedom and the ethical in distinction to the mechanism of nature. It is in the ethical

⁷⁴ Cf. Natorp's description of the Aesthetic: 'After all of this, giving priority to time and space [the transcendental aesthetic] over the laws of thinking of the object [the categories] in the *Kantian* system of transcendental philosophy is a well-meant mistake — understandable and excusable, if need be, only in the sense of anticipation. In a more rigorously built system time and space would have doubtlessly had to find their place in modality, in the category of actuality [logic].' Heidegger, *A Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 52 citing Paul Natorp, *Die Logischen Grundlagen der exakten Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: Verlag Teubner, 1910), p. 276ff.

⁷⁵ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Appendix III, 'Davos Lectures,' p. 192.

⁷⁶ For a summary of Heidegger's account of Kant's 'wavering' (*schwanken*) before a more fundamental interpretation of time see Daniel Dalstrom, *Heidegger's Kant-Courses at Marburg in Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in his Earliest Thought*, ed. T. Kisiel & J. van Buren (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), pp. 307-08. Heidegger gives the following reasons for this about turn. Kant's separation of sensibility from the understanding was born out of his dogmatic allegiance to the metaphysical tradition. Likewise, his reliance on a mechanical interpretation of time was inherited from natural science. Perhaps most importantly was Kant's acceptance of a Cartesian notion of intuition that understands all a priori as conditions or activities of the mind. Heidegger reinterprets Kant's productive synthesis of the imagination as the ecstatic horizon temporality, which breaks open the immanent nature of reason as grounded in the intellect.

sphere that human finitude breaks through to something beyond itself (transcends) to the realm of the Absolute. According to Cassirer, Heidegger, by placing his analysis in historical human finitude, relativises all acts of human knowledge and hence truth: '[T]ruths are relative to Dasein.' Cassirer then restates Kant's original question: 'Without prejudice to the finitude which Kant himself exhibited, how, nevertheless, can there be necessary and universal truths?' He continues, 'It is therefore because of this problem that Kant exemplifies mathematics.' If something of this magnitude is not isolated, it becomes difficult to account for things that are *not* bound to finitude. And finally,

Does Heidegger want to renounce this entire Objectivity, this form of absoluteness which Kant advocated in the ethical and the theoretical, as well as in the *Critique of Judgement*? Does he want to withdraw completely to the finite creature or, if not, where for him is the breakthrough to this sphere?⁷⁷

To all intents and purposes, the core of Heidegger's critique of the logical ground of metaphysics comes to the fore in Cassirer's questions. The dispute surrounds the basic orientation of philosophy and the relationship finite human being has to knowledge, truth and the determination of human freedom in history. What acts as 'ground' and what is 'determinate' for action?

Heidegger's reply focuses on finitude. He consents that the finite creature is capable of breaking out from immediacy to a higher or prior law; however, the transcendence in question is still in the realm of 'creatureliness' [*Geschöpflichkeit*]. The question that must first be addressed is the finitude or infinitude of Dasein. For Heidegger, the finite creature only has infinitude in the understanding of being, but human beings are not infinite nor can they create the infinite out of themselves. Heidegger's transcendence is a 'finite transcendence' that stands in an open relation to the world of beings based on an understanding of being and time.⁷⁸ For Heidegger, this describes the structure of 'being-in-truth'. Therefore, when Heidegger says that 'truth is relative to Dasein,' he is saying that truth occurs only in the transcendent structure of *Dasein's* temporal openness toward the world. Lastly, Heidegger explains that human freedom as the ground of ethics relates to anxiety, which sets free the human being: 'The sole, adequate relation to freedom in man is the self-freeing of freedom in man.'⁷⁹ Heidegger concludes with asking Cassirer to detail his understanding of the pathway to infinity and the status of the infinite itself.

⁷⁷ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Appendix III, 'Davos Lectures,' p. 194-95.

⁷⁸ Cf. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology Through Thought*, pp. 108ff. Richardson describes Heidegger's Kant interpretation as 'finite transcendence.'

⁷⁹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Appendix III, 'Davos Lectures,' pp. 196-200.

The positions of the two men becomes starkly defined when Cassirer describes his point of departure as a finitude that transcends through 'filling-out the finitude itself' towards an 'immanent infinitude'. Man 'can and must have, however, the metabasis which leads him from the immediacy of his existence into the region of pure form. And he possesses infinity solely in this form.' The region of pure form constitutes man's spiritual realm which is essentially, 'created from himself'.⁸⁰ Heidegger's interpretation of Kant, and his own account of Dasein as being-in-a-world which it *does not create* but is rather thrown into, opposes Cassirer's description of finitude/infinity. Heidegger concentrates on the finite nature of Dasein that is 'codetermined' by an original unity and the 'immanent structure of the relatedness of a human being.' 'I did not give freedom to myself, although it is through Being-free that I can first be myself.'⁸¹ Heidegger is detailing his concept of 'thrownness' as a self-interpreting being that is always already in the situation of being in existence.⁸²

While the exact position of each participant in the disputation is difficult to determine, what is apparent is that Heidegger's interpretation of Kant has led into the problem of transition and the nature of human being. Is human being as a creature of finitude *informed* by its original unity (being) in correlation with its worldly orientation, or does that finitude *form* its own 'spirit' through self-describing itself in objective, universal truths? What is striking about the stances of Heidegger and Cassirer is the similarity of their intent and yet the divergence of direction and means. Both are concerned with finitude, transcendence and a new manner of describing 'relations' in place of static concepts. However, the definitions and expectations for these terms are shaped by different philosophies. Neither describes finitude or transcendence in a theological sense; both are explained by way of immanence. Cassirer's position appears to transcend to an objective sphere; nevertheless that sphere does not function as a creative origin or a law-giving faculty in itself but is rather a self-created mirror or measure of human being's progress. Heidegger's position, while stressing the finitude and thrownness of Dasein, opens a horizon towards beings that is informed by an original understanding of being (infinity). Heidegger allows for a transcendent rather than an immanent relationship with an original realm which 'orders' or 'schematises' existence in correlation with Dasein's struggle for

⁸⁰ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Appendix III, 'Davos Lectures,' pp. 196-201.

⁸¹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Appendix III, 'Davos Lectures,' pp. 196-203.

⁸² Cf. Heidegger, BT, §29.

self-understanding. However, Dasein's relationship with itself is described as 'accidental' regarding the thrownness of its project, and leads Dasein back to the 'nothingness' of its existence.⁸³ It is in confronting the nothingness that Heidegger defines the task of philosophy: to throw Dasein back onto the 'hardness of its fate'. While Heidegger uses certain theological references, his project at this point aims at the destruction of traditional metaphysical unities, and hence 'infinity'. Heidegger's unity has the characteristics of an 'origin' in contrast to Cassirer's 'teleological' unity of self-creating objectivity. 'Unity,' and related terms such as 'synthesis' and 'transcendence,' describe different projects. A unity that aims at exposing the accidental (*zufällig*) nature of existence includes a form of determinism as a document of being. As Dasein is not in control of its original unity with being and is thrown to a world of beings, it is derivative: 'determined'. Except, once it is revealed by philosophy that the hardness of its fate comprises of a relation with 'nothingness,' that determinism is 'accidental' or 'arbitrary'. The arbitrary nature of the relationship with infinitude (as the understanding of being) undoubtedly breaks the formal necessity that metaphysical systems have relied on to describe the passage from the infinite to the finite and vice-versa. Accordingly, when the necessary relation is broken, the passage between the finite and the infinite appears as 'free'. It is free, in that it is 'unnecessary' and 'uncaused,' and yet, simultaneously, it is 'determined'. One cannot say why one comes into being; there is no 'necessity' for it. Conversely, being is 'necessary' for existence. This is a hard fact to absorb. If 'who' or 'what' I am is 'accidental,' and yet I am 'thrown' into my existence as a consequence of 'fate,' then I am *determined by arbitrariness* or, in other words, chaos.⁸⁴ I am, therefore, 'free' to be myself insofar as I am determinate of chaos. According to Heidegger, this situation is not an occasion for pessimism but a call for resoluteness and authenticity.⁸⁵ Dasein is immanent to its fate; however, this immanence is Dasein's 'world'; it is life-giving.

⁸³ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Appendix III, 'Davos Lectures,' pp. 203-04.

⁸⁴ Heidegger will rethink this point 1939 in reference to Nietzsche and knowledge. Cf. Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, pp. 68-83, where Heidegger thinks chaos in terms of schematism.

⁸⁵ Heidegger's description bares a significant resemblance to Nietzsche's description of the two stages of nihilism. Once the metaphysical supersensuous world has been denied, human beings are thrown back on their own resources without recourse to an infinite Creator or metaphysical realm of being. Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufmann & R. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1967), §22. While this collection of notes continues to be disputed, the volume and its classifications are necessary to cross-reference with Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche.

Cassirer, in his 1931 review of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, is scathing of Heidegger's position.⁸⁶ Cassirer reports that the Kantian project, which aims at the objectification of knowledge and the transcendence of the human spirit, is lost in the 'abyss [*Ab-grund*] of Dasein'. Although Cassirer shares with Heidegger an appreciation for the centrality of the power of the imagination, Cassirer explains that Heidegger does not escape from this point of departure and is always led back to originary being.

The original link with intuition can never be broken, the dependence upon it which it brings with it can never be set aside. It is not possible to break the chain of finitude. All thinking as such, indeed any 'purely logical' employment of the understanding, already bears the imprint of finitude.⁸⁷

Pierre Aubenque explains that Heidegger's comprehension of the 'finitude of thought' is that it is empty if it is not 'filled with intuition'; finite thought is thus derivative and dependent upon intuition for its form.⁸⁸ For Cassirer, who retains a metaphysical aspect to his understanding of transcendence, the subject is required to surpass this immanence and breakthrough to objectivity. Inasmuch as the breakthrough is provided by the *exhibitio originaria* in creative imagination, the subject is capable of generating its own surpassing. 'Spontaneity' is linked to creativity as a form of autonomy and liberty. However, Cassirer does not in Heidegger's opinion have a ground or foundation to launch the original spontaneity of the self. Heidegger as such always insists on the return to the ground for the enabling of the act of transcendence, which is therefore immanent to its own understanding and departure.

We have registered some of the problems in Heidegger's methodology, which Richardson aptly expresses as Dasein's problem of being 'faithful both to its transcendence and to its finitude'. For Richardson, Heidegger seeks a 'unified totality of finite transcendence' that accounts for both fundamental elements of Heidegger's synthesis.⁸⁹

As for the centre of transcendence (the pure imagination), it is certainly a self, but, because (ontologically) prior to the subject-object relationship, it is a non-subjective, pre-subjective self, whose unity derives from transcendence, whose ultimate meaning is time.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ernst Cassirer, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik, Bemerkungen zu Heideggers Kant-Interpretation*, in *Kant-Studien*, 36 (1931), pp. 1-26.

⁸⁷ Cassirer, cited in Aubenque's summary of the Davos debate, *The 1929 Debate Between Heidegger and Cassirer*, pp. 211-12.

⁸⁸ Aubenque, *The 1929 Debate Between Heidegger and Cassirer*, p. 212.

⁸⁹ Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology To Thought*, pp.71ff.

⁹⁰ Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology To Thought*, p.160.

However, Richardson raises a question that we have already provoked, '[H]ow are we to discern this controlling idea that gives it warrant, so that we may be sure we are submitting to a discipline and are not prey to mere arbitrariness?'⁹¹ In the following chapters, I hope to elucidate Heidegger's attempt to re-articulate Dasein's accidental thrownness and determinacy as a *necessity of being*. Heidegger will thereby struggle to refine the notions of finitude and transcendence as a unity that overcomes metaphysical descriptions of infinity and the truth that infinite concepts support.

⁹¹ Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology To Thought*, p.160.

3. What is Metaphysics?

This chapter will clarify Heidegger's association of metaphysics with the question of ontology: what is being? I will clarify Heidegger's objection to reason and rational modes of thinking. Heidegger wishes to re-describe human being as a being of radical finitude. However, Heidegger's finitude still requires a unifying ground or condition on which to position beings. I will show that Heidegger's objective is an ontological description of the whole of beings. His contention is that reason, as presented by Western metaphysics, cannot adequately describe the whole of beings. To achieve an adequate description Heidegger attempts to go beyond reason and describe the whole of beings in terms of the experience of Angst and the nothing (*das Nichts*). In so doing, Heidegger is rejecting an Idealist conception of the totality of beings and arguing for a fundamental distinct that cannot be contained by a metaphysical absolute.

3.1 What is Metaphysics?

Even the traditional distinction between thinking and acting is inessential; thinking itself is already action, and one can better experience what ethics is from Sophocles or from three words of Heraclitus than from the lectures of Aristotle. Only one single distinction is essential, namely that between Being and all beings. The time of distinctions is "past" because now, in this world-historical moment following the end of an epoch, what is at stake is once again beings as a whole, the whole existence that is always one's own, and Being as a whole and as such, whose "there" or dwelling-place is the ek-sistent human being.⁹²

Karl Löwith draws our attention to the reduction in Heidegger's work of all metaphysical categories to a single distinction between being and beings. Why do the familiar divisions of physics, ethics, logic, epistemology, aesthetics and theology extinguish themselves in the face of the ontological distinction? Löwith is correlating Heidegger's ontological distinction with Kierkegaard's criticism of German Idealist systems and implying that Heidegger bears closer relations to German system builders such as Schelling and Hegel rather than the subjective existentialism of Kierkegaard.⁹³ This section will

⁹² Karl Löwith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, ed. R. Wolin, trans. G. Steiner (New York: Columbia, 1995), p. 38.

⁹³ Cf. Epigraph to Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. R. Thomte (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) p. 1: 'The age of making distinctions is past. It has been vanquished by the system. In our day, whoever loves to make distinctions is regarded as an eccentric whose soul clings to something that has long since vanished.'

attempt to clarify Heidegger's ontological distinction with reference to Heidegger's inaugural lecture at the University of Freiburg, *What is Metaphysics?*

The title of Heidegger's 1929 lecture indicates that the question at issue is the definition or the essence of metaphysics. However, the task of defining metaphysics is problematized by the lack of metaphysical distinctions in the text. Heidegger's methodology destabilizes metaphysics at the outset through a marked non-engagement with established terminology. Consequently, the question '*What is Metaphysics?*' has an unnerving quality. Owing to this approach, the history of philosophy appears to be circumvented as a newfound Heideggerian 'metaphysical ontology' is described in its place. *What is Metaphysics?* can therefore be read as a continuation of the attempt, already begun in *Being and Time* and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* to turn philosophy away from metaphysics and toward ontology and a renewal of the thinking of being. Heidegger wishes to emancipate philosophy from a form of dogma brought about by the forgetting of the question of being. Hence, as he intends to supplant metaphysics with an original ontology, a 'destruction of the history of ontology' is considered central to Heidegger's enterprise.⁹⁴ The dissolution of traditional language is a prerequisite for the ensuing thought: to prepare a space for 'fundamental ontology' metaphysics must, by necessity, be subject to an 'overcoming' (*Überwindung*).

Despite the radical nature of any project announcing itself as the 'overcoming' of conventional language and method, its ground necessarily rests in the tradition. In order to break out of the philosophy of the subject, Heidegger attempts a general description of transcendence in contrast to the subjective or local level that occupied *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Consequently, Heidegger develops a conception of unity that rests on the experience of being rather than subjective consciousness or the everyday lifeworld. With the 'history of metaphysics' at stake, the charge to consider is accurately called to attention by Löwith: why is the ontological distinction between being and beings so utterly essential for metaphysics, theology and science in general? Why must Heidegger's division be fundamental?

⁹⁴ Heidegger, BT, §6.

The answer to the above question lies, first, in the role that being and nothingness play in allowing beings to appear at all and, secondly, in the category distinction that is applied to what is named 'science'. To begin with the latter point, Heidegger uses the word 'science' as a generic term for human investigation into phenomena. Thus, each science investigates the phenomena or class of beings under its appropriate designation: chemistry will focus on the chemical composition of things and physics on the physical components etc. Sciences that investigate things in appearance, in being, are named the 'positive sciences'. It is here that Heidegger makes a vital move which resonates through much, if not all, of his writings; the ontological distinction between being and beings is applied to the definition of 'science' with the intention of disqualifying 'scientific investigation' from the task of philosophy proper:

It is evident from the idea of science as such—insofar as it is understood as a possibility of Dasein—that there are two basic possibilities of science: sciences of beings, of whatever is, or ontic sciences; and *the* science of being, the ontological science, philosophy.⁹⁵

The above definition leads directly to Aristotle's concerns over the term science (*epistēmē*) and what constitutes the science of science in general.⁹⁶ The enquiry into the 'science of science in general' is customarily known as 'metaphysics,' the branch of learning that seeks the unity behind things in general, and it is this definition of metaphysics that permeates through the medieval and modern traditions. However, Heidegger appears to be calling this definition into question. His basic assertion is that the traditional account of metaphysics is in error, and thereby reducible to the status of a positive science, precisely because the entities and phenomena encountered are 'positive beings' as 'given' to the world of appearance. The question as to why there are *posita* at all does not seem to be addressed by the science of metaphysics, which already concedes its objects of enquiry as openly existing for investigation. As such, an uncritical attitude concerning the appearance of beings and the knowledge that human Dasein has of those beings is engendered within all positive sciences. Heidegger remarks that traditional metaphysics as a positive science does not enquire about the radical appearance of beings in themselves: the fact *that* they appear rather than what they represent in appearance and how we come to know of this representation. This point opens up a general discussion about the necessity and manifestation of beings prior to the formation of subjectivity. The origin of

⁹⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'Phänomenologie und Theologie' (1927), *Wegmarken*, trans. J.G. Hart & J. C. Maraldo as 'Phenomenology and Theology,' *Pathmarks*, p. 41.

⁹⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Γ, 1, 1003^a20-31. All quotation will be cited from *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 2 Vols., ed. J. Barnes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

beings as a whole focuses philosophy on the structures and networks that precede metaphysics and make metaphysics and science in general possible. Thus, prior to all discussions concerning the status of entities, their categorisation and the causal relations that bring them to a specific point in history etc. is the question concerning the fact that anything exists at all. The question concerning the existence of beings as such is the foundation of all metaphysical enquiry and to leave it unexamined is, for Heidegger, an act of gross negligence. That question is designated the *Seinsfrage*, the 'being-question,' and properly formulated stands as: *why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing?*⁹⁷

This returns us to the point above: the significance of being and nothingness for the disclosure of phenomena. The enquiry into the fact that beings exist at all is, on Heidegger's account, oriented by not one but two basic distinctions: the ontological distinction between being and beings, and the final component of the *Seinsfrage*—'nothing'. When enquiring into the appearance of entities, Heidegger becomes aware that the distinction between being and beings is insufficient to allow for the disclosure of beings in themselves.

3.2 Metaphysics and the Absolute

While Heidegger's method of questioning often appears extraordinarily innovative, particularly with regard to the nothing, he is in fact rehearsing well-established problems within the Western philosophical and theological traditions, as I shall demonstrate.

The question of the nothing has a long history stretching back to Parmenides and his refutation of non-being, or 'the nothing,' in favour of being, or 'the One'. Owing to its problematic stance toward the world of appearance, Plato and Aristotle contest the Parmenidean position and argue for some form of becoming based on the necessity of non-being. This particular problem is engaged with in detail in

⁹⁷ Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?', p. 96: 'Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts? Cf. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 1.

Plato's *Sophist* and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and finds its way into the Christian tradition through theologians such as Pseudo-Dionysius, Scotus Eriugena, Nicholas of Cusa and Meister Eckhart.⁹⁸

Heidegger establishes that the 'differentiation' between being and beings requires an opposing procedure to bring beings into appearance. In order to permit beings to appear as distinct entities, the nothing or nothingness acts as the difference to being's identity. Any description of this manner concerning the becoming of beings in relation to negativity not only engages with Greek and Medieval philosophy but also brings Heidegger into confrontation with German Idealism and the conception of the Absolute. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Stanley Rosen, Andrew Bowie, Gerhard Schmitt and Karin de Boer, among others, have testified to the fact that there is a robust relation between Heidegger and thinkers such as Kant, Schelling and Hegel.⁹⁹ For Heidegger, although he does not use such terms for reasons that will become clear, the constitution of being must have what can only be described as a 'dialectical' or 'speculative' nature. The specific task of comparing Hegel's Absolute with Heidegger's term being is found in *Hegel's Concept of Experience*, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, sections of *Contribution to Philosophy* as well as studies by Schmitt and de Boer.¹⁰⁰ However, a simple equating of the two terms is not the purpose of any of the works cited; rather the conjoining factor of the two thinkers is the problem of the Absolute and the work that the Absolute performs. Indeed, the term Absolute is seldom, if ever, used to indicate Heidegger's understanding of being. Nevertheless, Heidegger is investigating the conditions for beings to appear and is hence drawing upon transcendental idealist foundations that have sought to account for the appearance of phenomena

⁹⁸ Cf. Plato, 'Sophist,' *Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 237a; Aristotle, 'Metaphysics,' *N 2*, 1089a 20-26; Richard Polt, 'The Question of Nothing,' *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, eds. R. Polt & G. Fried (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 60-67. Polt gives a highly instructive insight into the history of thinking the nothing stretching back as far as ancient Greek philosophy and including medieval theological meditations, German Idealism and various twentieth century ventures into the subject.

⁹⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. P. C. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 100-116; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Heidegger's Ways*, trans. J. W. Stanley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), passim; Stanley Rosen, 'Thinking About Nothing,' *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, ed. M. Murray (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 134-35; Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*, (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 92-93, 138-39; Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 138-92; Gerhard Schmitt, *The Concept of Being in Hegel and Heidegger* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1977), passim; Karin de Boer, *Thinking in the Light of Time: Heidegger's Encounter with Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), passim.

¹⁰⁰ Martin Heidegger, 'Hegels Begriff der Erfahrung' (1942/43), *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 5: *Holzwege*, ed. F-W von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), trans. K. Haynes as 'Hegel's Concept of Experience,' *Off the Beaten Track*, eds. J. Young & K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 32: *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Ingrid Görland (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1980), trans. P. Emad & K. Maly as *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, pp. 119-160; de Boer, *Thinking in the Light of Time*, pp. 197-312; Schmitt, *The Concept of Being in Hegel and Heidegger*, pp. 113-50. Also cf. Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 68: *Hegel*, ed. I. Schüssler (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1993), pp. 3-49.

by way of the ‘necessary conditions’ of consciousness, the Ego, Nature and absolute knowing.¹⁰¹ As Heidegger remarks, there are acceptable and unacceptable ways of approaching a direct comparison between thinkers.

After I myself had in the first place pointed to a remarkable connection between time and the I, several repeated attempts have recently been made to prove that the problematic of “being and time” already exists in Hegel...The energetic efforts to prove that *Being and Time* is an old story should be a wholesome and moderating factor for its author...It is, however, quite different and decisive whether with such devious tricks we do Hegel a favour or even honour him...For the thesis that *the essence of being is time* is the exact opposite of what Hegel tried to demonstrate in his entire philosophy. The Hegelian thesis is the reverse: Being is the essence of time—being, that is, as infinity.¹⁰²

Both thinkers are seeking the ‘essence’ of the condition, that is, the condition that provides the ground for beings. Their foci are different but their objectives aim at a foundational grounding in the Absolute or what Heidegger prefers to call ‘being’. This is not to say, as Schmitt appears to comment, that the standing of the condition is the same in each case. According to Heidegger’s interpretation of Hegel, ‘absolute knowing—that is, the mode of consciousness that has become ontological—is oriented upon presence (*Anwesenheit*) as much as the consciousness that it has left behind: the absolute reveals itself as absolute self-presence for and in absolute knowing.’¹⁰³ The term ‘presence’ is synonymous with traditional metaphysics and its propensity to evaluate ontology in terms of positive beings; thus, for Hegel, ontology is still metaphysical and absolute knowing as absolute self-presence is not commensurate with Heidegger’s notion of fundamental ontology. For Heidegger, metaphysics misconstrues the ‘unconditional’ or ‘self-conditioned condition’ (*causa sui*) for a fundamental ground and thereby marks itself as a thinking that seeks to evade its obligation towards its true origin: being. ‘A thinking that turns away from its true origin will increasingly come to regard *itself* as the ultimate ground.’¹⁰⁴

Heidegger attempts to move beyond the self-grounding movements of German Idealism. However, the implications of this finding are severe. If being is not shackled by metaphysical claims of presence and self-conditioned ground, then being is neither self-conditioned nor can it be said to be unconditional. What is being? The status of being is undecided; however, Heidegger aim is to

¹⁰¹ Schmitt, *The Concept of Being in Hegel and Heidegger*, pp. 114-35; cf. Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*, pp. 127-77.

¹⁰² Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 144-45. Stress is Heidegger's; cf. de Boer, *Thinking in the Light of Time*, pp. 203-4, de Boer confirms Heidegger's reading.

¹⁰³ de Boer, *Thinking in the Light of Time*, p. 285.

¹⁰⁴ de Boer, *Thinking in the Light of Time*, p. 291.

destabilise the self-conditioning structure of Idealism by employing the nothing against metaphysics as the essence of being that metaphysics cannot quantify. Heidegger hopes to 'unground' metaphysical pretensions and pursue what he considered to be the 'true' conditions for the emergence of beings. Consequently, his task becomes one of describing or 'working out' a philosophical method that does not reproduce a metaphysical reliance upon beings and self-knowledge. The difficulty becomes an immense philosophical problem that has concerned the German tradition since Kant: how do we account for the world and the becoming of beings from the situation of already being in the world? For Heidegger, the method, begun as a phenomenological analysis into Dasein, cannot be a logical form. As logic is already committed to the 'positive' content of thought and hence cannot gain insight into that which is prior to 'things'; it cannot therefore comprehend the significance of the nothing. In order to impart itself as something outside existing metaphysical logic, the disclosure of nothingness is required to be intuitive or experienced in actuality in relation to the ontological activity of being. If this can be established, then a specified transition between the creative or formative aspect of the nothing and Dasein's experience of that nothing is disclosed. The majority of *What is Metaphysics?* aims at demonstrating this point and explaining a notion of transcendence that negotiates the distinctions between being, nothing and Dasein. The Absolute could then be defeated by detailing a phenomenon that transcends its boundary and exposes the limits of metaphysical absolutes at a general level.

For this reason, the ontological distinction between being and beings appears too 'metaphysical' to disclose beings as a whole without at the same time espousing the nothing. If the nothing is excluded from the disclosure, then we are obliged (as was Hegel) to formulate the ontological distinction as a metaphysical hierarchy between existing beings terminating in an absolute self-conditioning 'being'. Heidegger's fundamental ontology is *other than beings*, which upsets the Hegelian hierarchical structure and yet claims a relation with being in or through Dasein. It is this complexity that Heidegger is seeking to express through recourse to the nothing. In respect of the nothing, it is an *activity* which is 'in operation' when allowing beings to appear, and Heidegger conveys this meaning through a construction new to the German language—*nichten*. The verb gives rise to two interesting English forms. Rosen translates *nichten* as 'to nihilate' whereas, due to the intransitive nature of

Heidegger's usage, Michael Inwood favours the verb 'to noth'.¹⁰⁵ What both commentators agree on is Heidegger's wish to separate the nothing and its nihilating activity from a purely negative interpretation predicated upon the not (*das Nicht*), that is, the act of negating beings. Although it cannot be described as a being, the nothing is a 'something' in itself and its activity is positive.¹⁰⁶ Nothingness is included in the question of being, as the *Seinsfrage* indicates: *why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing?* What is interesting in this construction for Heidegger is the possibility that there could be another decision regarding beings: that they may not have existed at all and yet, curiously, they do. This use of the nothing to highlight the disclosure of beings is a development of a theme already existing in Heidegger's thought at least as early as 1919. In the lecture course, *The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview*, Heidegger expresses an early form of the *Seinsfrage* in terms of the question, 'Is there something?' The question lacks the appendage 'nothing;' however, it is already laid out in relation to a 'lived experience' (*Erlebnis*): 'In this experience something is questioned in relation to anything whatsoever. The questioning has a definite content: whether 'there is' a something, that is the question. The "there is" (*es geben*) stands in question, or, more accurately, stands in questioning.'¹⁰⁷ However, while the wonder of beings generates in Heidegger the *Seinsfrage*, Wittgenstein and other logical positivists assert that, 'This astonishment cannot be expressed in the form of a question.'¹⁰⁸ Their quarrel focuses upon the use of the nothing as a meaningless linguistic form that Heidegger utilises in order to direct philosophy toward a mythical or artistic description of the world—or that which is beyond it. Heidegger disagrees: for although the *Seinsfrage* presses upon the limits of language the question directs us to the appearance of beings as a whole exactly through highlighting the possible alternative: nothing. As a term, the nothing is successful in unsettling the logical positivists for the very reason that it cannot be

¹⁰⁵ Rosen, 'Thinking About Nothing,' pp. 116-38, uses the verb 'to nihilate' in order to separate out the activity of the Nothing from a negative destructive form such as 'annihilate.' The Nothing does not destroy beings; rather it is involved in their 'creation.' Michael Inwood, 'Does the Nothing Noth?,' *German Philosophy Since Kant*, ed. A. O'Hear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 271-91, prefers the verb 'to noth' as its activity is not an act of choice or a directed movement, it is continuous—the nothing simply 'noths.'

¹⁰⁶ Inwood, 'Does the Nothing Noth?,' pp. 273-4. Inwood relates Heidegger's positive sense of the nothing to Dr Samuel Johnston's analysis of 'Upon Nothing' a poem by John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester. Dr Johnston suggests that the nothing can have a positive as well as a negative meaning. It holds a positive sense only when it is stands as the subject of a sentence and becomes a noun, *the nothing*, rather than a pronoun.

¹⁰⁷ Martin Heidegger, Gesamtausgabe, Vol: 57/58: *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1987), trans. T. Sadler as *Towards a Definition of Philosophy* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), p. 56.

¹⁰⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, 'On Heidegger on Being and Dread,' *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, p. 80; also see Rudolf Carnap's famous article 'The Overcoming of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language,' *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, pp. 23-34, where he seeks to discredit Heidegger's use of the word nothing through linguistic analysis. In essence, Carnap refuses to understand the meaning of 'nothing' as it points to no real referent.

included in a positivist account. Therefore, the word nothing becomes an essential tool for the thinking of being that exceeds metaphysical accounts.

3.3 The Function of the Nothing

Nonetheless, it is not yet clear as to what specific function the nothing plays apart from providing an equilibrium to being in the course of the disclosure of beings. If the nothing is to be more than a quasi-logical assertion concerning a space or negation of space that is required in order for beings to appear, then its 'activity' requires clarification. What work does the nothing do? As Inwood explains, 'We are looking for a problem to be solved by the Nothing. But we find a surfeit of problems, all apparently solved...by the nihilating of the Nothing.' Those problems are listed as follows:

1. How do we relate to beings as beings?
2. Why are we selves and why are we free?
3. How are we aware of beings as a whole?
4. How is negation or denial possible?
5. Could God create the world out of nothing?
6. Why do we ask why something is the case and look for reasons for it?
7. What is the relationship between metaphysics and ordinary everyday life?
8. Why are there beings at all and not rather nothing?¹⁰⁹

For Heidegger, the *Seinsfrage* directs all of the above questions. The relation of beings to one another, the awareness of the whole of beings, and the questioning of the origin of that whole all require the ability to differentiate any being from another. Included in this differentiation is the ability to distinguish by means of negation and hence the origin of negation is also under investigation. Without distinction no being can differ from any other and human being cannot be made aware of any such difference. In order to account for such difference within and between beings, Heidegger asks, does differentiation itself have an ontological origin?

First, every metaphysical question always encompasses the whole range of metaphysical problems. Each question is itself always the whole. Therefore, second, every metaphysical question can be asked only in such a way that the questioner as such

¹⁰⁹ Inwood, 'Does the Nothing Noth?,' p. 276.

is also there within the question, that is, is placed in question. From this we conclude that metaphysical inquiry must be posed as a whole and from the essential position of the existence [*Dasein*] that questions.¹¹⁰

In Heidegger's recounting of metaphysics, he repeatedly subsumes traditional distinctions beneath the enquiry into the whole. That whole relates to the *Seinsfrage* and the fact that beings appear at all. Thus, Heidegger cannot proceed until he has drawn out the fundamental ontological distinction between being and nothingness which appears to precede the emergence of beings. Only then can we proceed to question beings and thus to traditional metaphysics. Consequently, Heidegger guides us away from questions relating to beings (ethics, politics, aesthetics etc.) and onward to face the whole of beings or, as he puts it, 'the whole range of metaphysical problems'. It is at this juncture that we are asked to consider the whole of beings as a metaphysical problem. However, the path that leads us from questioning this or that particular being (traditional metaphysics/positive science) to the problem concerning beings as a whole (fundamental ontology) is, for Heidegger, a radical leap in thinking which surpasses the scope of traditional metaphysics. The turn toward the whole of beings as a metaphysical problem relates to the attempt in *Being and Time* to wean philosophy off its metaphysical victuals that have most often been described in terms of objective beings, leading to an obsession with the being that receives the knowledge of those objects: human consciousness.¹¹¹ Hence, Heidegger argues that the *Seinsfrage* cannot be answered (or even asked) within the limits of traditional metaphysics; for an articulation of the problem a different approach is required. As he declares vis-à-vis the *Seinsfrage*, 'There is no gradual transition from the customary by which the question could slowly become more familiar. This is why it must be posed in advance, pro-posed, (*vor-gestellt*), as it were.'¹¹² Heidegger presents the *Seinsfrage*, the question concerning beings as a whole, as preceding enquiries relating to any being in particular. There is a fundamental distinction between being and beings that is given to us neither in rational analysis nor in the course of immediate experience of phenomena. It is this distinction that Heidegger wishes to uncover and describe through the question of nothingness. As such, although Heidegger registers his concerns with negativity and

¹¹⁰ Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?', p. 82.

¹¹¹ Heidegger, BT, §2-11, §12-13.

¹¹² Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 10.

nothingness in certain sections of *Being and Time*, *What is Metaphysics?* can be considered to be a development of the problem.¹¹³

When pointing us toward the whole of metaphysical questioning and stating that ‘metaphysical inquiry must be posed as a whole and from the essential position of the existence [*Dasein*] that questions,’ Heidegger is asking a question concerning conditions: ‘What would be necessary for beings to appear to us as beings?’ Only when the conditions for the emergence of beings as a whole has been satisfied can derivative metaphysical questions be asked. It is in this manner that the *Seinsfrage* is ‘included in every question,’ the conditions for occurrence of beings accompanies every question, a point that appears to escape Inwood:

Why, Darwin asked, do moths fly toward a candle, but not towards the moon? This question is of no immediate practical relevance. But asking it need not surely commit one to asking, or in some sense presuppose that one has asked, ‘Why is there anything at all rather than nothing?’¹¹⁴

For Heidegger, the *Seinsfrage* is in every question owing to the fact that every being which is able to question or be questioned contains within itself the ‘history of manifestation of beings’. As a manifest being, each being is related to the conditions of its own appearance and hence to the appearance of beings as a whole. However, as Wittgenstein, Carnap and Heidegger himself suggest in separate ways, to talk of nothingness as if it shares the same space as a being is to talk nonsense; the nothing is not a being. However, according to Heidegger, we may speak of the nothing without attaining the nothing itself.¹¹⁵ Metaphysics in Heidegger’s hands begins to shed its traditional distinctions as the search for the fundamental question regarding the appearance of beings turns toward the whole of metaphysical questioning, which is deemed to require a ground or ‘space’ for beings to appear before the traditional distinctions can align themselves. It is for this reason that Heidegger develops both a phenomenology of the nothing and an antagonistic attitude toward reason and rationality in unison: the nothing is required to ‘order’ beings, and yet the nothing cannot be ‘reached’ via a logical analysis. Reason

¹¹³ Cf. Heidegger, BT §40:186-87. Heidegger uses the word *das Nichts* in reference to *nirgends* (the ‘nothing and nowhere’) to elucidate the condition of Angst as an anxiety in the face of being-in-the-world, to be more precise it is the condition of Angst that first reveals the world as a whole. However, the nothing is not yet given the status of ontological ‘entity’ as it appears in *What is Metaphysics?* Also cf. ‘Has anyone ever made a problem of the ontological source of notness, or, prior to that, even sought the mere conditions on the basis of which the problem of the “not” and its notness and the possibility of that notness can be raised?’ Heidegger, BT §57.

¹¹⁴ Inwood, ‘Does the Nothing Noth?’, p 283.

¹¹⁵ Heidegger, ‘What is Metaphysics?’, p 86.

requires 'something' on which to think, that is, a being or entity to inquire into.¹¹⁶ As a fundamental constituent of the becoming of beings the nothing is not a being but *a condition for beings to appear* and is therefore, in some respect, beyond beings or 'meta-physical'. With this thought in mind, the implicit criticism of the philosophical tradition is that it has not been 'meta-physical' enough. Traditional metaphysics, owing to its fascination with beings, things, entities, has been unable to articulate the conditions for beings to appear except through recourse to another 'being' and therefore remains silent on the true essence of the condition. Furthermore, the categorisation of metaphysical beings has been completed using the thinking that concerns itself with entities—reason. If traditional metaphysics, owing to its methodological trust in reason, is incapable of formulating the *Seinsfrage* in a manner that will 'attend to' the conditions for the becoming of beings, then reason itself will have to be abandoned.

Due to the manner in which it thinks of beings, metaphysics almost seems to be, without knowing it, the barrier that refuses human beings the primordial relationship of Being to the human essence.¹¹⁷

Heidegger regards the investigation into the ground of all being and thinking as containing a fundamental difficulty. What is required is a way of attending to the conditions for beings without articulating those conditions heretically, that is to say, in terms of a material being. How then can the question into what is prior to beings proceed?

Heidegger realises that when inquiring into the ground of metaphysics he may have to proceed without the use of reason and therefore without the traditional tools of philosophy. Reason, and its requirement to think in terms of concepts and things, already produces a 'stance' toward the beings under investigation.¹¹⁸ This 'stance' is what common usage understands by 'ontology': the adoption of a metaphysical position or 'ideology' toward the world or the object of study. This form of ontology is not the goal of Heidegger's investigation. Rather, he wishes to formulate or reveal a fundamental ontology that destabilises subsequent 'ontologies' by disclosing their posterior ontic nature. The weapon Heidegger employs to these ends is, confusingly, 'nothing'. It is offered as the 'antidote' to positive science and positive thinking. Its technical purpose is to provide the means for thinking

¹¹⁶ Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?', p 85.

¹¹⁷ Heidegger, Martin, 'Introduction to "What is Metaphysics?"' (1949), *Pathmarks*, p. 281.

¹¹⁸ Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?', p 83.

beyond reason and beyond the beings that bend us toward their 'material' or 'thingy' nature requiring us to think in positive terms.

However, a problem arises. If the function of the nothing is to bring us into contact with the ontological condition, then how is the nothing made known to us? If we follow Heidegger's argument and agree that metaphysics is problematic because of its rational preoccupation with beings, then we accept that beings are obstructive, wherein we are in some way assenting to the problem of transition. Heidegger seems to be maintaining that the condition for beings cannot be revealed through an investigation into those beings. There is an aporia that exists between being and beings. If beings are presented as a problem, which prevents Dasein's comportment to being from occurring, then how is the disclosure of the 'condition' to arise? Furthermore, this impediment appears to be contrary to an earlier pronouncement in *Being and Time*:

We shall proceed toward the concept of Being by way of an interpretation of a certain special entity, *Dasein*, in which we shall arrive at the horizon for the understanding of Being and for the possibility of interpreting it; the universality of the concept of Being is not belied by the relatively 'special' character of our investigation.¹¹⁹

The problem of transition contends that there is no logical or causal pathway between two points and only a 'radical leap' in thinking will facilitate the passage from one point to its condition. In this case we happen to come up against the possibility that beings themselves constitute a problem that requires surmounting; a thought that threatens to leave the phenomenological approach of *Being and Time* far behind. However, the citation above denotes the use of a being, a 'special entity,' in order to proceed toward the 'concept of being,' which is made available to the special entity Dasein. This apparent inconsistency calls for clarification. The rejection of beings, which seems to be implied in *What is Metaphysics?* and Heidegger's later work has its basis in a decision that deeply engages with philosophical and theological history.¹²⁰ Heidegger is confronting the ancient pronouncement that 'nothing comes from nothing' and Leibniz's rendering as the principle of sufficient reason, 'nothing is without reason'. To take this line of thought to its ultimate conclusion is to reflect on the cause of beings in general and hence the transition from beings to their cause and vice versa. Therefore, the status of beings becomes obscure if they are to be regarded as an obstacle to the attainment of the

¹¹⁹ Heidegger, BT, §8:63.

¹²⁰ Cf. Heidegger, 'Letter on "Humanism",' *Pathmarks*, pp 239-276; *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 1-4; John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), pp. 47-96.

condition of beings. It is for this reason, at least as far as *Being and Time* is concerned, that the entity called Dasein is given special status as the being *whose concern is the being of beings*, thus the disclosure of the condition of beings in general is a question of transition that only Dasein can formulate. Dasein performs a mediating function in the investigation that allows Heidegger to accept the significance of some beings while rejecting the status of beings in general.

To recognise the enquiry into the condition for beings to emerge as engaging with the problem of transition we are asking if, for one, a transition occurs and, secondly, what is the nature of that event? If no transition is necessary, then there are philosophical implications to this discovery. The problem of transition as found in Schelling and Hegel is the transition from the 'real' to the 'ideal,' that is, the real to the Absolute. For Schelling in the *Naturphilosophie* and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* the problem of transition is resolved by making the ideal and real the 'other of each other' and, therefore, precluding the need for a further ground from which their relationship emerges.¹²¹ The ideal and the real become the ground of each other and can be said to identify with each other. Heidegger is rejecting this position and arguing for a fundamental distinction between beings and their condition. The dialectical unification that Hegel produces in his *Phenomenology* is, according to Heidegger, another engagement with beings, and it is this definition of a metaphysical absolute that is attacked in *Hegel's Concept of Experience*.¹²² Heidegger continues in *What is Metaphysics?* to argue for the occurrence and magnitude of a transition through 'transcendence'.¹²³

The exact embodiment of these fundamental principles, 'transition,' 'transcendence,' and 'being' and 'nothingness' as the condition for the emergence of beings is not yet described; however, their functions are becoming more refined. It is not that one cannot attend to the conditions for beings through an investigation into, for example, Dasein itself as a being. Rather, Heidegger objects to the metaphysical method. In his view, the nothing has generally been subsumed under the concept of negation and the word 'not' as the expressed form of that negation in formal logic. A negation or a succession of 'not-beings' reveals neither beings as a whole nor the nothing itself: negation is not sufficient to reveal the whole of beings. For Heidegger, the nothing has a primary ontological nature

¹²¹ Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*, p. 87.

¹²² Heidegger, *Hegel's Concept of Experience*, pp. 27-31; pp. 141-54.

¹²³ Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?' p. 91.

that precedes the act of negation. As he affirms, 'We assert that the nothing is more originary than the "not" and negation'.¹²⁴ Formal logic will not approach primal nothingness as the application of negation is dependent upon there already being entities present for the logical consciousness to negate. The crux of Heidegger's argument rests upon encountering the nothing in a fundamentally different manner that comes within reach of the originary ontological nature of nothingness, and thereby 'transcendence'.

However, we may pause to consider if this form of thinking is not an overturning of phenomenology's 'positive' treatment of things as real existences within 'appearance'.¹²⁵ In raising the question of nothingness, is Heidegger not simply returning to abstract conceptual thinking, which may or may not have an intentional associate in existence? It is for this reason that Heidegger develops a phenomenological analysis of the nothing as found in human 'experience'. He claims that the nothing is not a conceptual negation: it is 'encountered'. The nothing gains the rank of 'thing' that is not a 'thing;' nevertheless, it occurs in the experience of anxiety.

The nothing unveils itself in anxiety (*Angst*) —but not as a being. Just as little is it given as an object. Anxiety is no kind of grasping of the nothing...Rather, we said that in anxiety the nothing is encountered at one with beings as a whole.¹²⁶

It is experience that retains the 'positive' aspect of phenomenology whilst also acknowledging the nonsensicality of a direct encounter with the nothing itself, which would take the form of an absolute negation or annihilation. It is this sense of closeness and repulsion that drives Heidegger's philosophy into areas that are not traditionally associated with metaphysics. As Werner Brock explains:

A distinction of great significance...separates this negative answer [the logic of negation] from the positive one [experience of the nothing]. The totality of all that is can never be comprehended in its absolute sense. This, Heidegger admits, is impossible on principle. But in contrast to this impossibility stands the fact that we, as men, are placed amidst a great multitude of beings within the "whole." This is, indeed, our fundamental position, which constantly repeats itself throughout our life; and this being placed amidst beings within the "whole" (the "Befindlichkeit" of Dasein, as analysed in "Being and Time") opens up the realm of metaphysics; we are thus, potentially, face to face

¹²⁴ Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?' p. 86.

¹²⁵ Polt suggests that Heidegger's *Seinsfrage* is in breach of Husserlian phenomenology: 'The why-question is an egregious violation of the Husserlian *epoché*: instead of bracketing existence and describing phenomena, it demands an ultimate explanation for all that exists.' Polt, 'The Question of Nothing,' p. 67.

¹²⁶ Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?' pp. 89-90.

with metaphysics already in our actual Dasein, however, little many of us may be aware.¹²⁷

Ultimately the totality cannot be 'known,' nonetheless, we are within some form of a whole that is communicated to us by way of our existence. According to *What is Metaphysics?*, the conditions for the emergence of the whole are to be made available to us through the transcendence of the nothing.

3.4 The Role of Anxiety in the Disclosure of the Nothing

The question we have yet to answer is how is primordial ontology revealed through the nothing if a direct confrontation is rejected out of hand. How does transcendence occur? It is important to approach Heidegger's analysis of Angst in terms of the philosophical function it performs as opposed to it merely being an existential intrusion into human experience. Angst is an ontological activity of Dasein that reveals beings as a whole for the first time.

In the clear night of the nothing of anxiety the original openness of beings as such arises: that they are beings—and not nothing. But this “and not nothing” we add in our talk is not some kind of appended clarification. Rather, *it makes possible in advance* the manifestness of beings in general. The essence of the originally nihilating nothing lies in this, that it brings Da-sein for the first time before beings as such.¹²⁸

Angst is an existentially unsettling experience that makes manifest the phenomenon of beings as a whole. Angst affords an insight into the originary openness of beings, that is, the condition of being. The following section will attempt to explain how that manifestation is accomplished.

On account of the language and structure of *Being and Time*, many scholars have drawn a parallel between Heidegger and Kierkegaard's existential themes.¹²⁹ Indeed, early studies into the movement have chronicled the history of existentialism from Kierkegaard through Nietzsche to Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre and may also include Karl Jaspers, Paul Tillich and Gabriel Marcel.¹³⁰ Heidegger

¹²⁷ Heidegger, Martin, *Existence and Being*, trans. W. Brock (London: Vision Press, 1952), pp. 222-23. Brock's introductory essays to this into this volume emphasise the ontological import of Heidegger's work, pp. 218-248, and precede the English translation of *Being and Time* by ten years.

¹²⁸ Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?' p. 90, my stress.

¹²⁹ Cf. Heidegger, BT §39-40 for Heidegger's analysis of Angst.

¹³⁰ Some of these studies include: De Ruggerio, Guido, *Existentialism* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1946); Wahl, Jean, *A Short History of Existentialism*, trans. F. Williams & S. Maron (New York: The Wisdom Library, 1949); Kuhn, Helmut, *Encounters with Nothingness: An Essay on Existentialism* (London: Methuen, 1951); Grimsley, Ronald, *Existential Thought* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955); Cochrane, Arthur C., *Existentialism and God* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), Roberts, David E., *Existentialism and Religious Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957); Warnock, Mary, *Existentialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

tends to be read as a philosopher of existence whose use of Angst, guilt, being-toward-death etc. is present in order to direct Dasein to an authentic selfhood.¹³¹ This reading of Heidegger is feasible as all the elements of an existential interpretation are in attendance in *Being and Time*; however, to remain at this level of analysis is to ignore the ontological distinction in the work. Owing to an increased familiarity with Heidegger's method, the link between Heidegger and Kierkegaard is no longer considered to be as pronounced as once supposed and a close reading of *Being and Time* will evidence the ontological impetus that governs the investigation from its beginning.

So far as existence is the determining character of Dasein, the ontological analytic of this entity always requires that existentiality be considered beforehand. By "existentiality" we understand the state of Being that is constitutive for those entities that exist. But in the idea of such a constitutive state of Being, the idea of Being is already included. And thus even the possibility of carrying through the analytic of Dasein depends on working out beforehand the question about the meaning of Being in general...Therefore *fundamental ontology*, from which alone all other ontologies can take their rise, must be sought in the *existential analytic of Dasein*.¹³²

The more philosophically literate of the existential studies cited note Heidegger's ontological bearing as opposed to the psychological subjectivity of Kierkegaard.¹³³ This difference is exposed in Richard Coe's *Angst and the Abyss* through directly focusing on the usage of Angst and nothingness in each of the thinkers under analysis.¹³⁴ Coe's thesis is that if a divergence exists it is because the shared terms, Angst and nothingness, execute different effects. The method results in a more clear appreciation of the paths that each thinker is pursuing. Coe contends that the misconception surrounding Heidegger's project was due in part to the rendition of Angst by the English term 'anxiety' in the Macquarrie and Robinson translation.¹³⁵ In a post-Freudian world Heidegger's Angst was taken to be a psychological and therefore subjective anxiety. Consequently, the ontological determination of Angst suffers disregard and is replaced by a more restricted psychological function. To this I would add that the grasping of the meaning of the ontological difference is by no means a simple task. The ability merely to state the difference between beings and their condition does not bring to light the significance of Heidegger's philosophy. Furthermore, to comprehend the ontological difference as an issue of repute requires a thorough acquaintance with the problems of the Western philosophical and theological traditions as well as a familiarity with Heidegger's works. Particularly after *Being and Time*,

¹³¹ Heidegger, BT §46-60.

¹³² Heidegger, BT §4:13.

¹³³ Wahl, *A Short History of Existentialism*, pp. 9-26; Warnock, *Existentialism*, pp. 46-70.

¹³⁴ Richard K. Coe, *Angst and the Abyss: The Hermeneutics of Nothingness*, (Chico, Ca: Scholars Press, 1985).

¹³⁵ Coe, *Angst and the Abyss*, p. 3.

Heidegger attempts to differentiate his thought from metaphysics through a deepening of the understanding of being. A metaphysical argument may draw attention to the necessary conditions but it will not bring the ontological import of being and nothingness to experience. Heidegger's thought, like philosophy itself, requires the reader to accomplish the process for themselves, in order to 'understand' in experience. This experience is a rare occurrence and Heidegger is pursuing the moment that initiates the possibility of thought itself. In so doing, he rejects the Cartesian position that states that thought commences with an original thought that enables consciousness. Nothingness must be brought to experience as the original openness of being, beings and hence thought itself. It is Angst that performs the task of bringing human Dasein before the nothing. The experience is seen as the opening of ontological awareness, that is, the original perception that beings exist at all rather than there being 'nothing'. Although there are many theological implications to these claims, Heidegger is not describing the creation of the world; he is recounting the disclosure of the world and of being and nothing to Dasein. Precisely because Dasein is also a being in the world, it is 'blinded' by other beings and, therefore, cannot this 'see' its way toward an ontological awareness by way of familiarity with other beings. Similar to the logical argument that in a world of 'red' one cannot 'see' the colour 'red,' so too in a world of beings one cannot see beings without the bequest of the ontological difference. A form of transcendence is required in order to account for Dasein's ability to differentiate beings from other beings and beings from the condition for their occurrence.

Transcendence, on Heidegger's account, relates Dasein to the nothing through the ontological category of Angst. This places Angst at the centre of the ontological difference, Dasein 'receives' the difference and therefore openness of being 'in Angst'. Hence an appreciation of Angst is of importance to Heidegger. However, a psychological understanding that ends in a subjective anxiety does not bring to light the profundity of the ontological difference and would remain a derivative experience predicated upon a deeper ontological category. The distinction between a psychological and an ontological use of Angst is analogous to the disparity between fear and Angst. As Heidegger proclaims in both *Being and Time* and *What is Metaphysics?*, fear is fear of 'something'—a thing or being. Angst is fear without object thus it is not directly correlated to an entity.¹³⁶ Metaphysics in its traditional comportment toward beings can only distinguish fear as, for Heidegger, it is not capable of

¹³⁶ Heidegger, BT §40:185-86; Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?' p 88.



recognizing the ontological distinction that the experience of Angst directs us to. Although fear and Angst are associated terms they do not reveal equivalent experiences. It is a useful distinction that parallels the ontological distinction between being and beings: fear relates to beings, whereas Angst relates to nothingness and hence being. Nevertheless, it is also a distinction that Kierkegaard recognised.

Anxiety is a qualification of dreaming spirit, and as such it has its place in psychology. Awake, the difference between myself and my other is posited; sleeping, it is suspended; dreaming, it is an intimated nothing. The actuality of the spirit constantly shows itself as a form that tempts its possibility but disappears as soon as it seeks to grasp for it, and it is a nothing that can only bring anxiety. More it cannot do as long as it merely shows itself. The concept of anxiety is almost never treated in psychology. Therefore, I must point out that it is altogether different from fear and similar concepts that refer to something definite, whereas anxiety is freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibility.¹³⁷

Although Kierkegaard's location of the 'experience' of Angst is internal to consciousness and therefore psychological, it serves a similar function to Heidegger's use of the term. Through relating Angst to the experience of freedom and hereditary sin, Kierkegaard creates a differential between sinful man and a perfect God that serve as the 'possibility of possibility'. Angst reveals the relationship of man as a 'man of possibility,' sinful as that may be, before God. Although, this relation has been read as an ontological one by thinkers such as Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr and Rollo May, I am more persuaded by Coe's analysis that despite the foundational role that Kierkegaard's Angst undoubtedly performs, his methodology is caught in the philosophy of his age and heavily under the sway of Hegel. Therefore, the full ontological horizon, as exposed by phenomenology, is not available to Kierkegaard.¹³⁸

To return to the ontological significance of Angst, if Angst is to be radically different from the ontic perspectives of fear and negation, Heidegger's approach cannot be allowed to presuppose beings simply in order to negate them. Angst would also have to transcend. Angst would have to avoid the reliance upon beings or at the very least the inductive/deductive reduction of beings to 'not-beings' and thence to nothingness. Angst cannot pose a logical question or follow a causal path that discloses the nothing. This line of reasoning first assumes the actuality of beings and then supposes that there is no aporia between beings and nothingness. As a result, no transition is required and a further ground is not necessary to make sense of beings and being. Alternatively, one could expect an aporia to be

¹³⁷ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p 42.

¹³⁸ Reidar Thomte, 'Introduction,' Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p xvi-xvii. Cf. Coe, *Angst and the Abyss*, pp. 45-88.

present; however, its traversal is unproblematic. Heidegger describes the experience of Angst as follows:

In anxiety there occurs a shrinking back before...that is surely not any sort of flight but rather a kind of entranced calm. This "back before" takes its departure from the nothing. The nothing itself does not attract; it is essentially repelling. But this repulsion is itself as such a parting gesture toward beings that are submerging as a whole. This wholly repelling gesture toward beings that are slipping away as a whole, which is the action of the nothing that closes in on Dasein in anxiety, is the essence of the nothing: nihilation. It is neither an annihilation of beings nor does it spring from a negation. Nihilation will not submit to calculation in terms of annihilation and negation. The nothing itself nihilates.¹³⁹

Angst is the experience of the slipping away of beings as a whole and in this experience the phenomena of beings unified 'as a whole' first presents itself before Dasein. The nothing attacks the possibility of beings as a whole and thereby provides a stark relief to the presence of beings: that they appear as a whole as a possibility actual in existence. The 'parting gesture' of the nothing suggests that the nihilating activity not only reveals beings as a fundamental constituent of the world, but by means of its repelling exposure of beings it intimates another terrifying possibility: that there may be nothing. The nihilating activity of the nothing thus contains a 'dialectical movement' that exhibits a positive and a negative aspect to the one phenomena. The possibility that there may be nothing also reiterates the Leibnizian account of the principle of sufficient reason in that if nothing is a possibility that does *not occur*, then the something that is in existence appears in some way 'necessary'.¹⁴⁰ The nothing presents the structure of being-in-the-world to Dasein through the revelation that there is a 'unified' world affordable to Dasein which it is in: Dasein is 'within the whole' (*das Seiende im Ganzen*) which gives meaning.¹⁴¹ The nihilating activity presents the whole through withdrawal, through the nihilation of beings as a whole. For this very reason, being and nothing, from the ontological perspective, are identical. 'The nothing does not remain the indeterminate opposite of beings but unveils itself as the belonging to the being of beings.'¹⁴² Thus Heidegger is in concordance with the Hegelian proposition that *pure* being and *pure* nothing are the same. Being and nothingness are not two separate conditions for the emergence of beings, they both belong to the essence of the condition and are necessary for the experience and comprehension of the ontological distinction.

¹³⁹ Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?' p. 90.

¹⁴⁰ Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason will be the focus of chapter 4 below.

¹⁴¹ Werner Brock, *Existence and Being*, pp. 225. Brock emphasizes the importance of being 'within the whole' to Heidegger's entire project: 'Without it, "transcending" thought, such as the realisation of "nothingness" or the visualisation of "Being, would be impossible.'

¹⁴² Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?' p. 94.

If we return to the *Seinsfrage*, *why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing?*, we can see that Heidegger's analysis of the ontological category of Angst enacts the *Seinsfrage* in its entirety. Heidegger has sought to give an account of the appearance of beings through the experience of Angst contemporaneously with the transcendence of the nothing which, likewise, grounds Dasein in its being-in-the-world:

Da-sein means: being held out into the nothing.

Holding itself out into the nothing, Dasein, is in each case already beyond the beings as a whole. Such being beyond beings we call *transcendence*. If in the ground of its essence Dasein were not transcending, which now means, if it were not in advance holding itself out into the nothing, then it could never adopt a stance toward beings or even toward itself.¹⁴³

The being beyond beings in transcendence is, for Heidegger, 'meta-physics'. Transcendence is fundamental to Dasein as Dasein cannot be Dasein without the recognition of itself as being-in-the-world of beings. Consequently, 'meta-physics' as the original ontological awareness of the openness of being is a fundamental constituent of Dasein. On Heidegger's account, traditional metaphysics, owing to its reliance on the precedence of beings, cannot make us aware of this condition and transcend the sphere of beings.

¹⁴³ Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?' p. 91.

3.5 Preliminary Assessment

Several fundamental problems emerge from a reading of *What is Metaphysics?* and although Heidegger approaches these difficulties in a unique fashion, I have tried to demonstrate that these claims relate to authentic questions raised by the metaphysical tradition. I summarise them as follows:

1. The problem concerning the origin of distinctions
2. The problem of transition between beings and their condition
3. The problem of transcendence: what is transcended and what is given in transcendence?
4. The problem of the 'essence' of the condition of beings

I have argued that the ontological distinction between being and beings is a distillation of the problems listed above. As Löwith remarks in the opening of this chapter, in so doing Heidegger reduces all metaphysical categories to the single distinction between being and all beings. The grounds for Heidegger's reduction become clearer when we approach his work as a series of steps that relate to the quest for a fundamental ontology. Therefore, the challenges posed by the origin of distinctions, transition, transcendence and the essence of the condition are implicit in Heidegger's ontology. Heidegger understands metaphysics as a discipline for thinking and resolving fundamental problems rather than one caught up in identifying categories and producing logical proofs for those categories. However, for many commentators, it is not clear that Heidegger is progressing further than traditional metaphysical interpretations.

To begin with the first question raised, the problem of distinctions, the situation briefly stated requires that we account for Dasein's ability to distinguish between every being and between itself and the whole of beings. Heidegger's radical insight is to suggest that 'distinction itself' requires an origin. This thought process can be traced to a Socratic or Platonic mode of questioning which, upon encountering a phenomenon, seeks the unity behind that phenomenon. When Socrates is forced to judge between, for example, two or more occurrences of the same virtue the question is asked, 'How do we know that they are the same?' The assumption is that there is a common or primary element that secondary phenomena merely share in. Socrates is led, through engaging with the world, to the concept of virtue 'in itself'. Likewise, Heidegger asks similar questions even if his intentions ultimately lead us elsewhere: if there are a multiplicity of distinctions in the world, then how do we

recognise all by the name 'distinction'? Heidegger's reduction concentrates his thought in a single question, is there not a ground of all distinctions and all beings?

For Habermas, it is not clear that Heidegger is advancing a new form of philosophy at all. According to Habermas, Heidegger's primary problem is, 'How to dissolve the transcendental subject without eroding the world of difference that the subject works out.'¹⁴⁴ *What is Metaphysics?* demonstrates Heidegger's desire to maintain difference yet dissolves all difference into a single inexpressible origin. Habermas regards this methodology as 'inverted Platonism,' where the relationship between subject and object has been reversed. Habermas accuses Heidegger of elevating the category of world (as found in *Being and Time*) over and above subjective distinctions to achieve a hypostasised world-structure named 'being'.¹⁴⁵ While this strategic manoeuvre allows Heidegger to develop an ontological structure that goes before the subject and makes it possible, for Habermas, world and the activity of world-disclosure is a repackaged form of objectivity inherent to metaphysics. Furthermore, the centrality of an ontological conception of transcendence indicates Heidegger's metaphysical need to break out of isolated categories and 'go beyond' the world of subjectivity towards objective being. Because Dasein and distinctions remain important to Heidegger, his philosophy shows evidence of metaphysics and an inverted use of the philosophy of the subject.

Heidegger's answer to this form of criticism is established in terms of a *temporal* differentiation in experience—a 'happening—rather than a *concept* of distinction. Metaphysical distinctions remain at the level of mathematically founded concepts. The ontological distinction is required to be both *experiential* to *Dasein* and *grounding*, that is, ontology is required to disclose a necessary truth and universal structure regarding the *world*. Therefore, Heidegger's challenge is to uncover a fundamental foundation that is also relevant to experience. However, Heidegger's internal difficulty is that the origin or condition of beings is deemed to be other than the 'thingy' distinctions between beings. This category distinction is necessary for his critique of the history of philosophy as a history of presence. In order to re-inscribe the dominant philosophy of his day, Heidegger is required to explore different

¹⁴⁴ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 142.

¹⁴⁵ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 152. The charge of Platonism is also levelled at Heidegger by Derrida in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972) trans. A. Bass, 'Ousia and Grammē,' *Margins of Philosophy*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p. 63.

solutions. Therefore, Heidegger is attempting to modify the function of transcendence. To transcend out of the subject toward beings is a form of transcendence that relates to subjectivity. However, to transcend beings themselves toward an origin or condition of beings bears closer resemblance to theology or a type of metaphysics that transcendental philosophy has already surrendered. Heidegger is objecting to the traditional rendering of metaphysical attempts to transcend toward another 'being,' but is affirming a category of transcendence that 'steps-back' towards an understanding of being. Nonetheless, when Heidegger describes being or the nothing as an 'entity that is not a being,' it exposes him to charges of metaphysical abstraction or mysticism. Nonetheless, although Derrida criticises Heidegger's use of the ontological distinction as an inherently metaphysical category,¹⁴⁶ he also recognises that Heidegger's use of being and transcendence 'are nothing but necessary yet provisional movements' on Heidegger's path to his later philosophy.¹⁴⁷ It remains Heidegger's belief that traditional metaphysics has been unable to convey the conditions for beings to appear except by way of another 'being'. Heidegger is upholding his conviction that the condition for beings cannot be exposed through a rational investigation into those beings. Therefore, we revealed a problem of transition between the beings that we experience and the origin of those beings in being. If beings are presented as a problem to be resolved through the unearthing of the ontological condition, then how is the 'condition' disclosed?

Heidegger utilises the nothing to overcome this problem rather than attempting to unify or identify being and beings immanently, that is, through stating that they are the other of each other and that they require no further explanation to account for their reciprocal grounding. Through rejecting this position and arguing for a fundamental distinction between beings and their condition, Heidegger draws the problem of transition into his fundamental ontology and at the same time provides an effective resolution by broaching the problem of transcendence. Transcendence alleviates the problem of transition through providing an account of how the ontological distinction is given to us in experience. The condition for the emergence of beings is related to Dasein by means of the nothing and the ontological category of Angst. Being and nothingness, as conditions for the becoming of beings, gain an identity that is indissoluble. However, Connor Cunningham sees a logic of nihilism in

¹⁴⁶ Derrida, 'Différance,' *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁷ Derrida, Jacques, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967) trans. by G. C. Spivak as *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 22.

this identification which proliferates the errors of Western metaphysics and terminates in nihilism. Heidegger unifies and grounds his ontology by reducing the identity of difference to an essential monism that is nihilistic in the sense that Heidegger 'makes nothing appear as something' and thus conceals the origin of beings.¹⁴⁸ For Cunningham, this logic of identification is repeated throughout the Western tradition.

Nevertheless, before we accuse Heidegger of replicating the error of German Idealism and unifying the highest elements of his philosophy into a self-grounding identity, the 'being-nothing,' I suggest that Heidegger's identification occurs beyond beings in the realm of being. This point is significant in respect of Heidegger's condemnation of reason. The purpose of Heidegger's attack was to undermine our fixation with beings and expose reason's limitations regarding conditionality. If the condition of beings is beyond beings, then it is credible to suppose that it also beyond reason. Heidegger, therefore, attempts to approach the condition via other means, and I suggest that Heidegger's identification of being and nothing occurs beyond the jurisdiction of beings and therefore beyond causal relations and rational critique. At this instant, metaphysical convention breaks down and this is the situation that Heidegger wants to inspire. Heidegger is not attempting to make nothing appear as something, he is using the nothing to expose the limits of reason but claims that this path does not terminate in meaninglessness. Rather than conclude in a monism of nothing, Heidegger is following the lead of Schelling in rejecting rational categories and attempting to speak of the unintelligible that is beyond reason. In seeking the reason for beings we are led away from them, as it were, into the 'nothing'.¹⁴⁹

[T]his incomprehensibility, this active resistance to all thinking, this effectual darkness, this positive inclination to obscurity. [Previous philosophy] would have preferred to get rid of the uncomfortable altogether, to dissolve the unintelligible completely into understanding or (like Leibniz) into representation.¹⁵⁰

Like Schelling, Heidegger is attempting to correct a philosophical flaw that occurs when we struggle to penetrate into the origin of things through reasoned argument. This fails to provide for a true distinction between beings and their condition and also conceals the condition itself by covering over the radical nature of this thought with rational edifices. The enmity Heidegger displays toward this manner of thinking suggests that he is hostile to a purely immanent ontology. For Heidegger, the

¹⁴⁸ Connor Cunningham, *The Genealogy of Nihilism* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 131-154.

¹⁴⁹ Polt, 'The Question of Nothing,' p. 66.

¹⁵⁰ Schelling, F.W.J., *Schellings Werke*, ed. M. Schröter (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1927) 4:588: unfinished draft to *Ages of the World*, cited in Polt, 'The Question of Nothing,' p. 66.

origin of beings cannot be another being; hence transition is still required, as is the necessary activity of transcendence. If we are to name Heidegger's attempt to reveal the condition of beings in *What is Metaphysics?*, then he appears to be describing a *transcendent ontology*.

However, this analysis is challenged by Rosen's claim that we are encountering an *immanent transcendence* in Heidegger's thought.¹⁵¹ Rosen's concentrates on the logical implications of rejecting an 'absolute nothing' in favour of Heidegger's qualified nothing that has a distinction function. However, because the nothing is not absolutely nothing it 'exists' and must be a thing, a 'countable'. Rosen describes absolute nothingness as being truly uncountable and hence infinite. Therefore, *das Nichts* is the 'other of the *nihil absolutum*'. Moreover, as we have now described both the thesis and antithesis of the nothing, and also because Heidegger identifies nothingness with being, Rosen deduces that there are two alternatives: the finite (being and nothing) and the infinite (absolute nothingness). We have been drawn back into the circle of Hegelian logic. Hence, Rosen concludes that we have two choices: 'either to return to Hegel's logic of contradiction, or to abandon ontology.'¹⁵² Nonetheless, the grammar of Heidegger's argument is structured so as to bring us into confrontation with the condition for the emergence of beings, and in discarding the *nihil absolutum* (and the identification of beings with a material condition 'in being') he is describing the essence of that condition as an authentic necessity which is neither absolute nothing nor is it material being. It is in some manner the 'becoming condition,' that is, the condition that bridges the world of being and non-being. Although he is sympathetic to Heidegger's project at some junctures, it is Rosen's rational approach that lends a certain blindness to his analysis. However, the accusations of immanence and/or transcendence are germane, and if Heidegger is intent on disclosing the condition of beings, then the machinery of his method should be unearth. If transcendence is a fundamental movement in Heidegger's philosophy, then in order to investigate the allegation of immanence we can legitimately ask, what is transcended and what is given in transcendence?

Heidegger's position on transcendence states:

Holding itself out into the nothing, Dasein is in each case already beyond the beings as a whole. Such being beyond beings we call *transcendence*. If in the ground of its essence Dasein were not transcending, which now means, if it were not in advance holding itself

¹⁵¹ Rosen, 'Thinking About Nothing,' p. 132.

¹⁵² Rosen, 'Thinking About Nothing,' p. 134.

out into the nothing, then it could never adopt a stance toward beings or even toward itself.¹⁵³

Transcendence is both part of the essence of Dasein and also of the nothing. Transcendence appears to be essential for adopting a stance towards beings and towards Dasein itself (self-consciousness). Moreover, as we have understood being and nothingness to constitute an identity, the fact that transcendence is essential to the nihilating of the nothing also implies that transcendence is fundamental to being. While this explanation appears to furnish Habermas with more evidence of Heidegger's basic metaphysical orientation, Heidegger claims he is uncovering the *activities* of being that are required to bring beings 'to' Dasein and therefore to appearance. Therefore, Heidegger asserts that he is explicating the 'essence' of the nothing (and hence being) owing to it being a *condition for the emergence of beings*. The essence of the nothing comprises of transcendence. Consequently, nihilation *is* the 'transcendence of the nothing,' and the essence of the nothing—that which separates it from all other 'entities' or nonentities—consists in revealing its 'existence' through transcendence. The nothing is required to indicate its 'presence' through the activity of nihilation.

Heidegger portrays much of Western thought as a static tradition that is prone to separate essence from existence through methodological errors and contrasts this narrative with an active account of essence. An active description of essence replaces the essence of traditional metaphysics, which could be described as the unchanging permanence in time. Heidegger supplants this description with a temporalised essence which 'acts' in time. Heidegger's methodology alludes to a foundational problem in traditional metaphysics: if we are hoping to describe the essence of a thing through naming attributes and then seeking to unify those attributes through time, then a foundational structure is required that enables this process to emerge. If we cannot account for how this process emerges, then our methodology is in error. For Heidegger, this process is problematic at the level of the condition of beings. If we are asking the ground of beings to reveal its essence in the same manner as a tree or an attribute such as virtue, then we are asking something to disclose itself as that which it is not: we are asking that which is not a being to display the same characteristics as a being. Ground does not necessarily have attributes or unity in the manner of beings. It is not necessarily a stable phenomenon nor is it necessarily an unchanging presence in time.

¹⁵³ Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?' p. 91.

For Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, beings, entities and presence itself require time. The noun is replaced by a verb-based definition of an 'entity' that is known through its effects: being 'beings,' essence 'essences,' a thing 'things'. It is this form of essence that Heidegger hopes to describe when expounding statements such as 'the nothing nihilates'. Furthermore, Heidegger's notion of transcendence is also consistent with this definition of essence. The fact that the nothing transcends conveys the nothing as a function of its activity or, to be more precise, activity *is* the essence of the nothing. As the activity in question is transcendence, then so too is transcendence the 'essence of the nothing'. A relation opens up whereby the nothing communicates itself to us through the disclosure (one could almost say through the 'use of') its essence: the activity of nihilation as transcendence, the transcendence of the activity of nihilation. The elements of Heidegger's analysis merge into one transcending-nihilating-activity.

Heidegger appears to have dealt with the problem of transition raised above by defining transcendence as existing within the essence of the nothing: the nothing both unites and separates, reveals and conceals as part of its essential activity. The thought is radical because it seems to demand that the essence of fundamental ontology should include the activity (or existence) of transcendence. However, this account resembles a speculative description of God that includes God's existence within His essence without contradicting the fact that God is not a being among others. While Heidegger's narrative of the nothing provides an alternative to some of the foundational problem in the Western tradition, as we have discovered, it is not without its own difficulties. Nevertheless, the redeeming moment in Heidegger's position springs from the fact that beings in the world are an essential element of his ontology. It makes no sense to talk of the nothing without beings. Once you are interested in beings a set of problems arise such as 'what do things have in common?' and 'what causes things to exist?' and talk of the nothing is a fruitful way of attending to these problems. What is most apparent to Dasein is that there is not nothing, but rather there is being. That experience requires elucidation. Although an absolute nothing remains a conceptual possibility, it has no place in experience. While language begins to fail the description, Heidegger's nothing has 'form' and 'function,' it displays the characteristics of a 'what,' a 'something' that is not a being. Moreover, our enquiry into the nothing suggests that existence function with a form of necessity that completes the activity of being and nothingness. Transcendence, then, is not an activity of 'surpassing' or 'going between' as such (whether between God and man or being and beings); transcendence, for Heidegger,

is an ontological activity that is required by the essential activity of each of its parts: its embodiment is 'systematic'.

When the question of the nothing is approached in terms of the fundamental problems that it addresses, it becomes clear that Heidegger is seeking to transform foundational concepts in the metaphysics. Through pursuing the nothing Heidegger is also overcoming long-held beliefs or misconceptions that have sustained Western thought since its inception. Consequently, a *salto mortale* between the real and the ideal or the finite and the infinite is not required, as the separation between being and beings is no longer absolute and the ontological ground of beings is nearer and more essential to existence than a radical separation would first suppose.

4. On the Essence of Ground

This chapter will detail Heidegger's attempt to describe the whole of beings in terms of origin or ground. A central concern is the principle of sufficient reason that appears to describe beings in causal relations that terminate in a rational ground. As traditional metaphysics becomes problematic for Heidegger, the categories and concepts that metaphysics has rested upon are re-examined. I analyse the principle of sufficient reason as a principle of ground and explains how theological and philosophical attempts to ground a sequence are often unsatisfactory. I demonstrate Heidegger's wish to release the principle of sufficient reason from logical and causal associations and explain the principle of sufficient reason as an ontological principle that relates to transcendence and truth.

4.1 The Principle of Sufficient Reason

The treatise, *On the Essence of Ground*, is directly linked with the lecture *What is Metaphysics?* in the 1949 preface to the third edition of *Pathmarks* where Heidegger explains that both pieces were written in 1928 with the purpose of tackling separate but related issues: *What is Metaphysics?* addresses the nothing, whereas *On the Essence of Ground* names the ontological difference.¹⁵⁴ *On the Essence of Ground* is split into three sections: (1) The Problem of Ground, (2) Transcendence as the Domain of the Question Concerning the Essence of Ground, and (3) On the Essence of Ground. These themes appeared in *What is Metaphysics?* as a necessary outcome of deconstructing the question of being into its elemental parts.

Heidegger approaches the ontological difference through the problem of ground and its relation to transcendence. The perplexing situation presented to a reader of *On the Essence of Ground* is that that relationship is associated with several other historical problems that do not directly concern themselves with the domain of transcendence: Aristotle's thought on first principles and first causes, Kant's highest principle of synthetic judgement, Husserl's theory of intentionality and, primarily,

¹⁵⁴ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' *Pathmarks*, p. 97.

Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason.¹⁵⁵ At first glance it is not at all clear why Heidegger should take this path and we are left with the task of connecting the diverse components ourselves. In particular, the principle of sufficient reason creates bewilderment, as it is generally associated with causal reasoning of a type that Heidegger firmly opposed in *Being and Time*. Moreover, if the principle of sufficient reason is to be correlated with causal origins, then it has not been made explicit that Heidegger regards being to be the *cause of beings*. To hold that being has a direct causal association with the world of beings would be to create a host of transitional problems of the type that have been indicated in the chapters above. Heidegger generally attempts to use words such as 'origin,' 'emergence' and 'condition' when referring to being, rather than alluding to a causal derivation. Why does Heidegger seek to associate the problem of ground with the principle of sufficient reason?

As Heidegger suggests, the history of philosophy provides an explanation for the appearance of the principle. Aristotle, Crusius, Schopenhauer, Kant and Schelling are introduced in accordance with the 'principle of reason' or 'ground'.¹⁵⁶ To this we may add Locke, Berkeley, Spinoza and Hume.¹⁵⁷ All of the thinkers mentioned utilise the principle of sufficient reason as a principle of causality, or else employ the principle to deny the logical consequences of causation.

To restate the problem: generally understood, the principle of sufficient reason asserts that *nothing comes from nothing or nothing is without reason*. This is to suggest that an explanatory account of all things is possible, and hence nothing happens in the universe without a reason for it occurring in one way rather than another. The causes for such events are necessary and could not be otherwise. One implication of this statement is that there is a series of causal events occurring in the universe that can be traced backwards *ad infinitum*. However, the simple paradox that is presented to us is that if there is an infinite series of events, what begins those events? Existence is required to have an origin:

¹⁵⁵ Christopher Macann, 'The Essence of Transcendence,' *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments, Vol. III: Language*, ed. C. Macann (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 132.

¹⁵⁶ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' pp. 98-99.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, (Oxford: Penguin Classics, 2004) Book II, 26; George Berkeley, 'Principles of Human Knowledge,' *Philosophical Works* (London: Everyman, 1996). Part 1, §25-26; Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics & Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect and Selected Letters*, trans. S. Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992) Ethics, Part I, Axiom 4, Part V, Axiom 1 & 2; David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Book I, 3, 3; I, 3, 6; I, 3, 14.

nothing comes from nothing. We are presented with the need for an origin of things which can also be resolved by a 'prime mover,' which is the origin of everything but does not itself require an origin.¹⁵⁸ The principle of sufficient reason has served as the method by which 'reason' and 'ground' are explicitly related to each other in thinkers such as Spinoza and Leibniz, where the term 'substance' serves as a rational and causal ground. For Spinoza, substance is the necessary ground of all things in nature. Substance is the causal origin of world and nature and its productive expansion becomes world in time.¹⁵⁹ For Leibniz too, substance, as the unitary monad, grounds his thought.¹⁶⁰ The problem thinkers have with an openly causal description of the world is why the ground so described is the 'final ground'. What prevents an infinite regress whereby we can ask questions such as, what is the cause of substance?

A traditional solution to this problem is to locate the origin or ground of causality in a 'self-causing cause,' which is deemed to 'ground' the causal sequence. However, critics of this solution argue that a self-ground contradicts the very principle on which it is founded, for a self-causing cause does not appear to have a cause that it originates from; hence it is conditioned by 'nothing'.¹⁶¹ In the case of the first cause, it appears that 'something' comes from 'nothing'. Therefore, there is at least one instance that does not comply with the principle and the principle is judged to be inadequate. Another traditional solution is to locate the first cause outside of the causal sequence in an infinite Being. The causal sequence may itself be infinite within the material universe nevertheless that universe relies on an infinite God for its origin who is not subject to causal laws. While this provides some relief it also presents fresh problems concerning the relationship between the infinite and the finite that we have been describing in terms of 'problems of transition'. What appears to be a widespread feature of theological and philosophical thinking concerning the principle of sufficient reason is the conflation of logical grounds with causal origins whereby the logic of necessity, which requires logical foundations,

¹⁵⁸ Kant's Antinomies specifically deal with these paradoxes of reason. See *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 426/B 454 – A 461/B 489.

¹⁵⁹ See Jonathan Bennett, 'Spinoza's Metaphysics,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. D. Garret (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 61-88.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'The Monadology' in *Philosophical Writings* (London: Dent, 1934), §32.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza' (1785), in *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. G. di Giovanni, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1994), pp. 217-28. Also Paul Franks, 'All or Nothing: Systematicity and Nihilism in Jacobi, Reinhold and Maimon,' in *The Cambridge Guide to German Idealism*, ed. K. Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 97-100.

contaminates the empirical world of causal observation.¹⁶² This is not a problem in itself, given that the observation of causal sequence also suggests some form of origin. More exactly, what is at issue is the 'quality' of origin or cause that is determined by a rational grounding. What is implied is that the difficulty we encounter when seeking to think grounds is a rational difficulty that can be 'resolved' by philosophical or theological thought. A problem of transition then warns of an error or deficiency that has occurred in our thinking rather than in the substance of being itself. What is required is a *better* or *more rational* explanation that finally resolves the paradox.

Spinoza's solution to the problem of transition is to abolish it. He observes that the infinite cannot determine the finite. If an attribute of God serves as a limiting factor, then the determinate entity would also be eternal as all attributes of God are eternal. If this were not the case, a 'space' or 'time period' would exist that mediates between the infinite and the finite and hence the infinite would no longer be the immediate cause of the finite.¹⁶³ For Spinoza, finite objects can only be limited by other finite objects. Consequently, he identifies the difficulty of moving between general or infinite propositions concerning the universe and the finite particulars involved in that universe. His solution is to unify God and nature in substance thus making the causal origin of things *internal* to the universe. The infinite regress of the causal sequence is described as one of the attributes of infinite substance or God.

Leibniz's position is more complex. As a rationalist, his instinct is to give the logical relation of ground and consequent primacy over the causal relations of empirical experience. Hence, what is revealed is that ground and cause do not refer to the same object nor do they use similar methodologies. 'Ground' refers to logical ground, whereas 'cause' refers to physical causation in experience. Rationalist attempts to deduce particular effects from their causes by a priori logical analysis meet with resistance: it is not possible to know the effects of all particular empirical causes according to the laws of identity and non-contradiction alone. As Heidegger observes, it may be possible to say something like, 'The board is black,' and remain within the law of identity but in what way can a statement such as, 'The chalk falls off the table,' be analysed a priori from the relation

¹⁶² See Renato Cristin, *Heidegger and Leibniz: Reason and the Path*, trans. G. Parks (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), pp. 10-12.

¹⁶³ Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, 21.

between subject and predicate?¹⁶⁴ Leibniz shares this observation but does not denounce the trustworthiness of the principle of sufficient reason altogether. The law of non-contradiction will display truths if the denial of that truth will result in a contradiction. This is termed a necessary or 'sufficient truth of reason'. If an analysis does not reveal a contradiction, then a 'contingent truth of fact' may result. For a necessary truth of reason the contrary is impossible, for a contingent truth of fact its contrary is possible.¹⁶⁵ Contingent truths of fact do not result in 'sufficient reason' as made available to human reason; what they do reveal is the benevolence of God as the creator of a best possible universe. Only in God is the sufficient reason for all things known.

Both contingent and necessary truths could only be proved by analysis, but in the case of contingent truths, first, the analysis could never be completed by a finite mind, because the relations involved are infinite in number; secondly, the ultimate ground of the truth is *moral* not logical, the opposite is not self-contradictory but incompatible with the absolute goodness and wisdom of the deity.¹⁶⁶

God, as the cause of all things, serves as the ultimate foundation of causal truths, and necessarily exists outside the series of contingent events. What Ewing names as a 'moral ground' is the assumption or belief that things exist *for a purpose*, that is, they have a reason and yet that reason happens to be outside of rational analysis. Leibniz resolves this tension by stating that all acts are indeed determined but, 'determined by an inclining, not a necessary, cause; that is, all acts are motivated but cannot be deduced logically by the law of non-contradiction.'¹⁶⁷ Leibniz thus provides a space for freedom within his solution, the logically necessary truths and the inclining contingent facts may exist side by side. The confusion of logical grounds with causal origins is a common temptation in causal arguments, but Leibniz achieves a distinction between a motivating or moral ground that does not completely give itself over to rationality, and the logical ground proper which enables the deduction of necessary consequents from an analysis of the a priori defined subject. Thus the 'proof' of the motivating force behind contingent truths of facts is given by an 'assumption' concerning the purpose of the universe, in what Jacobi would later name as 'faith' (*Glaube*).¹⁶⁸ It is for this reason that the rational proof of the existence of God holds such weight in Leibniz's philosophy. The rational

¹⁶⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 26: *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*, ed. K. Held (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1990) trans. by M. Heim as *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 31.

¹⁶⁵ Ewing, A.C., *Kant's Treatment of Causality* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trubner, 1924), p. 15ff.

¹⁶⁶ Ewing, *Kant's Treatment of Causality*, p. 18 [my stress].

¹⁶⁷ Ewing, *Kant's Treatment of Causality*, p. 20.

¹⁶⁸ Jacobi, 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza (1789),' pp. 370-78; also cf. Jacobi's preface to 'David Hume on Faith (1815),' *Main Philosophical Writings*, pp. 538-41.

proof serves as a support for the contingent status of causal relations and it is precisely this state of affairs that Kant attacks in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.¹⁶⁹ It was left to Kant to attempt to resolve the difficulty between the empirical world that assumed but could not prove the principle of causality, and the totalising vision of rationalist thought that ultimately required an infinite being to uphold its claims.¹⁷⁰

This brief insight into the role of the principle of sufficient reason explains how reason and ground emerge from indefinite origins. What is less obvious is why Heidegger should *philosophically* revisit this question in order to gain insight into ground. If Heidegger is using the principle of sufficient reason to describe a self-evident causality that ultimately guides us to the 'origin of causality,' as in the case of a 'first being' or 'first cause,' the use of the principle appears puzzling. As Jürgen Habermas explains:

Ancient philosophy inherits from myth its view of the whole, but it distinguishes itself from myth by the conceptual level at which it relates everything to one. Origins are no longer recollected in narrative vividness as the primordial scene and beginning of the generational chain, as what is first *in the world*. Rather, these beginnings are removed from the dimension of space and time and abstracted into something first which, as the infinite, stands over and against the world of the finite and forms its basis.¹⁷¹

Heidegger has clearly been seeking to rid philosophy of conceptual beginnings and views any 'infinite concept' standing over and above 'finite being' as a metaphysical remnant. Rather, he has sought to reposition philosophy back into space, time and history and liberate thinking from conceptual origins that associate themselves with the infinite. Nonetheless, he is also attempting to 'philosophise,' that is, he is not seeking a causal 'generative chain' that links beings to a first being in the manner of a positive science; his thought aims at describing primordial or foundational structures of the world: ground. 'Any illumination of essence that is a *philosophizing* one, i.e., an intrinsically *finite* endeavour, must also necessarily always testify to that *nonessence* that drives *human* essence in its entire essence.'¹⁷² Heidegger's thought on the ground of being describes an essence that is informed

¹⁶⁹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 583-A 645/B 611-B 673.

¹⁷⁰ For background to this debate see Karl Ameriks 'Introduction: Interpreting German Idealism,' in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. K. Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-17; Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, ed. D. S. Pacini (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 15-64; Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism 1781-1801* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 2002), passim; K. Ameriks & D. Sturma (eds.) *The Modern Subject: Conceptions of the Self in Classical German Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), esp. pp. 11-30, 31-46.

¹⁷¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, trans. W.M. Hohengarten (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992) pp. 29-30.

¹⁷² Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 99.

by a 'nonessence' to be located somewhere in the domain of transcendence. A 'nonessence' replaces the infinite concept. Heidegger hopes to demonstrate that the essence of ground does not display itself as an essence *of reason*. That is, essence is not a being or a concept. However, the difficulties involved in revealing the ground of beings without revealing an infinite or abstractly foundational 'concept' are acute, how are we to recognise something that displays itself devoid of essence?

Heidegger responds to this dilemma by pursuing his assault on reason. The principle of sufficient reason terminates in metaphysical paradoxes because it has assumed the pretext of a rational principle concerning beings. Beings and the principle of sufficient reason corroborate one another, because reason requires beings to think and effect causal relations. *What is Metaphysics?* suggests that beings are in fact obstacles to the condition of beings. To reject beings as a pathway to the condition of beings upsets the causal logic that traditional metaphysics has relied upon for a foundation. This presents Heidegger with a problem. That is, it can be argued that we are only made aware of the possibility of 'conditions' by experiencing beings and then tracing a causal path back to a 'first being' or 'condition of beings'.¹⁷³ Hence, according to Heidegger's own phenomenological method, it makes little sense to declare that beings are in fact a hindrance to the disclosure of the condition of beings. The ontological difference appears to be linked with the condition for the 'emergence of beings'. Therefore, being is, in some manner, the 'cause' or 'ground' of beings. The ontological difference relates to the existence of beings, their condition and the connection between these two elements. Evidently, the terms 'cause' and 'condition' require clarification.

4.2 The Foundation of Reason

The investigation into the essence of ground opens with the 1928 lecture course *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*. This course represents a decisive shift in Heidegger's thought as it furnishes Heidegger with many of the crucial elements of his later philosophy. He includes two sections of the course in *Pathmarks*, the collection that Heidegger himself chose to plot his path of thinking: *From the Last Marburg Lecture Course* and the reworked *On the Essence of Ground*.¹⁷⁴ Additionally, the course moves away from *Being and Time*'s 'subjective' account of freedom as *Dasein*'s possibility 'to

¹⁷³ Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 584/B 612.

¹⁷⁴ Heidegger, 'From the Last Marburg Lecture Course,' *Pathmarks*, pp. 63-81.

be itself'. A notion of freedom is developed in relation to truth and the opening up of horizons of disclosure, of a primordial 'being-true,' that is generally associated with the 1930 essay *On the Essence of Truth*, but which is also contained in the 1928 lecture course.¹⁷⁵ *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, therefore, undertakes the task of breaking down Leibniz's philosophy into constituent parts in order to expose a prior ground to logic and present that ground as being in relation to temporality and truth. We will follow the argument of the treatise *On the Essence of Reason*, which is based upon this extended work, as it advances a more concise line of reasoning. The association that Heidegger then makes with truth will be analysed via the essay *On the Essence of Truth*. We will, however, refer to the lecture course where appropriate.

The relationship between logic and ground is presented as a question of thinking and that which makes thinking possible.

Thinking is in each case thinking about objects, and that means about beings. As a thinking about something, thinking stands in a relationship to beings. How are thinking and beings related? Thinking is itself an activity of Dasein and is thereby a way of being—of being as a being, Dasein, toward other beings. If thinking becomes our theme, then ontological relationships become thereby thematic.¹⁷⁶

As regards the history of modern philosophy, the relationship between thought and world is one where thought grounds metaphysics and therefore ontology and not vice-versa. Since Descartes founded existence upon the *cogito*, philosophy proceeds from thought to world and not from world or being to thought. The relationship between thought and being can be traced to theological and Platonic origins that prioritise 'rational' thought over being, and Heidegger cites Leibniz as the ultimate exponent of epistemological rationalism through his 'discovery' of the principle of sufficient reason as the 'supreme principle' of philosophy: *nothing is without reason or every being has a reason*.

The principle 'nothing is without reason' makes an assertion about beings: they are 'reasoned' or 'caused,' they do not come from nothing. The fact that the assertion states something that is held to be a 'principle,' that is, a 'rule of thought' (and, by implication, 'rule of causality') specifies that the principle is making a truth-claim concerning the way humans think or the way the world is structured. However, Heidegger points out that this truth-claim is not apparent in the principle itself; the 'truth' of

¹⁷⁵ Cf. 'On the Essence of Truth,' *Pathmarks*, pp. 136-154.

¹⁷⁶ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, p. 27.

the principle is 'presupposed'.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, what is achieved is the realisation that the principle of reason is in relation to truth and, consequently, truth requires a gauge or measure when determining the validity of its claims. Both reason and truth require a ground that establishes the correctness of its claims.

Heidegger argues that the history of logic, as it begins with Plato and Aristotle, turns the grounding of truth away from ontological categories and toward a truth of assertion and the correctness of propositional statements as found in judgements.¹⁷⁸ This is what became known as 'formal logic,' the correctness of propositional judgements with the objects of those judgements, a correspondence theory of truth. Leibniz too conceives truth as assertion of propositional judgements.¹⁷⁹ Against this formal logic Heidegger wishes to contrast a 'philosophical logic,' which is grounded in ontology.¹⁸⁰ In other words, Heidegger is asking: is not logic founded upon an ontology rather than ontology being founded on logic? Thus, the question follows: is the principle of reason or ground a 'logical' or 'metaphysical' principle?

The question could be reduced to a rudimentary question concerning the relation between 'knowledge' and 'cause,' where logic may be associated with knowledge and cause with metaphysics. Heidegger does not consider this relationship to be coincidental as the philosophical origins of knowledge are presumed to replace the more mythical causal explanation of reality. However, with the onset of scientific inquiry and the formalisation of reason into a 'supreme principle,' that appears to establish both 'first cause' and 'origin,' the relation between the two is somewhat confused. Indeed, Kant's First Critique set out to untangle the connection between a mechanistic view of causality and the possibility of philosophical thinking.¹⁸¹ Heidegger explains:

It is no accident that the idea of ground first emerges as 'cause' and as 'argument' (as the ground for maintaining an assertion, the grounds of proof), and both are designated by 'αἰτία' [cause]. Why is it not accidental? First, because the idea of cause and causation emerge immediately and urgently, on account of our being engaged in the world in producing one being from another, i.e., in the know-how related to producing, in τέχνη [technē]. Another reason is that beings show themselves at once as that which speech is about, i.e., as emerging in λόγος [logos], in the ἐπιστήμη [epistēmē, science]

¹⁷⁷ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p.100.

¹⁷⁸ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, p. 4.

¹⁷⁹ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 102; pp. 27-69.

¹⁸⁰ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁸¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Preface, A ix-x.

concerned with 'truth'. Understood in this way, *λόγος* with its *τί ἐστίν* [what it is] is related to *ἰδέα* [idea], to *εἶδη* [form]. We are then referred at once from *τέχνη*, through *αἴτιον* [cause] as *ἀρχή* [reason, origin] to *εἶδος* [specific form].¹⁸²

Heidegger envisages the *logos* and *technē* of philosophical activity as relating to the problem of ground. Therefore, the metaphysical activities of producing (cause and effect) and saying (thinking) are problems that relate to beings and hence the ground of beings. However, owing to the methodology by which we come into contact with beings, world and speech, we are always drawn to beings as the concurrent 'cause' and 'subject' of our comportment toward the world. The dominance that speech exerts, as propositional logic, over our thinking is due to the stance that *logos* and *technē* effect toward and against beings themselves. An illegitimate separation, an over and against beings, appears to be produced through the concealing of a more fundamental relation that gives both the human being and world its ground. Heidegger describes this relation through the unifying or, rather, the bestowing character of being. The grounding element of world and Dasein is being, yet it is not clear what that actually means or how that activity is to be conceived. The question remains, how do knowledge and cause relate to truth and reason if not through the principle of sufficient reason? If Heidegger is unsatisfied with formal philosophical logic, with what will he replace it?

Thus a predicate, or consequent, is always present in a subject, or antecedent; and in this fact consists the universal nature of truth, or the connection between the terms of the assertion, as Aristotle has also observed. This connection and inclusion of the predicate in the subject is explicit in relations of identity. In all other relations it is implicit and is revealed through an analysis of notions, upon which a priori demonstration is based.

...From these things, which have not been adequately considered due to their great simplicity, there follow many other things of great importance. Indeed, from them there at once arises the familiar axiom: "Nothing is without reason," or "there is no effect without a cause." If the axiom did not hold, there might be a truth that could not be proved a priori, i.e., which could not be resolved into relations of identity; and this is contrary to the nature of truth, which is always identical, whether explicitly or implicitly.¹⁸³

The quotation covers an extensive area of Leibniz's work, but specifically provides a connection between the principle of sufficient reason and truth. The relation between the principle of identity and the principle of sufficient reason is expressed as the latter principle being contingent upon the former. The principle of sufficient reason is dependent upon the 'prior' identity of subject and predicate (and, therefore, the related laws of thought: the principle of non-contradiction and the law of the excluded

¹⁸² Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, pp. 117-18.

¹⁸³ Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, *Primae Veritates*, in *Opusculæ et Fragments inédits de Leibniz*, ed. L. Couturat (1903), pp. 518ff. Cited in Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' pp. 101-02.

middle). It then follows that the principle of sufficient reason is founded on truth, as the identity of subject and predicate is what stands for truth in predicate logic. This appears to follow a more orthodox rationalist position than our exposition provided above, whereby the causal relation is predicated upon the logical relation of ground and consequent. A traditional interpretation of Leibniz's principles may associate the law of identity with a truth of reasoning and the principle of sufficient reason with contingent truths of fact. Here, however, Heidegger appears happy to follow the interpretation that the contingent truths of fact, which are associated with causality, are dependent upon a necessary logical ground. In spite of this, the 'truth' or 'ground' that Heidegger hopes to expose through the principle of identity is a non-rational ground that leaves the logical principle behind.¹⁸⁴

How Heidegger comes to terms with this uncharacteristic support of rational grounding is by sidestepping both the logical and causal arguments. The principle of identity states that if something is to be identical with something else, then this identity must base itself on the self-identity of predicate logic (what can be said of the subject in the predicate is necessarily contained in the subject). Likewise, the correspondence theory of truth (a thought/assertion being identical with the object it represents) also requires a certain form of identity. Yet, Heidegger contends that both forms of thought require a 'something' on which to think. That something Heidegger names as beings. One has to know what a being is before the truth of assertion can commence; this requires 'selfhood,' the ability to differentiate oneself from the thing in question and that thing from any other kind of thing. Although intimately related, the two theories are not quite the same.

One could argue that the direction each theory travels is different, the correspondence theory claiming that the mind conforms to the world, and the law of identity stating that the identity of the subject must conform to itself, thus preparing the way for Kant's claim that the world must conform to mind. The correspondence theory of truth is related to empiricism and the sceptical criticism that this theory has attracted, whereas the principle of identity (which is not excluded from a correspondence theory of

¹⁸⁴ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, pp. 52ff. Heidegger is excited by Leibniz's monadic view of substance. Leibniz's substance is grounding precisely because originary force/spontaneity is part of the essence of substance—substance's natural primary condition is that of dynamism rather than rest. Only an impeding power/structure can limit the drive of substance. Hence Leibniz uses Aristotelian notions of substance to overcome Aristotelian notions of rest and motion. Dynamic movement becomes the originary state of ground.

truth) is, in the modern period, based upon the ground of consciousness. Through suggesting that identity and reason are grounded by something other than the ground of consciousness, Heidegger is destabilising the assumptions of the tradition. If the principle of identity and the correspondence theory of truth rely on beings for their truth-claims, then what grounds beings and hence truth? Is philosophy to rethink its foundation?

Heidegger argues that the principle of identity and the 'self-evident' truth that it represents discloses a more originary temporal truth. The a priori principle of identity does *not* specify a truth of reasoning independent of sense experience.

In ancient ontology (Aristotle), being (as *ιδέα* and *γένος*), or that which defines a being as a being, is said to be *πρότερον* [earlier, prior] than beings, and something prior in a unique way. As *πρότερον φύσει* [prior by nature], is to be distinguished from the *πρότερον γνώσει* [what is prior by knowledge], the *πρότερον πρὸς ἡμᾶς* [prior with regard to us]. Being is earlier than beings; this "earlier than," attributed to being, is a distinguishing "feature," and it does not apply to *γνώσις* [knowledge], as the ordering of out conceptualization of beings.¹⁸⁵

Heidegger uses Aristotle to describe two basic possibilities of causality: what is epistemological primary for a subject and what is 'objectivity' prior in time and nature. To a philosophy based on the ground of consciousness, thought and beings appear *to consciousness* as foremost in time. Hence thought and logic create the impression of being first in time. For Heidegger, this reveals the ontological principle: being precedes beings. In spite of this, Heidegger leaves Aristotle's concept of being or form (*ιδέα*) as the inherent and prior ordering of matter behind when discussing being as the prior ground of beings. 'Being is neither prior ontically nor logically, but prior in a primordial sense that precedes both.'¹⁸⁶ Heidegger resists a logical or causal prioritisation of the factual or worldly over the conceptual, for to return to an idealist or empiricist interpretation of beings over thought would not provide a relation between being, truth and ground. Heidegger requires a mediating or unifying structure that grounds being and beings. This relation is described as truth.

The rational principle, raised by Leibniz, 'grounds' or 'is grounded in' the notion of truth as described by the principle of identity. Truth is a relationship between subject and object, mind and world, or cause and effect. Truths are resolved into relations of identity; if they cannot be resolved, then they are

¹⁸⁵ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, p. 146.

¹⁸⁶ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, p. 147.

not 'true'. The inference is that there are no 'untrue beings'. If there were untrue beings, then they would not be equal to themselves and simply not 'be'. Identity is the essence of propositional truth. Truth endures and hence so does the rational principle which springs from this truth. Once propositional truth and ground are brought into proximity with each other, Heidegger marks the relation as derivative. The manifestation of beings is necessarily prior to predication. Beings must first be manifest before any predication can occur. Therefore, Heidegger elevates Aristotle's causal priority of natural beings over the epistemological knowledge of beings into an ontological priority regarding the manifestation of beings as a whole. The principle of sufficient reason, that ostensibly supports propositional identity, is disclosed as an ontological principle of beings or ground: *der Satz vom Grund*.¹⁸⁷

An ontological progression then follows. The fact that beings can appear and be recognised as beings rests upon a prior understanding of what a being is, which in turn is dependent upon a prior disclosure of beings as a whole and the condition for the emergence of those beings: being. Only after the revealing of the ontological difference can *Dasein* 'see' beings in their manifestation. The principle of sufficient reason and propositional truth are grounded in the question of being. '*Unveiledness of being first makes possible the manifestation of beings*. This unveiledness, as truth concerning being, is termed *ontological truth*.'¹⁸⁸

The essence of truth as *alêtheia* or unconcealment (*Unveborgenheit*) is fully explicated in chapter 5. However, as regards the essence of ground, the essence of truth is disclosed in the ontological difference and the distinction between the truth of beings and the truth of being.

The essence of truth in general, which is thus necessarily forked in terms of the ontic and the ontological, is possible only together with the irruption of this distinction. And if what is distinctive about *Dasein* indeed lies in the fact that in understanding being it comports itself toward beings, then *that* potential for distinguishing in which the ontological difference becomes factual must have sunk the roots of its own possibility

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Cristin, *Heidegger and Leibniz*, pp. 10-12. Cristin informs us that uncertainty surrounding the logical or causal consequence of ground is evident in the German tradition since at least the birth of German mysticism in the 14th and 15th centuries and the translation of Latin terms into German, *Grund* being used as *Grund der Seele*, bottom of the soul. 'As a metaphor for God, *Grund* defines the unreachable, undefinable and most perfect essence of God. In this sense mysticism achieves the hyperbolic connection between *Grund* and *Abgrund*, between foundation and abyss; we find an original and absolutely new ontological version of this in Heidegger.'

¹⁸⁸ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 104.

in the ground of the essence of Dasein. By way of anticipation, we shall call this ground of the ontological difference the *transcendence* of Dasein.¹⁸⁹

The ability to discern difference is rooted in the 'ground of the essence of Dasein'. In a characteristic move the 'essence of ground' cannot be supplied conceptually as a 'what it is' of traditional philosophy. Essence as a 'what a thing is' can only be approached via the 'ground of the essence' of a particular being, that of Dasein, the being that the ontological difference relates to. The ground of this essence is the *transcendence* of Dasein. Therefore, through exposing the principle of sufficient reason as an ontological principle correlating beings with the condition of beings, Heidegger describes the principle of reason as a principle that contends with transition. The transition concerns being and beings and the transcendence or synthesis that is required for beings to be manifest. Hence the principle of reason recounts Dasein as a component of ontological transcendence.

4.3 Transcendence and Ground

Heidegger envisages the problem of ground to be located in the more original problem concerning the 'essence of transcendence'.¹⁹⁰ We encountered this term in *What is Metaphysics?* where Heidegger explained the essential function that transcendence performs in relation to the nothing. Transcendence directs Dasein to the nothing through the ontological category of Angst, through which the ontological difference between being and beings is revealed. Transcendence is directly related to the problem of transition that the ontological distinction first describes. The diametrical relationship is also a symbiotic one, where the division between being and beings, which the ontological distinction makes plain, only exists through Dasein *standing in transcendence*. That is, if Dasein was not, as a being, standing in a transcendent relation to being it would not be able to recognise the absolute necessity of the ontological distinction between itself as a being and the condition for that occurrence. The recognition of the problem of transition is dependent on the prior opening of that relation through transcendence. It is for this reason that Macann suggests that the theme of nothingness in *What is Metaphysics?* is only a 'strategy' and not a fundamental constituent of Dasein in order 'to get at the idea of being as a whole, or being as such,' it is the transcendent relations that are primary.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 106.

¹⁹⁰ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 106.

¹⁹¹ Macann, 'The Essence of Transcendence,' p. 130.

On the Essence of Ground builds on this description and locates transcendence not in a spatial surpassing of limits or boundaries but in the fundamental constitution of Dasein as a 'surpassing that makes possible such a thing as existence in general'. Transcendence becomes so central to the being of Dasein that 'to be a subject means to be a being in and as transcendence'.¹⁹² However, as a non-spatial and non-conceptual activity, transcendence does not describe the source of created objects which then confront and oppose each other. For Heidegger, transcendence is not the origin of subject-object relations, an error that has affected a common understanding of transcendence as a surpassing of limits or a crossing of boundaries founded on subject-object relations. 'What is surpassed is precisely and solely *beings themselves*, indeed every being that can be or become unconcealed for Dasein, thus *including precisely* that being as which "it itself" exists.'¹⁹³ Thus, through the surpassing that aims at going beyond all beings Dasein comes across itself as itself. 'Transcendence constitutes selfhood.' In a move that contains an absolute logic relating to the principle of identity, the principle of non-contradiction and the law of the excluded middle, the selfhood of Dasein is also made known via all the beings that Dasein is *not*. Thus transcendence establishes *self-identity*. As the possessor of selfhood and the ontological distinction, Dasein can now distinguish between what it is and what it is not. The surpassing of all beings enables the founding of the being Dasein. Once this is established Dasein can comport itself toward other beings.

However, in *On the Essence of Ground*, Heidegger states that this surpassing occurs as a whole and never merely at certain times, and acquires such a foundational moment in Heidegger's description that it 'make(s) possible such a thing as *existence in general*'. In *What is Metaphysics?* Angst brought Dasein before the nothing and opened it to the original 'perception' that beings exist at all rather than there being nothing. This vital instant in the history of Dasein awakens it to beings as a whole and hence the question of being. Furthermore, it appears precisely as a 'moment' in being and, therefore, subsequent to the emergence of beings. Even if this moment is primordial, it still has a posterior quality in comparison with the transcendence that we encounter in *On the Essence of Ground*, which is described as a foundational necessity for existence in general.

¹⁹² Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 108.

¹⁹³ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 108.

Heidegger continues by explaining that the comportment towards other beings is not a re-enactment of a subject-object relation, rather it is the determination of what we call world and that Dasein itself is in that unity called world.

We name *world* as that *toward which* Dasein as such transcends, and shall now determine transcendence as *being-in-the-world*. World co-constitutes the unitary structure of transcendence; as belonging to this structure, the concept of world may be called *transcendental*. This term names all that belongs essentially to transcendence and bears its intrinsic possibility thanks to such transcendence. And it is for this reason that an elucidation and interpretation of transcendence may be called a “transcendental” exposition.¹⁹⁴

In a direct criticism of the Kantian (and Husserlian) term that served to limit knowledge precisely to that which does not surpass and go beyond human experience, Heidegger calls the term ‘transcendental’ back into the structure of transcendence. The account of authentic selfhood and hermeneutic structures that constitute a major part of *Being and Time* appear to be opening up into a unitary description of transcendence as *being-in-relation-to-Dasein-in-relation-to-being-in-the-world*. Transcendence means then that the essential constitution of Dasein is as a being-in-the-world which transcends: ‘[I]t *can be* as existing, i.e., as Dasein, only *because* its essential constitution lies in being-in-the-world’. To mark this necessity Heidegger states, ‘The thesis: To the essence of Dasein as such belongs being-in-the-world, contains the problem of transcendence.’¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, once that is established Heidegger suggests that the ‘positive problem of transcendence’ remains, which is to describe how Dasein ‘relates’ to the world and the ground that is still, as yet, not described. Heidegger then gives an account of the concept of world in Greek thought and Christian theology.¹⁹⁶

The central thesis offered is that the Greek world had a relational conception of world as cosmos (*χόσμος*) that does not describe a particular being but instead signifies a ‘state of affairs’ that is not a sum of its parts; hence, it cannot be divided into fragmentary particulars. A ‘state of affairs’ is not reducible to a being, it is a relational activity or structure that includes all beings in its reach. A shared world for beings is required in advance of particularisation otherwise particular beings must form their own relations (or non-relations), which may result in chaos. However, that shared structure is a ‘world’ as distinct from a totality of entities, it is a world *for Dasein* and in which Dasein is placed through transcendence. The idea of a shared structure to reality develops further in Heidegger’s later

¹⁹⁴ Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Ground,’ p. 109.

¹⁹⁵ Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Ground,’ p. 111.

¹⁹⁶ Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Ground,’ pp. 111-25.

philosophy, not least the so-called linguistic turn that describes language as a shared resource. A shared world arrests the subject-object orientation of philosophical history by placing all beings inside a relational whole.¹⁹⁷ World relates to Dasein through revealing itself to be a unified whole. Beings that are not Dasein do not possess this knowledge. The prioritisation that is given to the relation 'world' presents an 'endowment' to Dasein that encroaches upon Dasein's freedom. One cannot merely act as though one were absolutely free; any structure will provide limitations that enable a positive as well as a negative response. That Dasein can 'see,' 'know' or 'discover' a relational structure called 'world' seems to imply that there is a 'relational' way to act within this structure.

[W]hat is metaphysically essential in the more or less clearly highlighted meaning of *χόσμος*, *mundus*, world, lies in the fact that it is directed toward an interpretation of human existence [*Dasein*] in its relational whole.¹⁹⁸

This relational structure is Heidegger's being-in-the-world as a transcendent Dasein. Therefore, transcendence and Heidegger's enquiry into ground is intended to account for the principle of reason as a principle of relationality between Dasein and world. The prior nature of ontological relations does not merely describe a formal priority. It explains that the ontological principle is intended to reveal relational structures that do not originate in subjective consciousness or formal logic. Dasein exists on account of beings. Heidegger states that transcendence is not a surpassing of spatial limits or boundaries, but is instead a constituting structure that gives Dasein to the world as a being-in-the-world. Thus transcendence also relates to what we know as world.

What appears to be unsettling Heidegger is the 'how' of relations. That is, it is easy to use comfortable terms such as 'relation' and 'relationality,' yet, the words do not convey any substantial meaning. The enactment of relationality remains a mystery. Relationality requires explicit elucidation because how one thing relates to another will determine the 'essence' of that relationality. Essence is a temporal act; the relation itself is not described in the word. Hence, in order to rectify this oversight, Heidegger attempts to convey the essence of transcendence through the use of terms such as 'casting-over' or 'over-throw' [*Überwurf*], 'world-forming' [*weltbildend*] and 'occasion' [*Gelegenheit*].

Beings, such as nature in the broadest sense, could in no way become manifest unless they found *occasion* to enter into a world. This is why we speak of their possible and occasional *entry into world* [*Welteingang*]. Entry into world is not some process that

¹⁹⁷ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 112.

¹⁹⁸ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 121.

transpires in those beings that enter it, but is something that “happens” “with” beings. And such occurrence is the existing of Dasein which as existing transcends.¹⁹⁹

What does it mean for beings to find ‘occasion to enter into a world?’ It appears that the transcendence of Dasein and the entry of beings into the world are the temporalisation of a primordial occurrence of being. This is the ‘occasion’ that Heidegger seems to be expressing; transcendence is a temporal happening that provides the ‘hours and days of beings’ entry into the world’. The ‘proof’ of this account is the fact that there are beings in the world that are manifest, and only if there is something like transcendence is there the possibility for beings to enter the structure of the world. *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* is more explicit in its delivery.

Understanding-of-being [i.e. world-entry] is transcendence; all understanding-of-being, whether unthematically pre-ontological, or thematic and conceptually ontological, is transcendental. This understanding-of-being and its essential basic modes is the disclosure that resides in the ecstatic unity of temporality, in the temporalizing breaking-open of horizons. This disclosure is the metaphysically primordial being-true, the truth, which is transcendence itself, *veritas transcendentalis*. It is the condition for the possibility of every ontic-intentional truth.²⁰⁰

World-entry is the entry of beings into temporality whereby they are able to appear as beings. The entry of beings themselves appears to be required for the breaking-open of horizons. Beings break open horizons through themselves entering into temporality. The event is co-incidental, which Heidegger describes in terms of primordial truth. That truth is named as ‘transcendence itself’ and its prevailing activity is one of ‘world-disclosure’ that ultimately stands as ‘the condition for the possibility of every ontic-intentional truth’. The investigation into the logic and language of conditions arrives at transcendence as the condition for beings’ entry in the world. Nonetheless, in view of the fact that Heidegger opened the treatise *On the Essence of Ground* with the principle of sufficient reason, the status of this condition is not entirely clear. Is transcendence, as the condition for beings’ being-in-the-world, a self-grounding or unconditioned condition? Or is it something quite dissimilar to these alternatives, something that is yet to be described? It appears from our depiction that Heidegger is concerned with the central or constituting structure of the condition for beings but has not yet named the ground of this structure. If, for the moment, we take this declaration at face value, and extract from this section the awareness that transcendence is absolutely essential for the manifestation of beings, such that transcendence constitutes *the* condition for their emergence, then the question

¹⁹⁹ Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Ground,’ p. 123. Cf. *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, pp. 216ff.

²⁰⁰ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, p. 217.

Heidegger asks is, 'To what extent does there lie in transcendence the intrinsic possibility of something like ground in general?'²⁰¹

4.4 The Essence of Ground

Heidegger's attempt to re-describe the principle of reason as an ontological principle requires him to provide a unity to his 'system'. The structures that are conceived via transcendence and world appear as ontological attempts to unify Dasein in truth as disclosure of transcendent being. For Habermas, however, this does not upset the derivative nature of Heidegger's thought. The distinctions that Heidegger employs originate from Platonism and the philosophy of the subject.²⁰² Despite Heidegger claiming that transcendence constitutes an ontological category, Dasein is transcending subjective categories in order to unify with objective being. It is not obvious to critics that the 'essence of ground' in transcendence is able to provide the unity and distinction required to account for beings. The question remains, how is the ontological distinction executed?

In conjunction with *What is Metaphysics?*, we can construct the process as follows: (1) In Angst the nothing performs the task of revealing beings as a whole through the negative (and yet, positive) procedure of nihilation. (2) In being-in-the-world the ontic comportment toward beings presupposes an understanding of being, which requires a distinction between these terms. (3) In time the essence of being is revealed as an ecstatic relationship. (4) In transcendence we see the constituting structure of the manifestation of beings in the world come to the fore.

Transcendence means standing in a temporal structure that enables the manifestation of beings *and* the surpassing of those beings. Transcendence requires temporality, being-in-the-world, the nihilating of the nothing and the ontological distinction itself. And likewise, those structures require transcendence. However, what would it mean for Dasein to surpass beings in a *positive* sense? If nihilation is seen as a 'negative surpassing' that reveals beings as a whole through Dasein 'holding itself out into the

²⁰¹ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' pp. 125.

²⁰² Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985) trans. by F. Lawrence as *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, (Cambridge, Ma: MIT Press, 1987), p. 152.

nothing,' then what would a positive surpassing reveal?²⁰³ As Macann notes, the Heideggerian description of transcendence has two directions, a progressive and regressive.²⁰⁴ The regressive or negative is equated with the drive towards the condition of beings in the nihilation of the nothing and the whole that that activity reveals. The progressive procedure is the way in which Dasein comports itself toward the world and other beings. The problem with assigning these direct roles to Heidegger's descriptions is that they occur coincidentally and are always related to each other. Therefore, the (regressive) disclosure of beings as a whole does not necessarily account for *beings themselves*. To see or encounter 'beings themselves' requires a description of the positive aspect of Dasein as a being-in-the-world in relation to other positive beings that occurs simultaneously with the advancement toward the nothing. This requirement is also considered to be transcendent, as Macann explains:

By and large, and largely because, as a methodological principle, Heidegger's phenomenological descriptions take their start upon the ontic plane, the relation between the ontic and the ontological concept of world is regarded as a regressive relation which requires that the phenomenologist work back to the ontological from the ontic. This means that the ontic concept of world...has itself to be transcended.²⁰⁵

The transcending that occurs toward world is the positive movement of transcendence. Dasein first has to transcend itself in order to encounter world, for which Heidegger uses the term *Umwillen*. *Umwillen* has the sense of 'for the sake of something' in its common usage (*um willen* e.g. *um meinetwillen* for my sake, *um Gottes willen* for God's sake) however, Heidegger's use of the German *gerund* form produces something in the manner of 'the forsaking' (*das Umwillen*) as an active noun. The preposition *um* takes the accusative case in German, which indicates that it is addressing the recipient of an action rather than the cause, the direct object rather than the subject. The sense is a will *toward* something, a direction that acts out of itself toward something else. The term *Umwillen* is strongly linked by Heidegger to the will (*Willen*) thus signifying an agent or action that involves the will.

Dasein is able to be in relation to itself as itself in this manner only if it surpasses (*übersteigen*) "itself" in this "for the sake of" [*Umwillen*]. This surpassing (*Überstieg*) that occurs "for the sake of" does so only in a "will" [*Willen*] that as such projects itself upon possibilities of itself.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics?*, p. 91.

²⁰⁴ Macann, 'The Essence of Transcendence,' pp. 133ff.

²⁰⁵ Macann, 'The Essence of Transcendence,' p. 135.

²⁰⁶ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 126.

Literally translated, the ‘surpassing forsaking’ surpasses itself and directs its activity back on to itself to create a movement that stands as a ‘forsaking off/to itself’. This move is deepened by the choice of the word *Überstieg*, from the verb *übersteigen*, to climbing over a wall. Surpassing is likened to climbing over something solid, a wall, and is not therefore solely an attribute of the concept or the spirit.

Within the dense language that Heidegger is using he seeks to describe an originary moment that epistemological philosophy may relate to the birth of self-consciousness. However, it is not the movement of a consciousness seeking to surpasses its immanent state and join the world of objectivity. It is because Dasein is *already in the world* that surpassing takes the form of a concrete struggle to first surpass beings and itself. On the other hand, the comparison with epistemology is valid for the simple reason that Heidegger is describing the birth of a self *out of itself*. And although selfhood constitutes an ontological structure that requires world and transcendence in order to approach anything like selfhood, comparisons with the Cartesian *cogito* readily spring to mind. However, there is a more direct relation that is offered to us by Heidegger’s association of selfhood and surpassing with the term freedom.

The “will” in question, however, must first “form” the “for the sake of” itself as and in a surpassing. Yet whatever, in accordance with its essence, casts something like the “for the sake of” projectively before it, rather than simply producing it as an occasional and additional accomplishment, is that which we call *freedom*.²⁰⁷

Heidegger is providing an ontological description of the birth of selfhood through an original act of freedom. The projecting of the self for the sake of the self *in freedom* produces selfhood. The freedom contained in selfhood is the ‘essence’ of selfhood, that is, that which makes it unique and distinguishable from any other manner of being. As Heidegger states, selfhood cannot be a mere by-product of some other act, its activity must be essential. The reference to freedom in the formation of selfhood brings to mind spontaneity and the role of freedom in Kant’s and Fichte’s Idealism, yet also evokes of Husserl’s transcendental ego.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Ground,’ p. 126.

²⁰⁸ Macann discusses the importation of a Husserlian notion of transcendence into Heidegger’s philosophy. Cf. Macann, ‘The Essence of Transcendence,’ pp. 122-27. Also the role of freedom is discussed in reference to Kant in Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 31: *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit: Einleitung in die Philosophie*, ed. H. Tietjen (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1982) trans. by T. Sadler as *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2002); and in reference to Schelling in Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 42: *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)*, ed. I. Schüssler (Frankfurt am

Fichte is concerned with the cognitive faculty and adopts Kant's transcendental standpoint that restricts reason to the limits of human consciousness and transcendental philosophy to the description and categorisation of cognitive presentations. He therefore understands the philosopher's task as one of discovering the ground of all experience, rather than the ground of all existence. However, his philosophy goes beyond that of Kant's when he asks: 'Why are the presentations which depend on freedom determined precisely as they are?' And answers, 'They are so because I have determined them.'²⁰⁹ Where Kant stops and asserts the conditions of knowledge dogmatically and pronounces that beyond these limits of human knowledge things cannot be known, Fichte raises his question: What is the source of the system of presentations? He thereby attempts to ground the conditions of human knowledge at a transcendental level.

Fichte describes the problem of transition as it relates to transcendental idealism. His major contribution to transcendental philosophy is his insistence on ground. In order to have anything like categories of the consciousness, which constitute 'world' for transcendental idealism, there must be something like a 'self' or a 'ground' for these categories to 'exist in' prior to the categories themselves. He seeks to overcome the problem of transition by grounding human knowledge immanent *to* consciousness. Fichte grounds the consciousness and thus all the conditions that apply to that consciousness through the one thing that the consciousness indisputably has: 'itself'. The intellect will provide the ground for itself *through itself* to produce what Kant thought was impossible to know or achieve: the self-in-itself. This will then in turn provide the ground for all experience. Fichte's self-in-itself is realised through abstraction at a transcendental level, via a reflection upon oneself in the process of abstracting and 'seeing' the intellect at work. Fichte believes it is possible to experience the self as both subject and object and in a spontaneous act the intellect consists of an 'immediate unity of being and seeing'.²¹⁰ The intellect is for itself qua intellect, and Fichte gives the intellect the faculty of 'seeing' – appearance – yet also gives this seeing a reality – 'being'. The two are united at a

Main: Klostermann, 1988), trans. J. Stambaugh as *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985).

²⁰⁹ Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, p. 6.

²¹⁰ Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, p. 17.

transcendental level, as the being of the intellect is co-determinate with the seeing intellect 'seeing itself' and in the same act 'creating itself' as a self-seeing-thing – self-consciousness. The freedom at the ground of human knowing is a self-determining entity that *creates itself* and, therefore, has no other ground. The conditions of knowledge that Kant expounds are also created in this act and are thus determined by the act of self-consciousness and not vice versa. The intellect initiates the conditions that Kant thinks are apparent though something in its own possession: the first spontaneous act, the intellect in itself.

Heidegger's criticism of this form of self-grounding has been registered, as has his attitude toward consciousness as the ground of being. To render a ground immanent to beings only delays the problem of ground. However, there is something unique in Fichte's philosophy that raises the problem of ground again after its suppression by Kant. It appears that Heidegger is interested in Fichte's description of self-grounding in freedom and the entire problem of spontaneous causes that afflicts German Idealism and Romanticism after the rise of scientific rationalism and the philosophy of Spinoza. Bowie describes the problem as follows: 'We live in a world which is bound by deterministic laws that also apply to our own organism, yet are able to choose between alternative courses of action and generate new ways of understanding.'²¹¹ What is described in freedom is the grounding of the self in a free act, which accounts for the freedom attributed to certain activities of the mind in opposition to the deterministic consequences of causal (scientific) or logical (metaphysical) reasoning. However, for Heidegger, freedom cannot be subject-driven or self-caused spontaneity.

In this interpretation of freedom arrived at in terms of transcendence there ultimately lies a more originary characterisation of the essence of freedom than that which determines it as spontaneity, i.e. as a kind of causality. The beginning of something by itself provides only the negative characterisation of freedom according to which there is no determinative cause lying further back. This characterisation, however, overlooks above all the fact that it speaks in an ontologically undifferentiated manner of "beginnings" and "occurrences," without explicitly characterizing what it means to be a cause in terms of the specific manner of being pertaining to the being that is in *this* way, namely Dasein.²¹²

For Heidegger, spontaneity (or 'beginning by oneself') remains a negative act within the causal nexus as it suggests a negation of cause at the level of ground: there is *not* a cause prior to myself. Heidegger

²¹¹ Andrew Bowie, Introduction to Friedrich Schleiermacher's *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, trans. A. Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. xi. Bowie reminds us that, 'Once the role of the spontaneity of the 'subject' in the constitution of an objective world is established the world cannot be said to be reducible to the objective physical laws which govern it,' p. x.

²¹² Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 126.

is refusing to allow the term 'spontaneity' to mask its tautologically inspired origins where the ground of the world is thought thinking itself. Not having a cause prior to the self does not account for the origin of the self: *nothing comes from nothing*. Rather, *'The selfhood of that self that already lies at the grounds of all spontaneity, however, lies in transcendence.'*²¹³

It appears that Heidegger is using the freedom of selfhood as the reflexive moment that gives world to the selfhood as the 'will toward something' and that correspondingly also gives the self to itself. The act of self-projecting (rather than self-grounding) is what we know as freedom. Dasein, as the inheritor of selfhood, finds itself constituted in a world in which it orientates itself 'freely'. This accounts for the selfhood 'coming to terms with itself' and describes the differentiation of the self from the world without allowing that act to be an ultimate ground. The confusing step that Heidegger then takes it to then place this reflexive act inside the structure of transcendence. We are left to think through the connections that we anticipate will provide a final critique of the principle of sufficient reason as a *causally* grounding principle. How does the selfhood as the positive characteristic of freedom and the ontological difference 'fit' inside transcendence? The clarification is interesting and familiar.

Only because transcendence consists in freedom can freedom make itself know as a distinctive kind of causality in existing Dasein. Yet the interpretation of freedom as "causality" above already moves within a particular understanding of ground. Freedom as transcendence, however, is not only a unique "kind" of ground, but the *origin of ground in general*. *Freedom is freedom for ground.*²¹⁴

In what amounts to a critique of the philosophy of self-conditioned causal ground, Heidegger suggests that self-ground as freedom can only exist if a prior ontological structure 'permits' a spontaneous enacting of freedom to take place. What Heidegger is contemplating is an inversion of the relationship between subject and ground where the ontological ground is the ground of subjective freedom. Subjective freedom is not *opposed to* ground or nature. Freedom exists in Dasein only because the ground is essentially free. This ontological inversion is inspired by Schelling, as evidenced by Heidegger's analysis of Schelling's system of freedom. Schelling's inquiry concerns the mechanistic nature of systems and its relation to human freedom. Schelling's treatise attempts to unify nature and human freedom using a pantheist system rather than the subjective consciousness of Kantian idealism.

²¹³ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 127.

²¹⁴ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 127.

The problem that is raised is that pantheism appears to be fatalistic because the nature of early nineteenth century science was inherently mechanistic and denied freedom. In order to retain freedom, Schelling explores the possibility that nature is itself free and that this does not invite a contradiction.²¹⁵ If system and freedom are both essential to us, then the ground of the system is freedom.²¹⁶ The difficulty that Heidegger has with Schelling's attempt to ground freedom in nature is the inclusion an anthropomorphic will as the primordial unity.²¹⁷ The freedom that Heidegger describes in *On the Essence of Ground* is *freedom as transcendence*, which suggests that transcendence, as the ground of the 'system of being,' is a free or self-constituting act relating to being and ground and not subjective freedom and will. Heidegger calls the relation of freedom to ground a 'grounding' that 'gives' and 'takes' ground. '*Transcendence means projection of world in such a way that those beings that are surpassed also already pervade and attune that which projects.*'²¹⁸ In this absorption of Dasein into beings Dasein gains ground, a basis, in which it is given and established in the world. Dasein becomes grounded. Hence, Heidegger envisages that the grounding of Dasein occurs by his being thrown to the world. Beings attune the nature of Dasein.

In establishing itself among beings and all the possibilities that are presented to Dasein as a being, there is likewise a withdrawal of other possibilities in which a negative movement is executed. To be Dasein is to have certain possibilities withdrawn. This 'establishing' and 'taking of a basis' through the withdrawal of certain possibilities is a simultaneous rather than a separate act in which both Dasein and 'world' are established. To be a finite being is to enter projection and withdrawal, and it is this interplay that Heidegger recognises as a unitary structure. However, the establishing and taking of ground has not yet revealed beings to Dasein, as in surpassing or being absorbed by beings Dasein does not necessarily encounter beings as such. For this a third type of grounding is required, 'ground as a grounding of something'. This makes possible Dasein's comportment toward other beings and is indeed a grounding that is provided by a form of transcending or surpassing of itself. However, rather than speaking of intentionality and a movement toward beings or indeed of the role that the nothing

²¹⁵ Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, pp. 62-96.

²¹⁶ Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, p. 22.

²¹⁷ Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, pp. 170ff.

²¹⁸ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 128.

plays in revealing beings, Heidegger suggests that 'grounding something means *making possible the why-question in general*'.²¹⁹

This final ground, although not in any temporal sense, is linked with the question, what is the origin of the why? Here the question arises, how and why does Heidegger shift the grounding of something onto the question of the why?

Yet because the first two ways of grounding *belong together* in transcendence, the springing forth of the "why" is transcendently necessary. The "why" even becomes manifold at its very origin. Its fundamental forms are: *Why in this way* and not otherwise? *Why this and not that?* *Why something at all and not nothing?* In this "why," in whatever manner it is expressed, there also lies already a preunderstanding, albeit a preconceptual one, of what-being, how-being, and being (nothing) in general. This understanding of being first makes possible the "why."²²⁰

In surpassing beings and being thrown in the midst of beings Dasein has a preunderstanding of what a being is and hence a comprehension of the being of beings; this is the 'why' that necessarily springs forth to produce why-questions that aim at beings. Only if this preunderstanding is present can Dasein ground itself in beings and raise such a question that reveals beings. However, the understanding of being is given somewhat tautologically as the answer to all whys, and thereby as the 'ultimate and primordial *grounding of things*'.

4.5 Preliminary Assessment

According to Heidegger, the 'understanding of being' (and note, *not* being itself) provides the ultimate 'grounding of things'. What are we to make of this? The grounding that we have been addressing is a grounding of *Dasein* and of *beings* and not a ground in itself. This is, perhaps, a strength as much as a weakness in Heidegger's argument. Heidegger, in refusing to impart to us something that he cannot directly speak of, maintains a certain philosophical rigour. The ground that we have been seeking is not given as a concrete foundation; rather it has its 'origin' in Dasein's unconceptualised 'comprehension' of being. It recalls the transcendental standpoint of Kant, although in a newly ontologised form. The being of Dasein's understanding resembles a Kantian a priori judgement, as its

²¹⁹ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 129.

²²⁰ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 130.

whole weight rests on the 'fact' that it must go before everything in order for anything to be. And yet, Heidegger appears to have travelled further and deeper than Fichte's self-grounding self without, that is, delivering an ultimate 'spontaneous' origin or cause. Furthermore, the why-question that leads out of Dasein's preunderstanding is likewise skewed. In this description there appears to be no answer to Heidegger's why-question. The inheritance of a German Transcendental Idealist orientation prohibits an explicit explication of what may be called a transcendental realist position or the 'things-in-themselves,' as Kant phrases the problem. One of the consequences of this methodological decision is the inability to explain why things ultimately occur. The quest for ground in Fichte, Schelling and Hegel is related to the loss of this fundamental capacity. The search for ground most often describes the 'how?' of human being and, with Fichte and Hegel, is ultimately grounded in human existence itself. By the same token, when Heidegger asks the why-question, he hears 'how?' The question, 'how is there something rather than nothing?' would elicit an answer more in line with Heidegger's account of ground as transcendence.

What we have been experiencing through Heidegger is the *process* of grounding that resides in something called transcendence, of which we also do not comprehend except through the activity that relates to the emergence of beings. The ground has not been given to us in the manner that the word 'ground' commonly suggests; what is given by referring to a thing such as transcendence or ground is the *activity* that is witnessed, experienced, employed or *made necessary* by the ontic structures manifest in the world. Being does not ground things but instead our *understanding of being* provides the ultimate grounding. We may then ask the question, if these two things relate in some fundamental manner as to provide the ultimate ground, are not the 'understanding of being' and 'being itself' *the same*? This somewhat radical thought is not so strange as it appears when we think, for example, of Fichte and Hegel's description of the Absolute. The final ground of each thinker establishes itself in a self-grounding moment in which a further inquiry into ground is rendered unnecessary. With Fichte ground is immanent to the Absolute Ego, and with Hegel absolute ground is achieved by way of the identification of infinite with the finite and Absolute Knowing with the self. Interestingly, it is this line of explanation that Heidegger arrives at in his later 1955-56 work on Leibniz, *The Principle of Reason*, where he asks, 'The question we are faced with by the principle of reason is this: to what

extent “are” being and *ratio* the same?’ Being and thought are identified with each other through the prism of Greek philosophy.²²¹

What may be unacceptable to a more traditional line of thinking is that the process or ‘binding power,’ with which ground is usually associated, appears to pass over to Dasein itself:

Such grounding of things lies “at the ground” of all comportment toward beings, and in such a way that only in the illumination granted by our understanding of being can beings become manifest in themselves (i.e., as the beings they are and in the way they are).²²²

Although on the surface it appears that Dasein is involved in an idealistic movement that illuminates and *makes manifest* beings through its understanding of being, I would argue that it is not so. We are reminded that ‘understanding of being’ also refers to ‘world-entry’ and that Dasein’s free projection, grounding and understanding of being all rely on transcendence.²²³ We are thereby presented with somewhat conflicting but related thoughts: ‘As altogether the most antecedent *answer*, our understanding of being provides the ultimate and primary *grounding of things*.’²²⁴ Conversely, ‘Transcendence explicitly unveils itself as the origin of grounding, however, when such grounding is brought to *spring forth* in its threefold character.’²²⁵ Dasein’s understanding of being grounds *things*, and yet transcendence is the *origin* of the activity of grounding. We again have two related ‘origins’ that replay the double movement of transcendence that Macann described in terms of a progressive and regressive theory.²²⁶ However, Macann observes with dissatisfaction that the two movements are not always held in a complementary relationship with each other, which causes him to criticise Heidegger for failing to produce a coherent philosophy.²²⁷ The major point of Macann’s argument is that Heidegger’s regressive moment toward being takes precedence over the progressive movement toward beings. Macann wishes to reconnect the ontological world with the ontic world and is disillusioned when Heidegger fails to relate the ontological structures back to the ontic beings that first gave indication that Heidegger’s philosophy was a revolutionary inversion of traditional

²²¹ Heidegger, Martin, *The Principle of Reason* trans. R. Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) p. 104ff; *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen: Verlag Gunther Neske, 1957) p. 175ff. Cf. Cristin, *Heidegger and Leibniz*, Chapter 2, *The Foundation as Fire and as Logos*, pp. 17-32.

²²² Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Ground,’ p. 130.

²²³ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, pp. 217.

²²⁴ Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Ground,’ p. 130.

²²⁵ Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Ground,’ p. 131.

²²⁶ Macann, ‘The Essence of Transcendence,’ pp. 133.

²²⁷ Macann, ‘The Essence of Transcendence,’ pp. 138ff.

epistemology. For Macann, being and beings are not ‘resolved’ and beings become a disenchanting feature of the Heideggerian landscape. The dissatisfaction that often remains is due to the procedure of grounding the separate elements in one another without providing a comprehensive account of either ‘thing’. However, Heidegger argues that life and philosophy do not exist to be ‘resolved,’ and that discord and difference are an essential constituent of being in the world. For Heidegger, existing beings are necessarily separated from being and at the same time united via transcendence. Heidegger’s conception of ground in *On the Essence of Ground* argues that being-in-the-world is grounding; however a final ground cannot be adequately grasped. Sonya Sikka claims that Heidegger’s notion of transcendence is influenced by mystical theologians such as Bonaventure, Meister Eckhart and Johannes Tauler. She claims that Heidegger’s structure also contains analogous content between a mystical interpretation of God and Heidegger’s ungraspable being.²²⁸ Confusion originates from Heidegger’s own distancing of God from being, where he includes God and theology within metaphysics. Heidegger argues in his later works that the event of being is the condition that would make possible the revelation of God.²²⁹ In contrast, John Caputo suggests that there is only a formal connection or ‘analogy of proportionality’ between, for example, Meister Eckhart and Heidegger’s philosophy. ‘[T]he relationship, the dialectic, the interchange, between God and the soul in Meister Eckhart is similar to the relation between Being and Dasein in Heidegger,’ but ‘the terms of the relation—Being and God, Dasein and the soul’ are not equivalent.²³⁰ I find Caputo’s argument more persuasive as the ungraspable nature of being and what is given in transcendence is not being offered as a mystical experience of being. What is being outlined is the process whereby Dasein finds a grounding in the world. The unresolved character of Dasein’s relationship with being may indeed be informed by theological predecessors; however, the essential difference remains that Heidegger is attempting to delineate the finite nature of transcendence and the historical contingency of a Dasein that cannot be resolved by infinite relation with truth or faith.

It is only through a continual referral to the ontological difference that Heidegger prevents us from falling into error. It appears that the ontological difference holds Heidegger’s description together at

²²⁸ Sonya Sikka, *Forms of Transcendence: Heidegger and Medieval Mystical Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 266-67.

²²⁹ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, §256.

²³⁰ John Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978), pp. 143-45.

the same time as holding it apart. As he mentions with regard to Aristotle's four causes, if the distinction between ontological grounds and ontic causes is not maintained our understanding will remain superficial and the ontological structures will remain concealed.²³¹ This is the reason that Heidegger provides for the limited understanding of the principle of reason in the philosophical tradition. Grounds are commonly revealed to be a conflation of logical and causal relations. The origin of things is judged to be the most universal concept available, yet this is mistakenly interpreted as a transcendent ground. For Heidegger this cannot stand as a satisfactory description, the universal is merely an abstract concept derived from an ontic being. 'First cause' reveals to us nothing except the recognition that things are in causal relation; 'first cause' in itself does not necessarily transcend. In a first cause or grounding substance 'the concepts of causality, foundation, reason and motivation are fused, each losing its peculiar features'. Whereas with Leibniz:

The problem of *Grund* openly becomes a difference that we could call aetiological; the undifferentiated mystical causality is rationalized in a scientific ontological design. We notice an evolution, or rather a real "qualitative leap": the *Grund* is conceived of in the rational framework of a logical principle.²³²

[T]he principle of causality cannot be logically derived from the logical principle of ground. Instead, its necessity is grounded in the fact that it is a necessary element of the whole that makes experience as such possible.²³³

The ground has been transformed to a process of grounding whose essence is not an unchanging substance or infinite being but an activity of grounding. This play between the ontologically differentiated worlds of being and beings gives Heidegger the opportunity to play on the word *Grund* and *Abgrund*, ground and abyss.²³⁴ The 'non-essence' that constitutes being and nothingness, as they are not 'things,' is described as an abyss that functions as a 'non-grounding ground' which gives the freedom of possibilities (or rather existence) to beings. Freedom is not like unchanging essence; freedom provides the space for possibilities. The abyssal ground (*Ab-grund*) is the boundless quality that is the counterpart of ground. As ground has given itself over to the activity of transcendence and Dasein's transcending there exists no ground in the conventional sense. There is only essential activity or the play between *Grund* and *Abgrund*. The word 'ground' applies to Dasein's absorption into

²³¹ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground,' p. 131. Cf. Kant's Third Antinomy, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 444-452/B 472-480.

²³² Cristin, *Heidegger and Leibniz*, p. 11.

²³³ Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*, p. 131. Heidegger is making such assertions in reference to Kant and the principle of causality as a temporal principle.

²³⁴ For an account of Heidegger's philosophical and linguistic debt to Schelling see Frank Schalow, *At the Interface of Destiny and Freedom: The New Locus of History in Heidegger's 1936 Schelling-Lectures*, CLIO, Vol. 28, Issue 1 (Indiana University, Purdue University of Fort Wayne, 1998). Also cf. Dale E Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), passim, esp. pp. 181-212.

beings and not to any other structure. As transcendence and (pre-)ontological freedom do not belong to Dasein's absorption as such but are instead the conditions that provide for that occurrence, they could be said to be 'groundless'.

5. On the Essence of Truth

This section hopes to describe the key developments in Heidegger's theory of truth and presents the strengths and weaknesses of his innovations. I demonstrate how the question of truth is related to the question of ground and recount how conditions of possibility are incorporated into the question of truth. I hope to expose the consequences that a re-description of the relationship between truth and ground has for 'condition,' 'meaning' and 'truth'. I argue that Heidegger's assault on the traditional metaphysical understanding of truth allows him to reveal a new horizon which he describes in terms of 'the open'. Major criticisms of Heidegger's position shall be considered with particular attention to his use of transcendental arguments in relation to truth theories.

5.1 Truth and Ground

[A]cquired knowledge does not constitute the essence of genuine knowing. The latter lies in the basic relation – prevailing at any given time – of man to beings, and consequently also in the mode of truth and in the decisiveness we attain through this basic relation.²³⁵

According to Heidegger's description, the basic relation that man holds toward beings embraces, or is constituted by, the mode of truth that is exhibited toward those beings. That is, basic relations are inseparable from modes of truth. The basic relation could be said to 'ground' any subsequent relation that rests upon its structure. As he states, the nature of basic relations will determine how human Dasein conducts itself towards beings. To clarify this point, Heidegger is investigating truth as a basic relation and highlights the importance and consequential nature of basic relations for man and for beings. When speaking of basic relations there appears to be a range of possible relations that may be called 'basic' or 'fundamental'. Any basic relation will affect or influence the beings that stand in that relation. Hence any relation will positively or negatively affect Dasein's relationship to beings. We are then presented with the problem of how to discern the 'positive' from the 'negative,' if indeed these are valid terms, both with respect to Dasein and to beings. In essence, we begin to argue over the mode or 'grounds' for the interpretation of these relations; it becoming increasingly important to maintain a hold on the interpretative mode since this will affect all subsequent findings. Although the

²³⁵ Heidegger, *Nietzsche II*, p. 20.

mode of interpretation may be in question a consensus takes shape concerning the status of the modes or grounds of interpretation: they are 'unfixed' and become an open point of conflict. This situation in itself is not a recent innovation. There is a strong Nietzschean aspect to this reading of events, which first gains an insight into basic relations and then assumes that to hold power over the mode of interpretation is to control relations between beings. The exposition of the mode of interpretation becomes the decisive expression for the overcoming of metaphysics that is first given its voice through Nietzsche. The presentation of the modes by which we know or experience beings is, for Heidegger, the crucial juncture that allows for another direction in thought. Before this time, metaphysics was caught in its own mode of relations not having the ability to see outside of itself.²³⁶ Heidegger's endeavour at this stage of his thought is therefore firmly focussed on exposing the grounds or basic truth relations in order to demonstrate both the inevitability of basic relations and the (concealed) possibility of other relations. This is inherent to his project of overcoming metaphysics. One is required to expose the 'internal logic' of metaphysics in order to prepare for its overcoming. Hence Heidegger is constantly looking for the site or space that will give him an aspect on the metaphysical relation enabling 'distance'. Simultaneously, he is trying to work metaphysics to its 'logical' conclusion from inside its world. This is perhaps where Heidegger and Nietzsche are closest to each other, in that the internal workings of metaphysics cannot be irrelevant to its overcoming. However, before approaching Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, we will attempt to bring out some of the background questions that uncover the basic relation in terms of the meaning of truth and ground. The concealed background relations and the method by which they are brought to light are what concern Heidegger here. The methodological procedure by which Heidegger approaches the question of truth is therefore also relevant. As explained in the previous section, Heidegger's ontological inquiry requires that we search for relations 'beneath' the ontic world of beings. That is to say, that in order to describe the nature of basic relations the question of conditions is fundamental to Heidegger's inquiry. I hope to demonstrate that it is Heidegger's enquiry into conditions that enables him to gain insight into the ground of metaphysical thinking. Once the 'ground' is brought into view, the way is prepared for a departure from metaphysics. This line of reasoning retrieves the interrelated nature of conditions and ground and their bearing on truth and the emergence of that truth.

²³⁶ This point will be exposure more fully below. Cf. Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, §85.

The connection between basic relations and truth is explored in Heidegger's two works *On the Essence of Ground* and *On the Essence of Truth*. In order to introduce a new relation between man and beings, the rational mode of interpretation must be wrested from a position of dominance. What is under discussion in these texts is the deficient nature of traditional theories that hope to describe the relationship between truth and ground. While the texts are far from clear treatises on these issues, they can be separated by their subject matter: truth and ground. That is, the traditional relationship between truth and ground is challenged on two fronts: the first through an analysis of the principle of sufficient reason, and the second via the correspondence theory of truth. This appears straightforward. However, according to Heidegger's insight, the outcome of the inquiry is already limited by the mode of interpretation that one enters into. Hence, a rational mode that represents itself in terms of a subject-object division will limit its findings to rational explanations and thereby 'neglect' or 'conceal' another world of relations. This limitation is itself problematic for philosophy, as the termination (or ground) of the inquiry is already bound by the laws of its own method. As Heidegger explains in reference to transcendental idealism:

Kant's philosophical effort in the last decade was dedicated exclusively to founding the system of reason. His effort failed, not because of external hindrances, but because of internal reasons. The unity of system and thus system itself, could not be grounded.²³⁷

As German Idealism aimed at explaining the relationship between God, World and Man systematically, that is, rationally, it was unable to ground itself using the rational method of transcendental idealism. Heidegger attacks the assumption that philosophical interpretation is a priori a rational or logical method based in the consciousness of the subject. This is, for Heidegger, one of the most basic prepositions of philosophical inquiry.²³⁸ However, the implication of this criticism suggests that ground may be accessible via a different 'relational' approach.²³⁹ In order to correct the situation, the inquiry must be cleared of its potentially damaging rational bias. *On the Essence of Ground* investigates basic relations via an analysis of the principle of sufficient reason and concludes

²³⁷ Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, p. 44.

²³⁸ Cf. Heidegger, Martin, *Introduction to What is Metaphysics? Pathmarks*, p. 279: 'We can no longer accept the claim of metaphysics to preside over our fundamental relation to "Being" or to decisively determine every relation to beings as such...As long as man remains the *animal rationale*, he is the *animal metaphysicum*. As long as man understands himself as the rational animal, metaphysics belongs, as Kant said, to the nature of man. But if our thinking should succeed in its efforts to go back into the ground of metaphysics, it might well help to bring about a change in the human essence, change accompanied by a transformation of metaphysics.'

²³⁹ Cf. Heidegger, Martin, *Schelling's Treatise*, pp. 43ff. Heidegger explains the totalizing nature of systems in terms of its destructive consequences for relations: 'In accordance with its nature, this totality can no longer be determined by *relations, in terms of relations to something else* – otherwise it wouldn't be the totality. This totality of Being lacks a relation to other things, it is not relative, and is in this sense absolutely *absolved* from everything else, released from all relations because it doesn't admit of any such thing at all.'

that any basic relation requires 'grounding' in ontological structures prior to their logical grounding in metaphysics. This enables Heidegger to free himself of obligations to rational metaphysics. Metaphysical logic does not succeed at an ontological or pre-ontological level. The ontological region that is exposed no longer describes conceptual or material origins and Heidegger prefers to invoke the notion of temporal 'activities' that participate in 'grounding'. Heidegger is attempting to re-describe static metaphysical notions such as ground in a radical temporal format. The essence of this ground activity is named as transcendence. However, while the term features in a great number of Heidegger's early works, transcendence no longer functions theologically and is not to be understood as naming a relationship with a divine being.²⁴⁰ Rather Heidegger describes the transcendent activity of ground as a temporal activity by which beings are 'made visible'. *On the Essence of Truth* continues this theme and attempts to make the *means* of manifestation explicit. In keeping with his attack on rational philosophical models, Heidegger does not confer the power of manifestation upon a subjective consciousness. The 'ground' that Heidegger seeks is therefore portrayed as the 'condition' for both thought and the beings that enable thought to think. However, as Charles Taylor remarks, if the procedure provides for both thought and beings, then this seems to entail delineating a 'third position' for the manifestation of things.²⁴¹ The suggestion that a third position supplies 'ground' to beings has an impact on we may call the coherence or 'meaning' of beings. For without the third position, which accounts for the relation between thought and beings, thought and beings risk lingering in 'meaninglessness'. What also appears to be at issue is the status of 'meaning' in relation to truth. For meaning to be revealed a third position is required that 'shows up' or 'makes manifest' coherence. Through the rigorous application of this principle, Heidegger suggests that *any position* that stands as a mode of interpretation (i.e. gives meaning to things) will regulate, and therefore delimit, the entities that it makes manifest. That is, the method of manifestation that conveys ground also colours or 'attunes' the things that become 'visible'. Truth as a basic relation that makes things visible is itself involved in attuning beings. Heidegger's inquiry argues for the contingent nature of basic relations but he is also candid about the nature of basic relations themselves. All basic relations attune things when involving themselves in the manifestation of beings: basic relations are attuning relations.

²⁴⁰ See Hildegard Feick & Susanne Ziegler, *Index zu Heideggers 'Sein und Zeit'* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1991), p. 91-2. Feick & Ziegler references Heidegger's use of transcendence from 1927-1970.

²⁴¹ Taylor, Charles, *Heidegger, Language and Ecology, Heidegger: Critical Reader*, p. 259.

Heidegger approaches his exposure of the attuning nature of truth and ground through building upon a description of truth as disclosure, as found in §44 of *Being and Time*. Truth as disclosure is based on an etymological reading of the Greek word *ἀλήθεια*, *aletheia* being a privative form of *lethe*.²⁴² Truth for the Greeks reads as something ‘un-covered’ or ‘dis-closed,’ which entails a prior ‘covering over’ or ‘concealment’. This twofold aspect of truth informs Heidegger’s reading and deconstruction of standard truth theory. What Heidegger appears to be driving towards is the description of truth as a disclosing ‘manifestation’. His demonstration requires that truth be related to basic relations in a more fundamental manner than traditional truth theories allow. If truth is understood in terms of a correspondence theory or correctness of propositions, then the logical basis of these theories is uncontested and the apparent neutrality of reason is maintained. It is not made explicit that reason is involved in an attuning activity, or that truth as disclosure ‘constitutes’ or ‘establishes’ the possibility of distinguishing truth from lie. The constituting nature of truth is also involved in a form of concealment, as it is Heidegger’s view that the method by which we see or judge things dominates all forms of disclosure. We therefore retain a certain blindness to our involvement in attuning activities.

On the Essence of Truth opens with a general understanding of truth; truth is to be in accordance [*in der Übereinstimmung*] with something. To be ‘in accordance with’ suggests that a relation of some kind exists between the intellect and the thing. Heidegger defines two basic categories of truth – material truth (accordance of thing to intellect) and propositional truth (accordance of intellect to thing). Owing to the primacy of material substance (beings) over thought (consciousness of beings), Heidegger states that propositional truth is possible only because of material truth.²⁴³ These truths move in seemingly opposite directions, and yet both definitions are dominated by the idea of correct relations. Heidegger takes the common characteristic that these definitions share to be an undeveloped notion of ‘accordance’ or ‘correctness’. For Heidegger, an undeveloped understanding of truth is more

²⁴² This argument is repeated throughout the 1930s and 1940s in the lecture series *Gesamtausgabe* Vol. 29/30: *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt, Endlichkeit, Einsamkeit* (1929-30). Ed. F-W von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1983) trans. W. McNeill & N. Walker as *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 26ff.; ‘Plato’s Doctrine of Truth (1931/32, 1940),’ *Pathmarks*, pp. 155-182; *Gesamtausgabe* Vol. 45: *Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte “Probleme” der “Logik”* (1937/38). Ed. F-W von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1992) trans. R. Rojcewicz & A. Schuwer as *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected “Problems” of “Logic”* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) pp. 95-130.

²⁴³ Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Truth,’ p. 138.

than an error; it suggests blindness within the metaphysical method. Correctness is presupposed and treated as a self-evident concept. Treating truth as correctness means ignoring the problem of articulating what it is that 'joins' language to the world. Heidegger wishes to reveal the undisclosed meaning of accordance, particularly with regard to propositional truth. His central contention is that propositional accounts of truth fail to articulate what connects language and world. Exposing this breach in traditional truth theories is integral to Heidegger's deconstruction.

He asks: if something is in accordance with something else of an entirely different essence, then how and in what way are they 'according'? For example, the correspondence of a word or statement with a material thing raises some problems. By way of illustration, if we take the essence of 'spoken language' to be something concerning 'saying,' and the essence of a stone to be in the material nature of its 'stoniness,' then Heidegger enquires: 'How is the statement able to correspond to something else, the thing, precisely by persisting in its own essence?'²⁴⁴ Language, to persist in its own essence, must remain a saying and so too a stone must remain in its stoniness. Hence a transmogrification on the part of language or the stone is not the issue here, and he concludes that the essence of correspondence is established by the *nature of the relation* between statement and thing. The relation itself is the object of truthful enquiry. If that relation is not fully exposed or described, then the language and world will remain foreign to each other. Heidegger utilises this discovery in a novel fashion. The relation between statement and thing is described as a *conditioning activity*, that is, a temporal condition. Instead of describing the categories that make possible thought or knowledge of truth, Heidegger is suggesting that the truth relation *itself* is a condition. What does he mean by this?

5.2 Conditions of Possibility

I have been using the term 'condition' as it corresponds to transcendental idealism, which has sought to account for the appearance of phenomena by way of 'necessary conditions' that precede that phenomena. The basic question asks: 'What makes X possible'.²⁴⁵ The problem that this methodology

²⁴⁴ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth,' p. 140.

²⁴⁵ Stambaugh, Joan, Introduction to Heidegger's *On Time and Being*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. viii.

raises surrounds the status of these conditions. Can a 'condition' be said to 'ground' a series of causal events or phenomena of the mind? If a condition can serve as a ground, then origins can be accounted for and a fundamental philosophical difficulty has been overcome. Transcendental idealism debates this question through the work of Kant, Jacobi, Maimon, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel; we will concentrate on how Heidegger develops the problem and the criticisms that his solutions draw.

One of Heidegger's former students, Ernst Tugendhat, observes that transcendental philosophy changes the location and essence of truth:

All beings are questioned with regard to the condition of the possibility in so far as this condition can be known to be true, and the first and most original principle to which this question leads back is not so much an absolute being as rather something which is given with absolute certainty.²⁴⁶

The transcendental method, in its Kantian form, limits questions of knowledge and truth to what can be known to be true, that is, that which can be presented before the human mind. Within this methodology empirical evidence holds truth but so does the dictate of reason. If some definite thing or structure exists in the world as presented to the human mind, then it is reasonable to inquire into the conditions that necessarily precede that thing. We are asked to extend our enquiry into what is not presented to us as such but what is deemed necessary for that thing or event to take place. As Tugendhat argues, this process changes the nature of truth as we no longer assign confidence to an absolute being that may be the origin of all things, although we may trust the rational enquiry as far as it extends into the unknown but necessary world of prior conditions. Nevertheless, while the transcendental standpoint liberates philosophy from engaging with an absolute being it also destroys the grounding function that an absolute being embraces. God no longer guarantees truth. Without God grounding world or phenomena the confidence in ground is gradually eroded. Grounding operations are replaced by the 'certainty' of conditions or principles.

In spite of this, philosophers such as Nietzsche, Derrida and Rorty see the Kantian account of possible experience as a residue of a theologically inspired metaphysics. Kant's reduction of reason to the realm of human experience was made at the cost of a distinction between phenomena and noumena: representations and 'things in themselves'. A strong distinction between the known and unknown founded upon the qualitative distinction between mind and nature or understanding and sensibility

²⁴⁶ Tugendhat, Ernst, 'Heidegger's Idea of Truth,' *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments, Vol. III*, (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 79. Tugendhat confines his analysis to §44 of Being and Time.

creates a dualism that was originally the target of his critique. The dualism is reduced in form to that of an interior-exterior partition. However, the problem is retained in the various ways that metaphysics seeks to distance itself from the world of 'causal reality,' 'nature' or 'history'. Rorty, in particular, views the use of conditions of possibility as an 'escape' from 'temporal actuality' into 'atemporal possibility'.²⁴⁷ Plato's Forms are likewise described as methods of escape. According to Rorty, the philosophical sin that these descriptions share is that they attempt to account for empirical objects through recourse to metaphysical objects that go before them and condition their appearance.²⁴⁸ The metaphysical objects are intended to prevent further questioning which asks after their origin: metaphysical objects are conditions and as such do not require, but rather account for, origins. They are considered to be eternal, timeless or simply necessary. The question then follows, if the metaphysical objects are not required to account for themselves, then why do empirical objects require a final account? Rorty thus restates the criticism that conditions of certainty cannot stand as grounds but offers no explanation to account for empirical objects. He avoids the contemplation of origins or conditions by reading the conditioning elements as being identical with final grounds. Final grounds are derelict as they fail in their responsibility to describe the origin of beings. This allows him to eliminate final grounds *and* the basis on which these inquiries were initiated, which was to explain how things are known or how things come into being. As final grounds cannot provide an account for themselves they are rejected together with the rationale for the inquiry. The inquiry into origins and conditions is abandoned. However, to my knowledge Rorty does not perform the parallel procedure of rejecting empirical objects for a similar reason, and thus taking a sceptical position. If final grounds are renounced because they cannot account for themselves, then presumably empirical objects are also candidates for refutation.

Rorty's argument illustrates the aversion some philosophers have to the problem of transition. The metaphysical objects are treated with suspicion because they appear to eviscerate worldly objects through supplying an 'external condition' for that object. Consequently, the 'ground' or 'meaning' (a term which still requires clarification) of an object is other to the object itself. The transcendental inquiry into conditions reasserts a dualistic account of worldly things, which again reveals the

²⁴⁷ Rorty, Richard, 'Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Reification of Language,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, p. 340.

²⁴⁸ Rorty, 'Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Reification of Language,' pp. 341-42

problem of transition. This outcome is appropriately judged problematic. However, Rorty's riposte, 'if the metaphysical objects are not required to account for themselves, then why do the empirical objects require a final account?' has a long philosophical history. It distils a Spinozist response to the problem of transition through abolishing the alleged external cause of things and placing causes immanent to the object and then asking: 'Why not?' In essence, the world is judged to be either the ground of itself or to exist in groundless. Despite the attempt to overcome metaphysics (which also reasons that things require origins rather than existing eternally²⁴⁹) the solution is deeply indebted to post-enlightenment rational thought, which requires a standard of truth or evidence to be presentable before a reasoned consciousness. What Rorty is not offering us at this juncture is an account of his standard of truth that supplies him with the tools for his criticism. All standards of truth appear to be questionable because they cannot supply a ground or justification for themselves.²⁵⁰ After the abandonment of an absolute being, this attack serves to destabilise metaphysical reliance upon conditions of possibility, whereby all philosophical knowledge becomes problematic.

How does Heidegger fit into this discussion? I have been arguing that Heidegger's methodology owes a great deal to German transcendental idealism and he also appears to be critical of rational explanations that end in immanent accounts of ground for the sake of consistency. The use of conditions in Heidegger's ontological inquiry into being appears to be fundamental. One envisages that the only way to arrive at the condition for beings is through a retracing of causal-type steps backward to being: the condition that provides for the thing or event.²⁵¹ Hence Heidegger accepts the replacement of the absolute being of metaphysics by the transcendental condition. Tugendhat, therefore, argues that in *Being and Time* Heidegger holds on to a 'first and most original principle' and, to this extent, he is read as a metaphysical thinker.²⁵² To link Heidegger with metaphysics is to attempt to denigrate his philosophy or at least its grounding in being. However, I would dispute that this is a simple case of metaphysical substitution. Heidegger has been trying to maintain a strong

²⁴⁹ The paradoxes of reason are again highlighted by Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 426/B 454 – A 461/B 489.

²⁵⁰ Rorty's own philosophy is dealt with in detail in *Rorty and his Critics* (London: Blackwell, 2000), passim, esp. pp. 1-30. I argue that Heidegger differs in his use of truth. He does not dismiss truth but instead explains that traditional truth relies on a disclosure of beings that is 'attuned' and grounded by a prior horizon; however, the ground given is directional and limiting.

²⁵¹ This point is confirmed by Heidegger in *Contributions to Philosophy* where he states that when inquiring into beings and beingness, 'it makes sense and is correct to go back to "presuppositions" and "conditions." *Contributions to Philosophy*, pp 64.

²⁵² Tugendhat, 'Heidegger's Idea of Truth,' p. 80.

distinction, the ontological distinction between being and beings, and has been attempting to show that this distinction is fundamental for the emergence of beings, the self and thought. That distinction is often thought through what Okrent describes as 'quasi-transcendental arguments'.²⁵³ However, both Tugendhat and Okrent agree that Heidegger has extended this categorization through recourse to an ontological horizon. In Tugendhat's case it is the horizon of world historic Dasein, and in Okrent's it is the disclosure or 'truth of being'. Tugendhat states that Heidegger begins with a transcendental standpoint which he then broadens to the 'transcendental in general,' or what is described as an ontological horizon. To begin with a transcendental standpoint is to accept Kantian limits regarding knowledge and an absolute being. How would an ontological horizon overcome the transcendental position?

Tugendhat accepts that the standpoint is transformed through the 'ecstatic temporality of Dasein'. Dasein and 'its world as history' provides a 'precursory openness' whereby 'the transcendental (thesis) is surpassed'.²⁵⁴ It is neither the subject nor the certitude of rationality that provide a foundation for beings and thought; what provides the ground is the 'pre-giveness' of Dasein and its world. It is this notion of pre-giveness that constitutes a horizon. The pre-giveness acts as a broadening movement by being inexpressible in the sense that a world that is already open and already of concern. It is what is required in order to exist or state any problem concerning the status of the world. The world is the background to all problems and therefore acts as a unifying horizon that overcomes the dualistic division between subject and object. In order to make the world a problem in itself one has to 'disengage' from it and retreat into a reified perspective. According to Tugendhat, this represents the earlier variant of Heidegger's description of truth: truth is disclosed through an ecstatic horizon, yet this horizon is the being and disclosing activity of Dasein as a being-in-the-world. The condition has a prior ontological status but it is related to the world of existence that resists a transcendental standpoint in the subject. However, to my mind it is not clear that this constitutes an extension of Kantian conditions of possibility, unless the fact that it involves 'world' in some way re-inscribes the condition with a horizon-like quality.

²⁵³ Okrent, 'The Truth of Being and the History of Philosophy,' in *Heidegger: A Critical Assessment*, p. 150.

²⁵⁴ Tugendhat, Ernst, 'Heidegger's Idea of Truth,' pp. 80.

Okrent distinguishes between two senses of being in Heidegger's work:

First "Being" is the Being of beings, what each being is thought to need so that it is, rather than nothing. That is, "Being" in this first sense refers to that which each being involves simply and solely in so far as it is at all. The science which studies Being in this sense is metaphysics, the science of Being qua Being. Equally, metaphysics, as the science of Being qua Being, increasingly comes to see Being in this sense, i.e. the Being of beings, as the ground of beings itself.²⁵⁵

Heidegger is metaphysical in the sense that part of his enquiry involves the being of beings and the condition that grounds beings: the condition that 'supplies' ground and 'demands' participation. Within Okrent's description we can see a Heideggerian play between donating and necessitating activities of being: the most general attribute of things and also the provider of ground. Metaphysics first treats being as the most universal attribute and then thinks that attribute as the prior condition that grounds the beings that it is describing. Heidegger is thinking being in a manner that utilizes and criticises this early thought on being. Heidegger's distinction between being and beings at an ontological level is what constitutes a qualified breakthrough. However, if being, as an ontological horizon, is allowed to acquire a reified status and read as a (supra) being, then dualism follows and we accept a certain kind of metaphysical thinking. However, in *Being and Time*, the radical nature of ontological horizons concerns their temporal or 'ecstatic' nature, and Okrent's second description of being hones in on the development of the temporal aspect of being which is described through *alètheia*, the truth of being.²⁵⁶ Consequently, we agree that Heidegger is using transcendental structures to investigate prior relations. However, those structures undergo modifications, not only concerning the extension/deconstruction of subjectivity in relation to world, but also with regards to the temporal nature of conditions and ground. This point illustrates the problems interpreters have when dealing with Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger's thought is concerned with the temporality of philosophical terms and structures even when he is not specifically indicating the temporal character of those terms and structures. If the pre-given is understood in atemporal terms it resembles quite closely a static metaphysical condition; Heidegger is attempting to characterise basic relations as temporal conditions that relate to truth as disclosure. However, the question remains: How does a temporal condition constitute a horizon and, secondly, can a temporal horizon stand as a ground for beings?

²⁵⁵ Okrent, 'The Truth of Being and the History of Philosophy,' p. 145.

²⁵⁶ Okrent, 'The Truth of Being and the History of Philosophy,' p. 145.

5.3 Temporal Conditions

A temporal consideration is essential to understand the inquiry to the conditions for beings and the truth of being. However, there are incongruities between Heidegger's use of temporality as a conditioning structure in *Being and Time* and that of later Heidegger. Okrent argues that it is the foray into the truth of being in the 1930s that constitutes Heidegger's advancement over a traditional metaphysical position.²⁵⁷ Conversely, Caputo declares that *Being and Time* investigates temporality in a more productive way than later Heidegger, who begins to mythologize the role of being.²⁵⁸ The contention surrounds the 'meaning of being' or the 'truth of being' in Heidegger's work. Caputo argues that in *Being and Time* Heidegger is inquiring into the meaning of being as the truth or disclosure of being and not giving the meaning of being any historical substantiation. That is, he is employing a 'transcendental theory *about* the history of metaphysics, not a theory which assumes a place *within* that history'.²⁵⁹ The transcendental description of conditions is meant to show how each 'meaning of being' comes into existence. A destruction (deconstruction) of the philosophical tradition is required in order to expose the concealed structures of each meaning of being. Thus, '[t]he existential analytic shows that the meaning of being is to be determined in terms of time, that the temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) of Dasein provides the clue to the temporality (*Temporalität*) of Being.'²⁶⁰ This commits Heidegger to a review of the history of philosophy and an investigation into the elements that prevent temporality from being exposed. Hence metaphysical thinking of atemporal being is included in his critique as are truth theories that fail to question the origin or conditions of truth in time. This leads Heidegger to portray Greek philosophy and its reliance on time and being as permanent presence (*Anwesenheit*).²⁶¹ The meaning of being that Heidegger wishes to display is a temporal structure. 'This means that Heidegger has a transcendental conception of "meaning" (as a condition of possibility), not the ordinary one, where meaning is something constituted and

²⁵⁷ Okrent, 'The Truth of Being and the History of Philosophy,' pp. 148ff.

²⁵⁸ Caputo, John D., *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 9-38.

²⁵⁹ Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, p. 10.

²⁶⁰ Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, p. 11.

²⁶¹ Heidegger, BT, §6.

historically actual.²⁶² Heidegger distinguishes between the 'being' of a thing and its 'meaning'. Meaning is always pre-given in the sense that it is a temporal structure that allows the being of a thing to show itself: meaning is manifestation and unity within being.²⁶³ Thus truth as disclosure relates to the meaning of being as both are disclosing structures that allow beings to be 'projected upon'. For Caputo, the 'meaning of being' is the functional task of pointing out the limits of metaphysical thought. It is thus rooted in the Kantian tradition. According to the development of Caputo's argument, to place the meaning of being into history itself is an error that Heidegger makes in his writings from the 1930s onwards. The move allows Heidegger's political activities to become intertwined with the history of being itself.²⁶⁴ To conclude, Caputo argues that the condition secured by Heidegger's early methodology is one of 'atemporal' functionality that discloses the temporal occurrence of being in history. Caputo's argument illustrates the relationship that Heidegger's philosophy has to history and the problems that temporality raises. The placing of meaning into history itself potentially reduces any truth claims to the level of historical context. Conversely, any atemporal description of the meaning of being may be perceived as a remnant of metaphysics.²⁶⁵

Stambaugh agrees with Caputo that in *Being and Time* Heidegger describes time in transcendental terms as, for instance, the condition of the possibility of care. However, she argues:

With the statement at the end of *Being and Time* that temporality, the basic structure of human being, is perhaps the horizon of Being, Heidegger implicitly relinquishes the question of causality and conditions of possibility, and embarks on the road toward the overcoming of metaphysics and ontology. To state that temporality is the horizon of Being is not the same as to state that Being is the cause or ground of time. Horizon has to do with directionality and openness, not with causality.²⁶⁶

In relinquishing the question of ground and causality in favour of horizon, Stambaugh reasons that conditions of possibility are also renounced. Conditions are related to causality and ground. As long as grounds are sought we are involved in conditions and causality. This draws attention to a basic problem concerning the role of causes, grounds and conditions, and thus the problem of origins. Some of the critics that I have cited have objected to the use of metaphysical arguments that account for beings in terms of 'causes' that cannot be 'grounded,' while others have objected to the use of

²⁶² Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, p. 15.

²⁶³ Cf. Heidegger, BT, §65:370ff.

²⁶⁴ Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, p. 16ff.

²⁶⁵ The problem of historical meaning shall be dealt with in more detail below.

²⁶⁶ Stambaugh, Joan, Introduction to Heidegger's *On Time and Being*, p. viii. She is referring to §83 of BT.

transcendental conditions of possibility. Here, however, Stambaugh states that the two are strongly related. The essay *On the Essence of Ground* attacks the notion of causality and makes it dependent upon the prior manifestation of beings. *On the Essence of Truth* confronts traditional truth theories that cannot account for the connection between language and world. Both appear to be relying upon conditions of possibility to deconstruct the tradition. How do we overcome conditions of possibility? Heidegger's horizons are the structures that being 'projects upon'. They are the structures that *allow for* beings to manifest themselves. They are unquestionably involved in conditions of possibility. Nevertheless, Stambaugh rightly states that Heidegger is trying to overcome the metaphysical language of the tradition, a tradition that is constantly informing his thought. It is rather a case of re-describing the metaphysical structures non-metaphysically. Heidegger does not wish to rely upon a metaphysical 'realm' or 'space' that radically departs from the world of being and existence. Hence conditions of possibility are seen as perpetuating a metaphysical functionality that looks to ground things in an external cause or origin beyond the thing itself. We have mentioned Rorty's objection to this way of thinking in section 5.2 above. An atemporal reading of conditions of possibility would therefore repeat the problem offering us either a dualist or immanentist solution to origins. Heidegger's answer is to speak of temporal horizons that *do not delineate a separate realm of being*. A horizon attempts to relate origins to the realm that 'we are in,' and the meaning of being and the truth of being both name basic relations of the 'one world'. Basic relations and truth are said to be 'related'. If, as Stambaugh says, time functions as the horizon of being, its advantage over atemporal conditions is that it does not implicitly name something 'spatialized' and therefore separate. Secondly, all things are required to be *in* time in order to be; hence, time is inherently conditional while simultaneously being ungraspable 'in itself'. According to Stambaugh, the reason that Heidegger's horizon is not reducible to metaphysical designations is because 'the relation is more fundamental than what is related'.²⁶⁷ Hence, the basic relation between Dasein and being is more fundamental than either of these two elements. It is this move that Caputo finds disturbing, and one which allows Heidegger to drop the existential qualities of his earlier work and begin to mythologize being through the description of epochs of being that occur in history. However, we must first allow Heidegger to name the relation that he is describing in *On the Essence of Truth*.

²⁶⁷ Stambaugh, Introduction to Heidegger's *On Time and Being*, p. x.

5.4 The Open

Heidegger's relation that leads us to an understanding of conditions is discovered in the nature of propositional truth. Heidegger understands propositional truth as endeavouring to present 'the thing' as it is presented before the sayer. Truth as a matter of accordance, therefore, has something to do with presenting and being presented and not 'representing,' which suggests that truth lies in the object of consciousness as represented to the intellect. As Heidegger defines it, 'to present here means to let the thing stand as opposed as object'.²⁶⁸ This is taken to mean that a thing must be standing present in the world in order to be spoken and related to consciousness, and this 'standing as an object' necessarily involves opposition (opposedness) and resistance to other things that are not it. Being a being involves opposition; however, to be in opposition means that that thing is already *placed* somewhere so that it may 'stand opposed'. Truth as accordance requires 'placedness' to be in correspondence with some other thing, and it is here that Heidegger concentrates his attention. For if truth concerns correctness and accordance and the essence of both sayer and thing are required to maintain themselves in their own activities, then the truthfulness of a statement can only be related across this area of 'placedness' which, conceivably, conditions the relation:

As thus placed, what stands opposed must traverse an open field of opposedness [*Entgegen*] and nevertheless must maintain its stand as a thing and show itself as something withstanding [*ein Ständiges*]. This appearing of the thing in traversing a field of opposedness takes place within an open region [*Offenen*], the openness [*Offenheit*] of which is not first created by the presenting but rather is only entered into and taken over as a domain of relatedness. The relation of the presentative statement to the thing is the accomplishment of that bearing [*Verhältnis*] that originally and always comes to prevail as a comportment [*Verhalten*]. But all comportment is distinguished by the fact that, standing in the open region, it in each case adheres to something opened up as such.²⁶⁹

With this brief, and frankly obscure, description the entire trajectory of Heidegger's inquiry appears to change course. Although Heidegger's prior language and thought remain complex, we retain familiar oppositions that aid our enquiry: being and beings, being and nothingness, being and its condition, reason and non-reason, etc. These oppositional elements originate in the metaphysical tradition. However, the reference to an 'open region' appears to reveal a new horizon which I will attempt to elucidate by means of Stambaugh's observation that Heidegger's overcoming of metaphysics is won through the elevation of relations over and above the elements that are involved in those relations.

²⁶⁸ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth,' p. 141.

²⁶⁹ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth,,,' p. 141.

Heidegger's description suggests that any thing to be a thing must exist in a relationship that binds it to existence. The relationship is thought of in terms of a 'region,' that is, something space-like. The region is involved in binding things to existence. That binding region is independent of and prior to the things it binds. As an essential region that is not a thing it resembles, although is not equal to, a space which is open. The strength of Heidegger's account rests on the thinker recognising the necessity of some form of relation or region for things to exist *in* or *through*. It involves thinking the *in* of this relation. Only then do things exist *in* the open are able to constitute relations between Dasein, beings and being as a whole. However, this is by no means a straightforward step to take. It means admitting something that is not there to see or think, as Heidegger regards thoughts to be beings like any other beings. At the same time it is claiming to be different from conditional structures that allow one to think the necessity of such and such a structure that allow for the existence of a thing.

The relation involves what Heidegger is calling 'truth'. All beings, to be beings, necessarily exist in this relation; 'to be' means to be in true, that is, *disclosed*, relations. Heidegger has already described truth in terms of disclosure and here we begin to see the structures that operate around this disclosive movement. For truth to operate in any sense of the word, things or beings are required to exist for truth to correspond to or be in accord with something else. Therefore, truth involves the disclosure of beings. Heidegger is taking a step back from this insight to claim that there is some thing or structure required that allows for the disclosure of things *as such*. That is, if beings are not responsible for their own disclosure, and Heidegger appears to claim that they cannot be, then there is conceivably a structure or open region that allows for the manifestation of beings. While causality implies that beings are somehow implicated in their own disclosure by the use of terms such as ground (of beings), Heidegger is feeling for a new account of a conditional explanation that frees itself from the metaphysical reliance on beings. That account cannot have a being-based terminology when it is describing the relation between these beings. The relation itself is described as the structure that configures or prepares an open region for things to manifest themselves in. In seeking to think the relation Heidegger, momentarily, drops the beings that are involved in that relation: the intellect and the thing are allowed to wander out of focus. The concentration on the relation itself constitute what Heidegger is calling a horizon. It suggests that the process of truth requires a 'channel' or 'means' for the relation to occur 'in' or 'through'. That channel as the area of presenting, 'for a long time has been

named “being.”²⁷⁰ However, Heidegger is in *On the Essence of Truth* attempting to describe a horizon that is not being, at least not in the sense that we have previously understood it. It relates, as Stambaugh has already pointed out, more to time than being and therefore to process rather than thing.

Various obstacles are encountered when enquiring into the means of a process as opposed to the beings that are involved that process. A central difficulty surrounds the mode of observation: how is the channel itself made visible when its contents are excluded from the enquiry? The open region is for this reason an obscure and somewhat fragile thing; it is not a structure in the sense of a superstructure that can easily be pointed to or named. Heidegger has more or less consistently maintained that being is only visible through beings. The attempt to look on being itself would constitute an impossibility and undermine much of Heidegger’s previous work. What we understand of Heidegger’s thought demands that everything is already in relation and as such its always ‘attuned’ or ‘in comportment’ toward something or another. That said, Heidegger is continually asking us to ‘think’ the ontological relation that requires being to be the origin of beings. And hence we are forced to think through the relation to its prior condition. This very fact brings us into contact with relations and processes that are not ‘in being’ and are therefore liberated from beings and content. Heidegger offers the open as such a region which is described as a horizon rather than a being. And yet the open region is not undisclosed, it appears to be in the world or perhaps, inversely, the world appears to be in it. The open is an essential element that beings require in order to be in the world, conversely, the open is only made visible when in relation to beings.

Okrent, drawing on some of Heidegger’s later work, states that the open as the truth of being is ‘the opening in which both beings and Being can appear’.²⁷¹ On this reading the open gains a privileged conditional status over the traditional opposition between beings and their grounds or conditions.

Being *and* time, time *and* Being, name the relation of both issues, the matter at stake which *holds* both issues toward each other and endures their relation. To reflect upon this situation is the task of thinking, assuming that thinking remains intent on persisting in its matter.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Truth,,’ p. 141.

²⁷¹ Okrent, ‘The Truth of Being and the History of Philosophy,’ p. 146. Okrent is mainly drawing upon *On Time and Being*.

²⁷² Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 4.

This account of Heidegger's open region, regardless of any criticisms we may have of it, can be said to be an advancement over a traditionally metaphysical condition in that it hopes to have described an 'origin of beings' which is essentially non-metaphysical. That is, by subsuming being and beings, being and time beneath the truth of being, as the open region, Heidegger allows for 'origins' without expelling them to an external space or 'other world'. The origins are not described in a traditional manner, as there are perhaps many 'origins' within this relationship. The play between truth as disclosure also involves concealment as the 'origin' of unconcealment. Being is not a fully accountable condition or origin of beings. The relation itself has been raised to a position of prominence and it is that which constitutes a horizon.

5.5 Attunement

Although we have been describing the open in terms of a structure that makes possible those things that stand in that structure the open cannot be said to be a 'neutral zone'. What becomes essential to the analysis is the understanding of what Heidegger means by 'attunement'. In English attunement has an ill-defined function. It can describe a 'musical,' 'spiritual' or 'cognitive' sense of focus or conduct. In the context of our discussion, it has been taken to mean 'non-neutral,' 'already in relation' or as 'in comportment' toward something or another. This lack of neutrality could be due to a variety of reasons: historical inheritance, the fact that reason itself has a history, the fact that beings always relate to something, etc. The significance is ambiguous. However, Heidegger clearly relates attunement – *Gestimmtheit* – to *Stimmung* and through this connection beings are exposed to the whole of beings.²⁷³ In effect, experience and feeling themselves are only possible on the basis of *Gestimmtheit*. Heidegger even mentions the essence of attunement in terms of '*das Wesen Stimmung*'. It therefore becomes clear that the open as the place of attunement does not translate as extension of the transcendental condition or as an extension of a rational inquiry into cause or ground. Heidegger is indeed relating it to experience but of the kind that we encountered in *What is Metaphysics?* *Gestimmtheit* relates to *Stimmung* as attunement to an existential mood such as *Angst*. Therefore, the open is described in terms of *an extension of an existential horizon of 'mood'*. We are reminded that existential *Angst* first made possible the disclosure of beings as a whole through exposure to the

²⁷³ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth,' pp. 147ff.

activity of the nothing. This was essential to Heidegger's cause in order to break out of metaphysical forms of argumentation. To argue in a reasoned sense requires, in Heidegger's narrative, an understanding of the content of argument or, in other words, an understanding of 'beings'. Heidegger has consistently been asking, how is it the case that we have an understanding of beings? One of the answers that he is giving is that beings are always already attuned towards understand beings as a whole (and thus the ontological difference) by the fact that they are in being: beings exist in constantly attuned existential horizons. The open is the 'condition' that provides this attunement and could be thought of as the 'existential horizon in itself,' or the 'condition for the possibility of mood'. If this account is correct, then Michel Haar's work on the centrality of mood and attunement in Heidegger's later work provides a more convincing reading than expositions that remain excessively influence by a transcendental perspective.²⁷⁴

5.6 Preliminary Assessment

The outcome of Heidegger's enquiry into truth as disclosure suggests that conditions cannot serve as ground. Conditions in their traditional usage appear to be metaphysically orientated in a way that fails to provide sufficient ground for a series of causal events or mental phenomena.²⁷⁵ When starting from beings and regressing to conditions, one appears to be committed to a metaphysical rationale that accounts for origins in terms of beings, causes and conditions. As Heidegger tries to show regarding the correctness of propositional truth: the principle of judgement or truth is already presupposed. Heidegger has been attempting to expose this presupposition and alleges that without the conjoining factor – the relation – propositional accounts of truth fail to articulate what connects language and world. Propositional accounts may be interested in truth in terms of what is true or false, but what makes truth possible in itself is often left unexplained. Conversely, according to Heidegger's critique, nor do transcendental accounts explain why truth or beings take the shape they do. The relational element or structure is generally presupposed. Nevertheless, Heidegger first approaches the problem of origins via a search for grounds and hopes to unearth the foundational factors to phenomena. That

²⁷⁴ Haar, Michel, 'Attunement and Thinking,' in *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, Dreyfus, H. & Hall, H. eds., (London: Blackwell, 1992).pp. 159-70.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Rorty, 'Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Reification of Language,' pp. 341ff.

is, the origin of worldly phenomena is sought in structural 'conditions' within the nature or essence of being, rather than within the nature of knowledge. Heidegger reasons that being conditions consciousness rather than consciousness conditioning itself and/or being. Transcendental conditions are ontologised. For this reason being is often described as the 'condition of beings'. However, in the works that I have been studying a transformation (or overcoming) is set in motion. Heidegger understands that the inquiry is self-limiting due to the focus on beings. Beings attune our thinking process toward beings and not towards 'originary thinking'. Rather than asking, what makes X possible? Heidegger begins to ask the question, what makes possibility possible? Wherein his early work he was reliant on phenomena (the X) to orientate his investigation, Heidegger begins to hypostatise the conditions of phenomena and 'think being without regard for beings'.²⁷⁶ Hence we begin to inquiry into being *in itself*, time *in itself* and the relation *in itself*; a situation that many philosophers find abhorrent owing to its apparent rejection of the content of thought.

At a deeper level, Heidegger is investigating the limits or presuppositions surrounding the nature of first principles, conditions or 'rules'. His inquiry into origins asks: 'What sets the rules?' Part of his answer is that rules and principles appear to be preset. However, as Okrent observes, this does not ally Heidegger to an analytical philosophy of language or similar; he rejects any explicit notion of obeying or conforming to correctly articulated rules.²⁷⁷ On the other hand, Heidegger is not saying that rules are completely hidden to us; rather he is saying that the preset appears in a manner other than explicit rule giving. Because of its overt reliance on rules, metaphysical reason cannot enter the preset and gain access to its own condition. Rules cannot be fully explicated but they can perhaps be circumvented and therefore exposed in a negative fashion. Hence the language that Heidegger chooses is specifically intended to subvert, bypass or 'leap over' rule-based reason.

With the intention of revealing the mechanisms of this obedience/compliance to conditions, Heidegger speaks in terms of the attunement and comportment of beings.

A statement is invested with its correctness by the openness of comportment; for only through the latter can what is opened up really become the standard for the presentative correspondence. Open comportment must let itself be assigned this standard. This

²⁷⁶ Cf. Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 2.

²⁷⁷ Okrent, 'The Truth of Being and the History of Philosophy,' p. 148.

means that it must take over a pre-given standard for all presenting. This belongs to the openness of comportment. But if the correctness (truth) of statements becomes possible only through this openness of comportment, then what first makes correctness possible must with more original legitimacy be taken as the essence of truth.²⁷⁸

The comportment in question concerns the behaviour of truth, or the behaviour of statement to thing that is considered to be the truth relation. This comportment, as a standard for all presentation, is set by the open; its 'attitude' is 'attuned' by the open region and not by the force of the statement itself. This attunement is the focus of Heidegger's thinking at this point; it sets the pitch for truth to disclose itself. The essence of truth as disclosure is linked to freedom as the essence of the open. Heidegger is asking something like: 'How can the accomplishment of a pre-given directedness occur?' And he answers: 'The openness of comportment as the inner condition of the possibility of correctness is grounded in freedom.'²⁷⁹

We are left to ponder the obscure link that Heidegger is making between the pre-given (the rule) and that which sets the pre-given (freedom). Why is freedom related to comportment? As I read Heidegger, he appears to be probing into the ground-setting movement that 'must' somewhere exist by virtue of the fact that pre-givens or rules appear to exist. The argument seems to say that all existence as comportment is 'attuned' comportment, that is, there is no neutral attitude for beings to be in, and *that* comportment is determined by the open. To be a being one is required to be manifest in truth as disclosure; to be manifest in the open. To enter into the open is to enter into comportment. Hence to be a being is to be in comportment. The open region, as the origin of comportment, 'binds' the presenting of beings *through* comportment. The comportment that exists between things is a relation that binds. The region of disclosure or the region of the binding relation is then thought in terms of a condition: What would *make possible* a binding relation? The answer that Heidegger gives is that the presupposed status of that which enters into a binding comportment is—freedom.²⁸⁰ If this were not the case, then the prior condition would also be a 'bound condition' and would require further investigation into why it was already bound. It is this focus on the relationship of binding (as opposed to the 'things' that are bound) that constitutes a 'horizontal' rather than a conditional investigation. Heidegger is quite explicitly using a line of reasoning that springs from the principle of sufficient

²⁷⁸ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth,' p. 142.

²⁷⁹ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth,' p. 142.

²⁸⁰ The missing element here is the 'that which,' i.e., 'that which' enters into binding is free. The being or 'that which' enters, therefore, has some undisclosed origin prior to the binding comportment.

reason; it is a retelling of one solution to the problem of beginnings: a conditioned series is required to begin. That beginning is required to be self-caused or 'unconditioned' otherwise it does not describe a beginning. Heidegger's leap to the domain of freedom can initially be read as an ontological or transcendental response to this familiar problem. In Heidegger's language 'binding' suggests something 'directed' and as we are now investigating the origin of directed comportment, it makes little sense to say that it is based on an 'even prior' directedness. Hence, Heidegger seems to be saying that somewhere *things must 'freely' begin*. This constitutes a move beyond conditionals, which begin with beings, and toward a thinking of the horizon 'in itself'. Heidegger is essentially saying that in order to gain insight into the nature of presets (or rules) one has to attempt to think those presets *as* presets, that is, independent of the beings that are set. This point is articulated more clearly in the later lecture *On Time and Being*.

To think Being itself explicitly requires disregarding Being to the extent that it is only grounded and interpreted in terms of beings and for beings as their ground, as in all metaphysics. To think Being explicitly requires us to relinquish Being as the ground of beings.²⁸¹

In order to liberate himself from a metaphysical conception of ground, Heidegger tries to think being in itself. Heidegger is inverting the order of philosophical thinking when he says that the first to thought – the obviousness of beings and the self – is not the first in being. Being, as the condition of beings, is the last to thought but it is the first in the logic of beginnings.²⁸² Heidegger sees his tasks as one of stripping away the layers that obscure his insight into beginnings or the origins of presets (being, time, freedom, the open). He is attempting to think the preset *in itself*, thereby gaining insight into the setting of presets.

Clearly, this is not a straightforward course to take and involves, as Heidegger admits, 'many stops, detours and wrong paths'.²⁸³ Nevertheless, before commenting on the consequences of this path of thinking I have been attempting to delineate Heidegger's method in order to understand his objectives. I have been arguing that this entails a concentration on the relation itself and the distance that is gained when realising that conditions, beings and grounds are all involved in preset modes. This simple realisation is won through Heidegger's rigorous deconstruction of metaphysical thought and

²⁸¹ Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth,' p. 6.

²⁸² Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, p. 146.

²⁸³ Heidegger, 'My Way to Phenomenology,' in *On Time and Being*, p. 80.

an investigation into the presuppositions passed on through the history of philosophy. I have also been claiming that Heidegger's attempt to deconstruct metaphysics as a rational heritage is coherent within Heidegger's method. I have, therefore, been in disagreement with commentary that portrays Heidegger's demarcation of horizons in terms of an extension of the (rational) transcendental method. The method by which Heidegger approaches the open as a preset is fundamental to understand the nature of a pre-directed mode of interpretation. The horizon that Heidegger hopes to demarcate leaves behind the content of the relation and attempts to think the relation (rather than the thing) in itself. Heidegger appears to understand metaphysical grounds as a limit or error existing in metaphysics: metaphysics risks remaining in groundless as long as one confines oneself to metaphysical reason. Heidegger insists that to remain in metaphysics is to remain in the manipulation of (ungroundable) grounds. Heidegger's enquiry into conditions enables him to gain insight into the ground of metaphysical thinking. Once the 'ground' is brought into view, the way is prepared for a departure from metaphysics.

Where does the spring go that springs away from the ground? Into an abyss? Yes, as long as we only represent the spring in the horizon of metaphysical thinking. No, insofar as we spring and let go.²⁸⁴

Heidegger does not regard his enquiry as one that leaps into an abyss. It is only thought in these terms when one relies on a metaphysical representation of grounds.

However, Heidegger's methodology has significant consequences for metaphysical procedures such as the functional nature of truth and also the role he assigns to history. As Heidegger is placing the transcendental condition in a horizon that, according to Stambaugh, overcomes ontological structures themselves, commentators find it hard to reconnect ontological structures with ontic beings that dwell in those structures. As Tugendhat observes, once truth is awarded the title 'disclosure' the functional ontic distinction between truth and lies is lost. That assertions need to be verified and meaning needs to be clarified is beside the point, and Heidegger's horizon is judged inadequate to this task. However, the process is considered to be liberating is because it made 'possible an immediate and positive truth-

²⁸⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Identity and Difference*, trans. J. Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) pp. 32-33.

relation, an explicit truth-relation which no longer made any claim to certainty and so could not be disturbed by uncertainty either.²⁸⁵

Tugendhat claims that the investigation into truth as disclosure has led Heidegger to a form of immediacy which repudiates the possibility of error and, consequently, of certainty. Heidegger is, therefore, read as being engaged in a traditional enterprise that has been with philosophy at least since Plato. Heidegger's approach is to take the truth-error problem out of service by employing the subversive technique of conjoining elements at the ontological level, which is considered to be prior to rational analysis. Hence what is 'disclosed' substitutes for the traditional truth-relation. Unfortunately, the truth-relation cannot reassert itself once this move has been made because truth now means disclosure as such, and disclosure as such does not differentiate between truth and lie. This disclosed horizon is supported by the concealment or untruth of being and, accordingly, concealment constitutes the hidden element of being. As the criticism stands, it has its appeal in the fact that we can see many of these moves being described in Heidegger's work. However, we are then led to accept that Heidegger has extended a rational transcendental condition and replaced it with something beyond rationality and thus the inferred emptiness of the term 'being'.²⁸⁶ Under these conditions the relationships between being and beings, subject and object, truth and lie break down. For Tugendhat and Macann, this is an objectionable place to remain; for Rorty, who celebrates the abandonment of external metaphysical concepts, this is a good place to be which he then converts to a pragmatic account of utilitarian life in opposition to the 'eternal truths' of metaphysics.²⁸⁷ In brief, Rorty is happy to abandon the relations with conditions, whereas Tugendhat and Macann continue to seek relations in conditional correlation with beings. I support these criticisms in part, in that a more pointed critique might be that once Heidegger breaks into the world of presets and the setting of presets, it is not at all obvious that he has gained a definite insight into how or why a preset would wish to express itself through such notions as being and beings or truth and lies. Relations may indeed

²⁸⁵ Tugendhat, 'Heidegger's Idea of Truth,' p. 90.

²⁸⁶ As Rorty opines: 'I think Heidegger goes on and on about "the question of Being" without ever answering it because Being is a good example of something we have no criteria for answering questions about. It is a good example of something we have no handle on, no tools for manipulating – something which resists "the technical interpretation of thinking.'" Richard Rorty, 'Heidegger, Contingency and Pragmatism,' in *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, p. 215.

²⁸⁷ Rorty, 'Heidegger, Contingency and Pragmatism,' p. 209.

be involved in a binding operation between things but their status as the 'rule that set the rule' remains deeply obscure.

As the non-metaphysical horizon becomes more abstract and more deeply concealed from view, the ways in which being and the open are made known to us are given through more limited means. As abstract reason has been abandoned, Heidegger moves into notions of history that rely on either immediacy or assertions concerning the epochal movements in history in order to overcome what he sees as nihilism. We shall broach the problem of nihilism in the following chapters.

6. Nihilism and the Overcoming of Metaphysics

Heidegger's critique of the traditional categories and methodology of metaphysics leads him to confront Nietzsche and Nietzsche's account of nihilism in the 1930s. In preparation for Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, this chapter introduces the concept of nihilism and its relation to the overcoming of metaphysics in Jacobi and Nietzsche's philosophy. I outline some of the major themes in Nietzsche's work and describe how those themes are consistent with traditional philosophical concerns. I argue that the existence of time in the form of history creates a philosophical problem for metaphysics: if there is history and there is metaphysics, then what is the relation? Nietzsche's genealogical method attacks the foundation of metaphysics through providing historical and temporal answers to metaphysical questions. Genealogical enquiry permits Nietzsche to define nihilism in terms of metaphysics: nihilism is a consequence of uncovering eternal metaphysical meanings as 'fable'. This process leads to the end of tradition as an unquestionable source of meaning.

6.1 Nietzsche's Themes

Nietzsche's philosophy is tremendously rich and his influence multifaceted and far-reaching. Owing to the limits of this thesis, I cannot provide a full treatment of Nietzsche's works and innumerable influences. Nevertheless, I propose a brief discussion of Nietzsche's philosophical orientation with the intention of providing a backdrop for Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche. This will be followed by a more in-depth analysis of genealogy and nihilism. I hope to expose the philosophical structures implicit in Nietzsche's attack on traditional metaphysics and associate them with Heidegger's enterprise, as I have been describing it.

Steven E. Aschheim reminds us that, 'the artistic avant-garde, the Stephan George circle, vegetarians, sexual liberationist, the Youth movements, feminism, Zionism, expressionism, völkisch groups, conservative revolutionaries, and, of course, national socialism,' have all laid claim to a Nietzschean

inheritance.²⁸⁸ The diversity of movements cited testifies to the many varieties of Nietzsche interpretation that have existed since its initial appearance in the late 19th century. Lou Salomé's 1894 study, *Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken*, was the first full-length enquiry into Nietzsche and his thought, which also bears witness to Nietzsche's considerable influence on the development of psychoanalysis.²⁸⁹ Wilhelm Dilthey is representative of early philosophical interpretations that tended to read Nietzsche as a cultural critic and 'philosopher of life'. Dilthey associates Nietzsche with 'unsystematic thinkers' such as Montaigne, Marcus Aurelius, Carlyle, Emerson, Ruskin, Tolstoy and Maeterlinck, whose methods border on 'rhetoric and persuasion' rather than scientific or logical proof.²⁹⁰ Georg Simmel follows a similar line of interpretation:

Nietzsche's attempt is to remove the meaning-giving goal of life from its illusory position outside of life and to put that goal back into life itself. There is no more radical way to do this than through a vision of life in which self-directed augmentation is but the realization of what life provides as potential, including means and values. Every stage of human existence now finds its meaning not in something absolute and definite, but in something higher that succeeds it in which everything antecedent, having been only potential and germinal, wakes up to greater efficiency and expansion.²⁹¹

While psychological and vitalist readings persisted, a second stage of interpretation can be described which attempted to sublimate Nietzsche's work into the various ideological and political agendas that dominated the early twentieth century; national socialism would be the most prominent of these movements.²⁹² Post-World War II readings of Nietzsche assume a divergence of opinion. The famous Kaufmann defence of Nietzsche represents an 'essentialist' reading whereby previous interpretations of Nietzsche are judged according to how far they deviate from or conform to a 'correct' reading of Nietzsche.²⁹³ Conversely, Gianni Vattimo states that the greatest influence of recent years has been the 1961 publication of Heidegger's 1936-1946 Nietzsche lectures.²⁹⁴ Heidegger generates controversy by

²⁸⁸ Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) p. 308.

²⁸⁹ Lou Salomé, *Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken* (Vienna: Carl Konegen, 1894); trans. by S. Mandel as *Nietzsche* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); also cf. C.G. Jung, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminars Given in 1934-39*, Vol. I & II, ed. J. L. Jarrett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Paul-Laurent Assoun, *Freud et Nietzsche* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), trans. by R. L. Collier Jr. as *Freud and Nietzsche* (London: Athlone Press, 2000), passim, esp. pp. 51-94; Michel Henry, *Genéalogie de la psychanalyse: Le commencement perdu* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985), trans. by D. Brick as *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp.204-240.

²⁹⁰ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Wesen der Philosophie* (1907) trans. S.A. & W.T Amery as *The Essence of Philosophy*, trans. (New York: AMS Press, 1969) pp. 31 & 72.

²⁹¹ Georg Simmel, *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche: Ein Vortragszyklus* (1907) trans. H. Loiskandl, D. Weinstein & M. Weinstein as *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991) pp. 6-7.

²⁹² Cf. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990*, particularly chapters 3, 4 & 5.

²⁹³ Cf. Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 3-18.

²⁹⁴ Gianni Vattimo, *Introduzione a Nietzsche* (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1985), trans. N. Martin, *Nietzsche: An Introduction* (London: Athlone Press, 2002), pp. 1ff.

treating Nietzsche as a metaphysician and, in contrast to earlier interpretations, attempts to expose a fundamental philosophical position in his work. However, a wave of equally groundbreaking interpretations that linked Nietzsche to a burgeoning poststructuralist movement also emerged after World War II. Georges Bataille and Gilles Deleuze are representative of this ongoing project that wishes to describe a 'new Nietzsche' divested of right-wing subjectivist and hierarchical teachings.²⁹⁵

This brief survey barely hints at the diversity of interests that Nietzsche has generated. However, common to many readings is the desire to present Nietzsche as an epoch-making radical who introduces revolutionary ingredients into tired philosophical conventions. Although there is some merit in awarding Nietzsche revolutionary status, Richard Schacht draws attention to the fact that most of Nietzsche's concerns are philosophical concerns that have been present in the Western tradition since its inception.²⁹⁶ Schacht and others have argued that Nietzsche has significant predecessors in the philosophical tradition such as Heraclitus, Plato, Spinoza and Schopenhauer.²⁹⁷ The difference that Nietzsche brings to philosophy is the manner in which he attacks the various problems he encounters. Some of his foremost concerns surround the status of truth, art, morality, religion, time, change and reason. These subjects cannot be said to be foreign to philosophy or religious thought. However, Nietzsche's exceptional contribution to philosophy can be observed in his methodology and the distinctions he uses to evaluate traditional concepts. His methodology engages in polemic attack, psychological accusations, rhetoric, poetry, satire, humour, and philosophical and historical analysis in the form of aphorisms, essays and extended theses. Furthermore, his innovative categorisation grants philosophical significance to terms such as health/sickness, strength/weakness, power/impotence and active/reactive force. Such a breadth of style can effect a sense of giddiness and

²⁹⁵ Cf. Georges Bataille, *Sur Nietzsche* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1945) trans. B. Boone as *On Nietzsche* (London: Athlone, 1992); Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la Philosophie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), trans. H. Tomlinson as *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (London: Athlone, 1983).

²⁹⁶ Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche's Kind of Philosophy*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 155ff.

²⁹⁷ Cf. V. Tejera, *Nietzsche and Greek Thought*, (Dordrecht: Martin Nijhoff, 1987), *passim*, esp. Ch. III, pp. 33-56; John Sallis, *Nietzsche's Platonism* in *Nietzsche: Critical Assessments*, Vol. IV, ed. D. W. Conway & P. S. Groff (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 292-302; Catherine Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, Strauss, Derrida*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 33-69; Richard Schacht, *The Nietzsche-Spinoza Problem: Spinoza as Precursor?* in *Spinoza: Critical Assessments*, Vol. IV, ed. G. Lloyd (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 256-275; Martha C. Nussbaum, 'The Transfiguration of Intoxication: Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Dionysus' in *Nietzsche: Critical Assessments*, Vol. I, pp. 331-359; Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, *passim*, esp. Ch. 1.

disorientation to the unsuspecting reader, as some commentators have noted, leaving the interpreter either free to pursue his/her own interests or bewildered and lost at sea.²⁹⁸

If there is a common stimulus to Nietzsche's thought, it could be said to be the metaphysical concepts generated by philosophy, science and religion. Deleuze argues that, 'Nietzsche's most general project is the introduction of sense and value into philosophy.'²⁹⁹ By 'sense,' Deleuze understands 'meaning'. Sense or meaning is the result of a play of 'forces,' interchangeable and pluralistic, rather than being fixed in meaning by a metaphysical hierarchy of universal concepts. However, while Deleuze is undoubtedly justified in raising the active nature of Nietzsche critique, these elements are methodically introduced into Nietzsche's thought to counteract static metaphysical concepts and hence the overcoming of metaphysical concepts represents the most common theme in Nietzsche's project. Following this line of reasoning, Nietzsche's procedure first seeks to understand the eternal truths of metaphysics as *error*. That historical error entails, for Nietzsche, the history of metaphysics.

Belief in unconditioned substances and in identical things is likewise a primary, ancient error committed by everything organic. Insofar, however, as all metaphysics has had principally to do with substance and freedom of the will, one may designate it the science that treats of the fundamental errors of mankind – but does so as though they were fundamental truths.³⁰⁰

Metaphysical truths, which have hitherto now served as foundational truths, are nothing more than illusions created by an ancient obsession with the origin of things. Rather than prescribing the origin of things in immanent nature, an opposition is generated whereby origins could only be established from 'above' or by a 'mysterious thing in itself'.³⁰¹ Bowie has described Nietzsche in the context of the assault on Enlightenment rationalism and natural sciences that dominated the thought of the 19th century.³⁰² Nietzsche's early works, particularly *The Birth of Tragedy*, *On Truth and Lies in a*

²⁹⁸ Richard Deming cites the American poet Wallace Stevens as one 'drunk' on Nietzsche: 'Strategies of Overcoming: Nietzsche and the Will to Metaphor,' *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 28, No. 1, April 2004, p. 61. Babette Babich goes as far to accuse philosophers of 'going on holiday' when they approach Nietzsche, taking in the 'roar of the waves' and the 'mountain air' rather than attending to a rigorous philosophical task: 'Heidegger's Relation to Nietzsche's Thinking: Connivance, Nihilism, and Value' in *New Nietzsche Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1-2, Winter 1999, p. 25.

²⁹⁹ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 1.

³⁰⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), I §19.

³⁰¹ Vattimo, *Nietzsche*, pp. 59-60.

³⁰² Andrew Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy: From Kant to Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 133-155.

Nonmoral Sense and *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, perhaps propose one major theme:³⁰³

What...if all foundational concepts, including regulative ideas, are just fictions, 'noble lies' which are used to conceal the fact that there is nothing ultimately to back up the demand to think and act in terms of them?³⁰⁴

Nietzsche's allegation states that fundamental truths, which claim an essential insight into the nature of the world, are merely 'stories' that account for origins. The truth stories enable human beings to prepare themselves for life within a sanitised or sanctified whole. As Bowie suggests, Nietzsche's claim against truth destabilises foundational concepts by appearing to claim a privileged insight into 'meaninglessness' as the ultimate 'non-foundation' of human existence. That is, if there is nothing inherent in foundational theory to warrant the term 'foundation,' then the 'nothing' that lies behind them is a free play of meaning: meaninglessness *as* foundation. Nietzsche is concerned with truth and the status that truth has been historically accorded in the sciences. In order to subvert what he sees as unjustifiable theorising, his technique is to read traditional metaphysical concepts in reverse: truth becomes an error.

What then is truth? A moveable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins.³⁰⁵

In Nietzsche's hands, truth loses its rational prejudice and acquires a literary or metaphorical usage. Truth serves as a chronicle of finite human relations. It is a narrative or sensuous relationship that one has with life rather than being a fixed position around which human existence must assemble. Truth is drained of meaning when it is confined to a rational standpoint that imagines it has uncovered a 'value-free' objective truth. For Nietzsche, there is no value-free position from which to assert universal validity; such a position is 'illusory'. The consequence of this argument is to suggest that there are only 'value-full' positions from which to launch validity. Those claims are thus not 'universal' in an atemporal sense. A universal, scientific truth and method is, for Nietzsche, a denial of

³⁰³ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Birth of Tragedy' in *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. & ed. W. Kaufman (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), pp. 1-144; 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense' in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the early 1870's*, ed. & trans. D. Breazeale (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1979), pp. 79-97; 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life' in *Untimely Mediations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 57-124.

³⁰⁴ Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy*, p. 139.

³⁰⁵ Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense in Truth,' p. 84.

the sensuous force of truth: it severs the relation one has to life in favour of a neutral relation between concepts. Neutral relations are considered to be life-denying. It is in this sense that our understanding of truth is now forgotten. We have not laid truth down and forgotten its whereabouts; we have transformed the term into something else. According to Nietzsche's early essay, we have forgotten that truth narrates a 'story' that enables human beings to situate themselves in life.³⁰⁶

Nietzsche's truth becomes perspectival and no longer functions as a foundational concept. Nietzsche's 'truth-from-a-particular-perspective' allows him to adopt a specialised standpoint against the claims of reason. One can observe how Nietzsche's opposition to traditional truth theory is augmented by an unusual argument that alleges that truth can be 'life-enhancing' or 'life-denying'. Nietzsche is offering an alternative usage for truth contrary to a traditional convention, which describes truth as a neutral concept to be uncovered or brought into accord with itself. Once Nietzsche denies a rational conception of truth, truth is transformed through thinking truth in terms of relations to life. Hence, truth can be 'good' or 'bad' *for life*. It suggests that truth is a 'relation' and not a 'thing,' 'concept' or 'principle'. This transformation implies that truth is set by somewhat more pragmatic concerns than Platonic Ideals. It is set by life-enhancing practices that presuppose a form of 'will' for life. What is not life-enhancing is life-denying and hence nihilistic: a will to nothingness. However, the exact meaning of will and its relation to nihilism is the cause of much dispute, as will become apparent.

Nietzsche's investigations cause him to question the foundation of truth. Through philological and historical exploration, he hypothesises that metaphysical truth is linked to a dogma that wishes to assert a life-denying system of truth. *On the Genealogy of Morals* associates metaphysics with the rise of religion and religious truth. Here Nietzsche investigates the origin of morality in terms of an 'ascetic ideal' formed by means of Christian thought and practice. The story that Nietzsche tells is one of the subjugation of an earlier life-affirming morality by a subsequent life-denying morality. We shall deal more closely with the genealogical methodology below; however, the main task of his genealogy is to demonstrate that life-affirming values can be dominated by life-denying values, which terminates in the disbelief of values altogether: the condition known as nihilism. Nietzsche's skill is his ability

³⁰⁶ Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins in 'Nietzsche's Works and Their Themes' in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, p. 21, note that the popularity of 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense' has risen in recent years owing to the promotion of metaphor and language poststructuralist circles.

to think through the consequences of a fundamental change in truth relations. As he muses regarding the 'death of God,' 'now that this faith has been undermined, how much must collapse because it was built on this faith.'³⁰⁷ That is, how far do metaphysical conceptions of truth support all forms of beliefs? What is more, if metaphysical support is withdrawn from belief, then how much must be *rebuilt* on new life-enhancing foundations? This could be considered as the centre of Nietzsche's philosophy if viewed from his double definition of nihilism as comprising both a 'decline and recession of the power of the spirit' and an 'increased power of the spirit'.³⁰⁸ Thinking through to the 'ground' of nihilism permits Nietzsche to play the physician who distinguishes symptom from cause. Consequently, his life-based distinction allows him to expose the processes that disguise a basic ontology or ideology of life-denial:

[I]t is an error to consider "social distress" or "physiological degeneration" or, worse, corruption, as the *cause* of nihilism. Ours is the most decent and compassionate age. Distress, whether of the soul, body or intellect, cannot of itself give birth to nihilism (i.e. the radical repudiation of value, meaning and desirability). Such distress always permits a variety of interpretations. Rather: it is in one particular interpretation, the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted.³⁰⁹

Once the malignant ideology has been exposed as the 'true cause' of the social problem, Nietzsche can turn towards his corrective: active nihilism or thinking life *deprived* of its life-denying shackles. Therefore, the rethinking of metaphysics and Christian morality is necessarily a 'revaluation'. Any revaluation of belief systems remains, for Nietzsche, nihilistic in that it must be conscious of the lack of *metaphysical* ideals that underpin its thought. Nietzsche's attempt to think ideals by way of an entirely different directive is personified by his construction of Zarathustra as a character that struggles against the old metaphysical world. Zarathustra's journey commences in a 'going down' and ends with the words, 'This is *my* morning, *my* day beginneth: *arise now, arise, thou great noontide!*'³¹⁰ The transformation of ideals entails training or creating 'higher men,' the *Übermensch*, who finally rid themselves of Christian-metaphysical beliefs.³¹¹ Nietzsche's task is, 'to translate man back into nature'

³⁰⁷ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §343.

³⁰⁸ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §22. Also cf. §23.

³⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §1.1

³¹⁰ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, IV §80

³¹¹ This is one of the most controversial of Nietzsche's doctrines owing to its 'appropriation' by German National Socialism in the 1930's. However, in 1905 Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, who is strongly associated with tainting Nietzsche's legend, writes on Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. She cautions against reading the Superman as a racial type: 'This type must not be regarded as a fanciful figure: it is not a nebulous hope which is to be realised at some indefinitely remote period, thousands of years hence; nor is it a new species (in the Darwinian sense) of which we can know nothing...it is meant to be a possibility which men of the present age could realise with all their spiritual and physical energies, provided that they adopt the new values.' Introduction to Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. T. Common (Edinburgh: Foulis, 1914), p. xii.

and then re-describe him as a creature of health, ‘deaf to the lure of the old metaphysical bird-catchers who have been whistling to him for far too long: “You are more! You are higher! You have a different origin!”’³¹²

The methods by which Nietzsche hopes to transform philosophy and bring human life back to health are deceptive. The force of his writing often masks a more philosophical position that he occupies. However, many scholars have argued that the means of exposing the roots of nihilism and transforming the nature of philosophy is performed not only in the content of his thought but also in the form and style of Nietzsche’s texts. Both Deleuze and Sarah Kofman testify to the essential role of the aphorism in Nietzsche’s method. It is considered the ‘form of pluralist thought’ that claims to ‘articulate and formulate a *sense*,’ which only an aphorism is capable of achieving.³¹³ As Nietzsche confesses, an aphorism requires exegesis.³¹⁴ Nietzsche’s penchant for the aphorism is therefore read as an intentional desire for transformative interaction on the part of the reader and the text. The text acts on the reader and ‘cultivates’ him or her through an exegetic process.

A new reading/writing destroys the traditional categories of the book as a closed totality containing a definitive meaning, the author’s; in such a way it deconstructs the idea of the author as master of the meaning of the work and immortalizes himself through it. The aphorism, by its discontinuous character, disseminates meaning and appeals to the pluralism of interpretations and their renewal: only movement is immortal.³¹⁵

As Deming notes, ‘Reading, then, becomes properly understood as action and not merely passive reception.’³¹⁶ In this case, both reader and text are forced to change, to ‘mature,’ rather than remain stationary and unaffected. As Kofman appears to state regarding immortality, texts and readers are literally ‘carried through time’ by the methodology and style of performative textual reading. However, it is pertinent to question the extent of the novelty involved in this analysis. While this may appear new to some commentators, the aphoristic style can be traced to the German Romantic tradition since at least Schlegel, as can the opposition to epistemology with non-rational forms of thinking.³¹⁷ Moreover, the hermeneutic tradition of commentary and the continual development of the

³¹² Nietzsche, ‘Beyond Good and Evil,’ in *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, §230

³¹³ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 31.

³¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘On the Genealogy of Morals’ in *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, Preface 8, p. 459.

³¹⁵ Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche et la Métaphore* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1983) trans. by D. Large as *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 116.

³¹⁶ Deming, *Strategies of Overcoming*, p. 63.

³¹⁷ Cf. Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, 2nd ed., (Manchester: Manchester University Press [1990] 2003, Ch. 2.

text has been a central feature of the Jewish oral tradition for over 3000 years and of the written tradition for approximately 1800 years.³¹⁸ Nevertheless, the innovative element in poststructuralist interpretations of Nietzsche's influence is the extension of hermeneutic practices to include all texts and all language and the deconstructive aspect to Nietzsche's work. Nietzsche's significance results from his tireless endeavour to undermine exclusive authorities and regulative principles in Western thought in favour of performative action and pluralistic origins. Therefore, his methodology is considered central to a new form of textual reading.

6.2 Genealogy

In order to explore Nietzsche's methodology further, I propose a brief analysis of one of Nietzsche's most celebrated contributions to philosophy—genealogy. Why does Nietzsche turn to genealogy? I will argue that Nietzsche initiates a genealogical survey into morality because it specifically questions the supremacy of traditional metaphysical concepts through an examination of history. I hope to demonstrate that historical analysis provides Nietzsche with many of the tools required for a confrontation with metaphysics.

Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* is concerned with the origin of moral prejudice. Nietzsche asks, 'under what conditions did man devise the value judgements good and evil?'³¹⁹ To answer this question Nietzsche begins a historio-philosophical enquiry that examines the development of morality without the aid of theological revelation or metaphysical principles. Nietzsche's genealogy is developed in opposition to other forms of historical enquiry. His critique of moral values attacks both the values themselves and their manner of development. Therefore theological teleologies, historical evolutionary theory and 'English psychology,' which places the origin of morality at the level of

³¹⁸ The Rabbinic tradition accepts that the written law and the oral law were both revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. The writing down of the central precepts of the oral law (the Mishnah) was only executed under great duress by Rabbi Yehudah the Prince around 170-200 of the Common Era (C.E.); however, the Mishnaic period is generally considered to be c. 30 B.C.E. to 200 C.E. The Talmudic period, which further develops the oral and Mishnaic traditions, is considered to be c. 200 C.E. – 500 C.E. Cf. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, *The Talmud, Steinsaltz Edition: A Reference Guide*, (New York: Random House, 1989) pp. 11-33. Likewise, modern biblical hermeneutics is often traced to Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*, (1670). Cf. Richard H. Popkin, *Spinoza and Bible Scholarship* in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, pp. 383-407.

³¹⁹ Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals,' Preface §3, p. 453.

molecular interaction, are all rejected in favour of a genealogical approach.³²⁰ For Nietzsche, such theories are predisposed to a mechanised, and therefore passive, interpretation of moral development. English psychological theories are particularly singled out for their desire to designate 'utility' and 'pragmatic function' as the origin of moral sensations.³²¹ Nietzsche regards this type of investigation as thoroughly 'unhistorical,' and begins to inquire into the 'historical' development of morals as the active decisions of individuals. Hence, we are obliged to ask after the nature of Nietzsche's genealogical enquiry.

On the Genealogy of Morals is an enquiry into the nature of valuation in history. As Deleuze notes, Nietzsche's thesis is a critique of the values and principles that are used to estimate morals, but it is also the critique of 'the value of values, of the evaluation from which their value arises, thus the problem of their *creation*.'³²² The values in question are not to be judged separately from their creation and the individuals or 'types' creating the evaluation. For example, Kant's 'conditions of possibility' are values and evaluative principles that have, to paraphrase Nietzsche, forgotten they are values. Nietzsche hopes to read moral development in a similar manner to a Husserlian or Heideggerian theory of intentionality, that is, the individual elements in a relation cannot be separated and judged in isolation: they must be read as a whole. However, as Michel Foucault affirms, the investigation that Nietzsche initiates opposes a conventional search for metaphysical or theological origins: 'What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of the origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity.'³²³ Devotees to Nietzsche's cause embrace the contest that genealogy brings to homogeneous identities and origins. The historical character of their enquires attempt to employ history against itself with a view to 'dispel[ling] the chimeras of origins'.³²⁴ This is the sense of 'origin' that Nietzsche elicits in his genealogy:

Genealogy means both the value of origins and the origins of values. Genealogy is as opposed to absolute values as it is to relative or utilitarian ones. Genealogy signifies the differential element of values from which their value itself derives.³²⁵

³²⁰ Cf. Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals,' I, §1, p. 460.

³²¹ Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals,' I, §2, p. 461.

³²² Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 1.

³²³ Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,' trans. D. F. Bouchard & S. Simon in *Nietzsche: Critical Assessments*, Vol. III, p. 63.

³²⁴ Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,' p. 64. Foucault makes a distinction between Nietzsche's use of *Ursprung* and *Herkunft*, pp. 61-66.

³²⁵ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 2.

The historical nature of genealogy is intrinsic to Nietzsche's critical method, but the origins that are disclosed are considered to be 'differential' or 'discordant'. By this, Deleuze and Foucault largely mean that Nietzsche's enquiry investigates morality in terms of 'hieroglyphics' or signs that are 'documented' in historical existence.³²⁶ However, the judgements passed on historical 'facts' are used to undermine standardised versions of moral progress, which have been recounted in Western societies in the form of theological hypotheses and tales of national origins since their formation.

Nietzsche dramatically illustrates the genealogical method by way of his theory of moral origins in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. His thesis states that the crisis in Western morality is due to a 'slave revolt in morality'.³²⁷ The 'slave revolt in morality' is set against a version of Christian morality that portrays itself as a morally superior and divinely inspired universal truth: 'I negate a type of morality that has become prevalent and predominant as morality itself—the morality of decadence or, more concretely, *Christian morality*.'³²⁸ Nietzsche asserts that Christian morality is born of resentment against former aristocratic rulers or 'masters'. The rise of Christian morality is due to a slave insurrection against a master morality: it is *reactive* rather than *active*. However, the position of slave and master is not dependent upon the position that individuals or groups occupy in the social order. The spiritual or moral state of the individual determines the character of master or slave. In keeping with his life-affirming principle, Nietzsche explains that slave morality is the result of having to turn life-affirming passions inwardly where they are unable to disseminate themselves and are hence converted into *ressentiment*.³²⁹ 'All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward* – this is what I call the *internalisation* of man.'³³⁰ Resentment allows values to be inversed: bad becomes good, meekness becomes strength and strength and nobility are scorned as attributes of evil. Once resentment has been institutionalised into a system of slave morality, then the long process of bad conscience, decadence, and nihilism is set in train.³³¹ In this fashion, Nietzsche is illustrating how morality is created by the actions and inactions of human beings. Actions and judgements are systematised to a moral code, which is then regarded as invulnerable. Nietzsche's self-appointed task

³²⁶ Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals,' Preface, §7, p. 457.

³²⁷ Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals,' I, §10, p. 472.

³²⁸ Nietzsche, 'Ecco Homo,' *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, XIV, §4.

³²⁹ Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals,' I, §10 & §11.

³³⁰ Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals,' II, §16, p. 520.

³³¹ Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals,' I, §16 & II, §14-22.

is to unveil moral origins as historic origins *in time* and therefore expose their finite, contingent nature. Subsequently, he begins to counter moral decadence and bad conscience with another history that will lead to the externalisation of instincts and thus attempt to realise the happiness and health of human kind.

To an extent, Nietzsche's insights are conditioned by his view of history and the problems inherent in certain historical synopses. Alexander Nehamas provides a link between Nietzsche's early work *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*, suggesting that the fundamental problem that both essays address is interpretation.³³² At the basis of the inquiry lies the question: 'Is meaning discovered or created?'³³³ The question concerns historical meaning and its fixed or fluctuating status. A fixed or universal historical meaning correlates to a metaphysical conception of objective reality where meaning can be exposed or 'discovered' in the nature of reality. Conversely, an ever-changing conception of history suggests a continual 'creation' of meaning. *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* advises that an over-reliance on history is dangerous as it inhibits action by presenting history as an automated, mechanistic process upon which the human being has no effect. However, Nietzsche also describes history in terms of ever-changing flux, which reveals the irrelevance of any present condition.³³⁴ Both descriptions create a condition of 'impotence' through exposing the ineffectual nature of human action. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's attitude towards history appears contradictory. Is it a mechanistic process that conditions the present or a constant flux?

When the historical sense reigns *without restraint*, and all its consequences are realized, it uproots the future because it destroys illusion and robs the things that exist of the atmosphere in which alone they can live.³³⁵

To destroy illusion is to destroy the illusion of human action and therefore freedom; human beings require the atmosphere of freedom in order to live. History and the 'system of history' inhibit freedom, but what is not clear is what definition of freedom Nietzsche is employing. What is clear from our analysis thus far is that a sense of action executed by the individuals in question is important

³³² Alexander Nehamas, 'The Genealogy of Genealogy: Interpretation in Nietzsche's Second Untimely Meditation and in *On the Genealogy of Morals*' in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals*, ed. R. Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) pp. 269-283.

³³³ Nehamas, 'The Genealogy of Genealogy,' p. 269.

³³⁴ Magnus & Higgins, 'Nietzsche's Works and Their Themes,' p. 26; Nehamas, 'The Genealogy of Genealogy,' p. 270; Cf. Nietzsche, 'The Birth of Tragedy,' §7, p. 60 where Nietzsche links the inhibition of action to knowledge, a Hamlet-like condition whereby knowledge creates nausea and inertia. In order to act one requires the 'veil of illusion.'

³³⁵ Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,' § 7, p. 95.

for Nietzsche's antidote to life-denying philosophies. However, presently it seems that human action requires the 'illusion of freedom' in order to live healthily. 'Real freedom,' whatever that may mean, is not referred to. In both cases history, and not human action, establishes reality. Thus, 'freedom' appears to mean freedom *from* the reality of history. Freedom, as illusion, has the attribute of deception. There is hence a connection between both historical mechanism and ever-changing flux: they both deny the 'activity' that is essential to Nietzsche's later philosophical project.

Nietzsche is on the one hand contemplating a Hegelian reading of history that has ended in time and hence makes new history impossible or merely a coda to the completed historical process.³³⁶ The reason for this is that the Hegelian model is rendered as a necessary movement of history to pre-established ends in time. With the aim of destroying this metaphysical reading of history, Nietzsche offers several 'antidotes'. One is the 'fabrication' of a sense of 'forgetting' or an *unhistorical* stance toward history that disregards historical knowledge and therefore provides an illusory attitude that allows new activity to take place. Hence, human freedom is related to illusion. The second remedy is named the *suprahistorical* attitude where the aim is, 'To impose upon becoming the character of being.'³³⁷ In the face of ever-changing flux, an illusory state of 'timeless' is required to secure the appearance of grounds. Again, the root of each solution appears to be contradictory. The former presumes an unchanging ground to history that must be forgotten, and the latter ignores the flux of history. The completion of history and/or incessant flux renders human freedom ineffectual. The two antidotes to history again reveal Nietzsche's concern with freedom of action. He does not wish to portray human being as an irrelevance, but accepts a certain inevitability to history. In brief, he is taking up the Kantian problematic of how to position the human being in a world of process without destroying all notions of human freedom. Thus, Nietzsche attempts to recognise the pattern of history (the causal sequence) as indicating a real nature to the world while simultaneously denying that the pattern has any *inherent* meaning.³³⁸ Any real nature that is 'there' is not accessible to human beings. This implies that human action is likewise meaningless hence the need to forget history. As a meaningless pattern, historical meaning is provided by human interpretation, which may in itself be

³³⁶ Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,' § 7, pp. 104ff.

³³⁷ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §617.

³³⁸ Nehamas, 'The Genealogy of Genealogy,' p. 273.

illusory, but is deemed necessary for human life. Nietzsche's analysis appears to give humanity an illusory space for action.

What is being outlined is a structure for the rejection of any metaphysical *telos* or principle that provides meaning to historical events. In contrast to Kant, who sought to contend with the caustic implications of mechanism by securing a realm of freedom in the human mind, Nietzsche is attempting to secure a certain level of freedom by attacking the nature of the mechanism: history. In his early essay, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, history is evaded through illusion and the suspicions cast on the meaning of historical patterns. *On the Genealogy of Morals* explodes that notion to question the very basis of the creation of historical meaning. In the later essay, the nature of value creation is brought into discussion thorough Nietzsche's questioning of the traditional moral story. In the absence of fixed meaning, the question of freedom versus mechanism is redundant. Scientific mechanisms are merely science's way of avoiding the problem of active force. Nietzsche no longer has to argue his case *against* science or history if the hierarchy of scientific or historical 'proof' is undermined.

Nehamas explains in the following way. If a universal meaning represents a 'first nature' to history, then the destruction of universal meaning suggests there is no 'first nature' or 'reality' to historical events: there is no historical ground.

The best we can do is to confront our inherited and hereditary nature with our knowledge of it, and through a new, stern discipline combat our inborn heritage and implant in ourselves a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature, so our first nature withers away.³³⁹

As Nehamas comments, the prospect that there are no first natures and that all natures were brought into the world at some specific point in history also questions the status of second natures.³⁴⁰ The theory attacks the coherence of cause and effect and suggests that the relation between the two elements does not establish anything as irresistible as a 'reason'. Nietzsche is thus changing the position by which reason is judged. If a cause and its subsequent effect do not describe a 'reason,' then the meaning of reason is not supplied by a mechanistic or determinate relationship. For

³³⁹ Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,' § 3, p. 76.

³⁴⁰ Nehamas, 'The Genealogy of Genealogy,' pp. 274-5.

Nietzsche, a reason would have to relate to a meaning in relation to human life: a lived or 'moral' meaning for usage in life. However, moral meaning is only available through interpretation hence the questionable status of first natures. There are only second natures thus only interpretations. In a broader sense, Nietzsche is attempting to raise human beings above the state of nature or perceived natural law while simultaneously recognising the inescapable 'truth' that human beings exist in nature. Nietzsche's difficulty stems from finding these two positions, human being (freedom) and law driven nature, to be contradictory. The implications of this thought compel Nietzsche to seek solutions or, if the case of mechanistic or completed history is too strong, 'antidotes' that return human action to a necessary state of illusion. Nietzsche describes the establishment of historical meaning by way of *monumental*, *antiquarian* and *critical history*, that is, the study of monumental personalities, the appreciation of the past cultures and a critical attitude that reveals all events to be produced in time and thus potentially flawed. Nietzsche's attack on the precedence of the causal sequence and its logical conclusion in first natures or first principles despoils the premises of the principle of sufficient reason. Nehamas suggests that these themes are conjoined in *On the Genealogy of Morals* where Nietzsche finally rejects anything like a 'true nature' to the world:

If the causal description of the world is not a description of its real nature, if in fact there is no such thing as the world's real nature, then interpretation need not be, as Nietzsche had believed when he composed his earlier works, falsification.³⁴¹

Nietzsche's enquiry into the historical production of values reveals the creation of value as a product of will thus rendering metaphysical historical necessity essentially meaningless. The insight presents two opposing positions in historical time: the interpreter, who exists in the present, and the historical event. A temporal distance opens up between the historical and present age. For Nietzsche and the genealogical method, the historical event cannot be a fixed truth because the bestowal of meaning always rests on the prerogative of the interpreter: it is *decided* in the present.

MacIntyre describes the state of affairs that exists between the metaphysical tradition and Nietzsche in terms of opposing methodologies: an encyclopaedic procedure that seeks to unify the world through rational concepts and the genealogical method that seeks to describe the world as a set of

³⁴¹ Nehamas, 'The Genealogy of Genealogy,' p. 275.

perspectives.³⁴² From either position, the opposing methodology is incoherent. The encyclopaedic method can only judge genealogy as an irrational or relativistic attack that misconceives reason; and the genealogist can only view the metaphysician as producing just another reading of events. According to MacIntyre, each position requires the other in order to form a coherent representation of itself to itself.

An encyclopaedic reading suggests that Nietzsche's genealogy reduces truth to human will and subsequently denies any universal position by which events are judged. Truth becomes perspectival and no longer functions as a foundational concept. This supposition has been described by many philosophers in the rational tradition as the 'liar's paradox'.³⁴³ The argument states that perspectivism appears to require a particular vantage point from which to launch such radical statements: How does one criticise the foundational concepts of all western intellectual history without claiming a unique perspective for oneself? In order to pronounce a global claim such as, 'Everything I say is false,' the liar paradoxically professes a statement of truth. In accordance with this analysis, Nietzsche's writing can be read as a sceptical or relativistic attack that asserts a global statement concerning the 'fallacy of reality'. The statement relies on the correspondence of this 'fact' with a particular 'reality,' in this case a universal statement on the nature of the world, and hence demonstrates that universal truths are valid. However, as mentioned above, this criticism is not as coherent as it appears. Bowie is in agreement with Nehamas when he suggests that if the concept of truth as presented by the correspondence theory of truth is itself nonsensical, then the liar's paradox begins to break down.³⁴⁴

In order for MacIntyre to entertain the thought that Nietzsche is a relativist, he is wont to understand Nietzschean will as *voluntas*: as the volition of a subjective will.³⁴⁵ Truth then becomes relative to that will when universal reason is denied and truth is determined through the caprice of the interpreter. When taking up an encyclopaedic position, MacIntyre is reading Nietzsche's denial of reason as arguing 'against' reason rather than understanding it as an outright rebuttal. Thus, the encyclopaedist can see no 'proof' or 'ground' to warrant Nietzsche's rejection.

³⁴² Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry, Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), pp. 32-57.

³⁴³ Magnus & Higgins, 'Nietzsche's Works and Their Themes,' p. 32.

³⁴⁴ Cf. Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy*, pp. 135ff.

³⁴⁵ MacIntyre, Alasdair, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1982), pp. 107ff.

Conversely, postmodern commentary reads Nietzsche as transforming the entire interpretive base of argument through understanding 'will' in terms of *energeia* or *dunamis*. Thus, will is understood as a differential in the play of forces and not a subjective decision.³⁴⁶ On this reading, the metaphysician cannot comprehend that the interpretive nature of Nietzsche's subject is due to a balance of forces which are essentially non-metaphysical and non-subjective. Truth is not a wilful act of the subject, but is the effect of forces.

'Willing' is not 'desiring,' striving, demanding: it is distinguished from these by the affect of commanding.

There is no such thing as 'willing,' but only a willing *something*: one must not remove the aim from the total condition—as epistemologists do. 'Willing' as they understand it is as little a reality as 'thinking': it is pure fiction.

It is part of willing that something is commanded (—which naturally does not mean that the will is 'effected').

That state of tension by virtue of which a force seeks to discharge itself—is not an example of 'willing'.³⁴⁷

Nietzsche brings his understanding of will in line with his general understanding of philosophy and moral development: the singular and the isolated cannot exist as independent universal entities or otherwise.³⁴⁸ Will is inseparable from the content of willing. However, the radical posture of this thought appears as an attempt to think interconnectedness as a 'primary' state of existence. The will is, so to speak, an effect and not a cause. It takes its lead from 'force,' which the will 'commands'. Beneath willing there is 'force'. If willing is defined as the 'act of a subject,' then philosophy will expend great effort in explaining how a 'self' is formed *prior* to the first act of will.³⁴⁹ Nietzsche implies that rational methodology passes over the force in willing owing to its definition of willing as the act of a subjective 'self'. For Nietzsche, the creation of a metaphysical object to explain the initiation of various activities is a futile exercise: subjects, objects or basic concepts have no meaning

³⁴⁶ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp. 6-8.

³⁴⁷ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §668.

³⁴⁸ Commentators such as Simmel, Henry, Nussbaum, Bowie as well as Nietzsche himself, have recognised the influence of Schopenhauer on Nietzsche's conception of the will. Nietzsche's will is distinct in that it is qualified by the term 'power,' which I here understand as force. Cf. Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, Ch. 3, pp. 32-52; Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 204-240; Nussbaum, Martha C., 'The Transfiguration of Intoxication,' pp. 331-359; Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, pp. 206-214.

³⁴⁹ The problems found in the formation of subjective identity in Kant philosophy is well described by Bowie in *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, pp. 15-40.

in themselves.³⁵⁰ That is, they have no metaphysical independence. For example, Nietzsche's use of 'pity' and 'human suffering' in *On the Genealogy of Morals* are considered meaningless entities that are only made coherent by human will.³⁵¹ There is thus an inherent dualism in Nietzsche's reading that is constantly declined by refusing to give up one's mode of interpretation to a metaphysical realm that exists 'in itself'. This stands opposed to the necessary presupposition of, for example, transcendental idealism that requires some form of 'in itself' to be present in order to receive sensations or unify understanding and intuition. For Nietzsche, the 'in itself' is essentially meaningless, in the sense that a ground for it cannot be ultimately justified. The description of passivity in nature or the reception of sensation only begs the question of the 'origin' of activity or force. For Nietzsche, the problem of the self is generated by the creation of a mechanistic world where passivity becomes a rule. Consequently, units of activity (the will, the self, spontaneity, God, etc.) are required to repair the problem of unexpressed freedom, force and creation.

If Kant is trying to express the relation between nature and humanity in terms of a human subject that is law-bound yet capable of acting above or independent of mechanistic natural law, then Nietzsche is attempting to describe laws as stories that account for or describe activity. Laws are in themselves meaningless. Nietzsche distinguishes subjects as commanders of forces, which better describes the 'real' nature of our world. However, freed from objective truths and natural laws, the weight of meaning falls on human beings to create and manipulate as they please. Nietzsche's assault on historical narratives allowed him to portray moral (the theory of human meaning) as a reactive force in preference to a universal or progressive truth. Freedom is taken to be the manner in which natural forces are 'commanded' rather than a capacity to act above natural law. This freedom is also a great responsibility as, in Nietzsche's view, the 'commanding of forces' can be performed badly as well as admirably:

We cannot no longer conceal from ourselves *what* is expressed by all that willing which has taken its direction from the ascetic ideal: this hatred of the human, and even more of the animal, and more still of the material, this horror of the senses, of reason itself, this fear of happiness and beauty, the longing to get away from all appearance, change, becoming, death, wishing, from longing itself—all this means—let us dare to grasp it—

³⁵⁰ Conversely, Fichte may claim that an absolute self has no 'content' and therefore does not require a further grounding, it being self-constituting. Heidegger uses the same method when claiming, 'being is not a thing.' The implication is that only things that have content require grounding.

³⁵¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals,' preface 5 & 6, II §6 & 7.

a will to nothingness, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental presuppositions of life.³⁵²

Nietzsche's attack on truth in *The Genealogy of Morals*, which includes the origin of religious truth, is described in terms of a life-denying 'ascetic ideal'. Willing can execute a life-denying will as Nietzsche indicates. I have been attempting to demonstrate that Nietzsche attacks metaphysical ideals, history and regulative law because they do not explain the relationship between human beings and nature adequately. Truth, morality, and history have not been employed to enhance humanity. Nietzsche is free to judge religion and metaphysics by the measure of life-enhancement because he has extended or transformed the definition of truth to incorporate a life-enhancing spirit or force. Hence, Bowie's comment that all foundational concepts are unfounded fictions is not entirely correct because 'foundation' is replaced by 'enhancement': what enhances life is foundational *for life*. According to Nietzsche, religion, history, science and metaphysics are guilty of seeking to deny life-enhancing will (truth) in favour of a life-denying will (nihilism). Nietzsche attempts to adjudicate between different types of historical metaphysics. Genealogy says that if history has a relation to metaphysics, then history is damaging for human enhancement. For Nietzsche, metaphysics has been the attempt to identify and unify history according to a life-denying will: nihilism.

³⁵² Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals,' III, §28.

6.3 Nihilism

6.3.1 Jacobi

Although the origin of the condition known as nihilism is unresolved, the term was first placed in a formal philosophical context by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819). Jacobi was responsible for reintroducing Spinozistic monism into the rationalist elucidation of reason. Monism reduces all things in the universe to the activity of one fundamental constituent, which Spinoza describes in terms of a neutral 'substance'. In so doing, he substitutes traditional religious accounts of the universe and its creation for a dispassionate power or elemental 'material'. Jacobi sought to educe the logical inferences of a philosophy that intends a purely rational description of the world. To achieve this he employed Spinoza's system *against* rationalist philosophy. According to Jacobi, Spinoza is driven by an interpretation of the principle of sufficient reason – *a nihilo nihil fit* – 'nothing comes from nothing'.³⁵³ The axiom describes the causal aspects of reality and constitutes the basis of a mechanistic view of causality. As discussed in section 4.2 above, there are various ways to judge the effect of this principle and its implications for the ground of a series of causal events. Nevertheless, Jacobi argues that a 'consistent' version of the rationalist concept of reasons as explanatory grounds, would lead inexorably to a system that was (A) monistic, (B) atheistic, (C) fatalistic, and (D) nihilistic.³⁵⁴

Jacobi acknowledges Spinoza's identification of the problem of ground in relation to the problem of transition. According to Spinoza, in order to ground a series of events one cannot argue for a transition from the finite to an infinite first cause that necessarily exists outside of the causal series. When evaluating the world by way of scientific materialism, everything has a cause and that cause is finite in nature.³⁵⁵ Spinoza's response was his famous equating of nature with God: the placing of the first

³⁵³ Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza (1785),' in *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. G. di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1994) p. 187. Also see di Giovanni, 'Philosophical Arguments: An Essay in Analysis,' *Main Philosophical Writings*, pp 73-77, where the *gigni de nihilo nihil, in nihilum nil potest reverti* (nothing is generated from nothing; nothing can return to nothing) principle is discussed. Cf. Spinoza, *Ethics* I, Pr. 18, Pr. 26, Pr. 28, Pr. 32 & Pr. 33.

³⁵⁴ Paul Franks, *All or Nothing, Systematicity and Nihilism in Jacobi, Reinhold and Maimon*, in *The Cambridge Guide to German Idealism*, ed. K. Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 97-98.

³⁵⁵ Spinoza, *Ethics* I, Def. 2: 'A thing is said to be finite in its own kind (*in suo genere finita*) when it can be limited by another thing of the same nature. For example, a body is said to be finite because we can always conceive of

cause *immanent* to the series of causal events. This results in an endless series of conditions that purports to be grounded in the self-generated infinite substance.

Jacobi uses Spinoza to undermine the rational construction of causal grounds. If there were an external cause conditioning a series, then what would produce the initial movement? Certain conditions would be required in order produce the impetus for the world or cosmos and these conditions would constitute 'preconditions' and, hence, the first cause would not be the first. It therefore follows that the first cause cannot be external but, according to the principle of sufficient reason, must be immanent. Secondly, if the external first cause is infinite, taken to mean eternal and unchanging, then the cause of the finite world would either already exist as an 'idea' within the infinite, or be created anew. As idea and creative power are deemed as being co-extensive in God, then either the universe would be in existence for all eternity and would therefore also be infinite and co-existent with God or, again, the finite world would be conditioned by something prior to this which implies that the first cause is not first. However, if the world is created anew then the *a nihilo nihil fit* principle is contradicted and the first cause can create from, and therefore be conditioned by, 'nothing'. Consequently, God or, more precisely, the rationally premised knowledge of God, is prohibited from existing outside of causal nature and appears to be co-existent with nature or the *a nihilo nihil fit* principle and the principle of sufficient reason suffer contradiction. The natural finite world becomes a finite series of infinite events conditioned by an infinite 'God,' who by definition no longer has a first cause and exhibits monist and pantheist qualities. The later two characteristics of an immanent God expose the immanent cause to the accusations of fatalism, atheism and nihilism as, for Jacobi, theism requires individuation and free will that infinite substance cannot sustain. The search for an all-encompassing rational explanation for causal events leads to a world that rationality cannot 'justify' resulting in 'nothing' at the ground of the universe.³⁵⁶

another body greater than it. So too, a thought is limited by another thought. But body is not limited by thought, nor a thought by body.' This definition creates problems later on, for it reads like a general dualistic division, where body and thought do not intertwine. Moreover, in terms of finite things they appear to be both 'finite,' that is limited and 'infinite' in that they have no beginning nor end, a thought which worried Jacobi.

³⁵⁶ See Jacobi, 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza (1785)' in *Main Philosophical Writings*, pp. 217-28 for Jacobi's workings of Spinoza's arguments.

Jacobi's criticisms can be reduced to an opposition between immanentism and transcendence. His charge is that Enlightenment rationality is *inherently* immanentist, that is, groundless. Jacobi's bold claim was that all philosophy, if it pushed to its logical limits, displayed the same characteristic conclusions as Spinoza's ill-famed work: atheism, fatalism and solipsism.³⁵⁷ Jacobi aimed to limit and therefore undermine the authority of Enlightenment reason.³⁵⁸ Jacobi not only questioned the assumptions of 'free reason' but also doubted everything associated with the rational gathering of knowledge, including moral judgements. For Jacobi, reason cannot escape involvement with knowledge, judgements and conditions; however, the necessities involved in rational procedure cannot be 'grounded' by means of rationality but only through 'faith'.³⁵⁹ Consequently, Enlightenment reason cannot accomplish what it proposed it could accomplish, that is, an explanation of *all* based on reason. Accordingly, some interpreters conclude that Jacobi prepared the ground for radical scepticism through offering us the choice between rational nihilism (the inability to ground rational observations) and his preferred alternative—irrational belief.³⁶⁰ Conversely, commentators such as Franks and Milbank have argued that in fact Jacobi's intention was to liberate reason from its rationalist affliction and inaugurate a 'higher form of reason,' which incorporates a 'living faith'.³⁶¹

For our purposes, Jacobi is concerned with maintaining an external cause of the universe in terms of a creator God, but denies reason the capacity to understand God or any coherent ground through the rational pursuit of conditions and first causes.³⁶² Scientifically inspired explanations of a material or immaterial world can only result in idealism or nihilism: a grounding in the self, or nothing.³⁶³ Nihilism is the inability to provide grounds. Rational judgements terminate in groundlessness and

³⁵⁷ The radical nature of this claim is not to be underestimated. Spinoza's *Ethics*, were published posthumously first in Latin in 1677 and his philosophy and the problems it raised were considered to be well and truly dealt with by Jacobi's time, the late 18th Century.

³⁵⁸ The controversy was one part of Jacobi's three-fold attack against Enlightenment reason and is more accurately entitled the Spinozism controversy as he picked subsequent battles with Fichte over his alleged atheism, and with Schelling over his alleged pantheism. Franks, *All or Nothing*: pp. 95-116.

³⁵⁹ Cf. The important Supplement VII to 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza (1789)' describes two senses of reason and the conditionality that they effect, pp. 370-78; also cf. Jacobi's preface to 'David Hume on Faith (1815)' that serves as a preface to his collected works clarifies his position, *Main Philosophical Writings*, pp 538-41.

³⁶⁰ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy From Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987) p. 83.

³⁶¹ Franks, *All or Nothing*, pp. 95-116; John Milbank, *Knowledge: The Theological Critique of Philosophy in Hamann and Jacobi*, in *Radical Orthodoxy*, ed. J. Milbank, C. Pickstock and G. Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 21-37.

³⁶² Gillespie points out that an interpretation that states that God is *de facto* unknowable derives from mediaeval nominalism which locates divine will above reason and which terminates in an unknowable and capricious God. Gillespie argues that the theory of an omnipotent divine will is the major cause of Western nihilism. See Michael Allen Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 33-63.

³⁶³ Where self-grounding also amounts to nothing. Cf. Jacobi, 'David Hume on Faith (Preface 1815),' *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 583.

grounding can only be achieved by what he termed 'faith'. For Jacobi, our subjectivity and relationship to a creator God eludes all rational analysis and is rather established through a commitment to faith.³⁶⁴ It is interesting to note that not only are Jacobi's arguments highly influential for advancing both Germany Idealism and Romanticism, but his critique of the nihilistic nature of scientific reason indirectly informs Heidegger's critique of metaphysics.

6.3.2 Nietzsche

While Jacobi's criticism of reason worked from within a rational system and exposed the logical limits at the system's periphery, Nietzsche's attack is much more extensive. It does not confine itself to rationality per se; rather the genealogical methodology has rendered all things, including Christian morality, 'fiction' or 'invention'. It appears to work from within history, philosophy and Christian morality to expose the meaninglessness of the grounding conditions.

The faith in the categories of reason is the cause of nihilism. We have measured the value of the world according to categories *that refer to a purely fictitious world*.³⁶⁵

For Nietzsche, nihilism names the erroneous founding of values on metaphysical categories. Nihilism entails that all values that are grounded by conceptual, rational and religious principles are now disputed. The fact that we have judged the world by erroneous values means that we have devalued the world we are in. The highest beliefs that we held to be true can no longer be supported due to their lack of foundation. Beliefs become unbelievable: '*the highest values devalue themselves*'.³⁶⁶ The use of the term 'values' rather than an objective idiom such as 'reason' or 'rationality' specifies that something significant has transpired. Value-based language confirms Nietzsche's reduction of 'eternal truths' to 'values,' as discussed in section 6.3 concerning genealogy.

The devaluation of values finds its most famous expression in Nietzsche's parable on the 'Death of God'.³⁶⁷ The parable tells of a madman who pronounces the death of God in a marketplace in broad

³⁶⁴Jacobi, 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza (1785),' p. 189 & 'David Hume on Faith (Preface 1815),' *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 519.

³⁶⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §12.

³⁶⁶ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §2.

³⁶⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science*, ed. B. Williams, trans. J. Nauckhoff & A. Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) §125; cf. §108.

daylight. His announcement is met with derision and indifference by the market-goers indicating that the epoch of nihilism has commenced and that God has already been 'left behind'. The parable is widely read as revealing the implausible nature of divine authority, as Nietzsche himself explains:

The greatest recent event – that 'God is dead'; that the Christian God has become unbelievable – is already starting to cast its first shadow over Europe...Even less may one suppose many to know at all *what* this event really means – and, now that this faith has been undermined, how much must collapse because it was built on this faith.³⁶⁸

Nonetheless, as noted, the meaning of this event is less clear. In the light of the death of God, Nietzsche's work could be read as uncovering the extent to which Western civilization rests upon implausible theological ground. However, the ending of the parable and much of *The Gay Science* are replete with religious themes that suggest the retention of religious spirituality in a transformed aesthetic state.³⁶⁹ On the other hand, as the transformation from religious tradition to an aesthetic alternative is concurrent with a critique of rationalism, Nietzsche is also read as an irrationalist (a charge also aimed at Jacobi) and atheist.³⁷⁰ What is under discussion is Nietzsche's position in relation to 'modernity'. Nietzsche recognises the contradictory forces at play in the modern age; however, it is uncertain whether he is providing a diagnosis of modernity or whether his philosophy is actively sustaining the destruction of tradition. Is Nietzsche a modern mythmaker or a sceptical opponent of religion and rationality? These positions are not necessarily contradictory; nonetheless, through this form of engagement it appears that the nihilistic description of human history is not clearly determined.

To understand the Nietzschean position more holistically one can look to his two concepts of nihilism: active and passive.

Nihilism. It is *ambiguous*:

- A. Nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit: as *active* nihilism.
- B. Nihilism as a decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as *passive* nihilism.³⁷¹

Passive nihilism is the first stage of nihilism: the knowledge that all metaphysical concepts and goals are lacking. However, this state of affairs and any remedy that is forthcoming is dependent upon the

³⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §343.

³⁶⁹ Magnus and Higgins, *Nietzsche's Works and Their Themes*, pp. 35-38. Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* supports this claim. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1969) *passim*.

³⁷⁰ See Alexander Nehamas, 'Nietzsche, Modernity, Aestheticism' in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, p. 229. Also cf. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 6-7.

³⁷¹ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §22. Also cf. §23.

diagnosis of the problem. The problem that Nietzsche perceives in nineteenth century Europe is described as decadence and the diminishing of human creative power in comparison with the golden age of Greece, for example. Nihilism produces a decline in power and culture. Moreover, this is merely the outward effect of a deeper condition that Nietzsche has coined the 'death of God'. The 'death of God' expresses the terminus of a specific history of morality that Nietzsche explains in his *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche's chronicles the elevation of a slave morality to a position of dominance above a master morality. Slave morality erects a spiritual 'supersensuous world,' which preaches life-denying values as truth, over and against the 'sensuous world' of an older master morality. Slave morality performs this inversion because it was not in control of the sensuous world. The inversion signifies a revolt in morality: the inversion of truth. However, the story is not complete. Slave morality contains an 'inner logic,' which states that the highest values must devalue themselves. Through the promotion of life-denying values, *human beings have become too nihilistic to hold onto the pretence of their beliefs.*

One can see *what* it was that triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the confession of truthfulness that was taken ever more rigorously [...] Looking at nature as if it were proof of the goodness and care of a god; interpreting history in honour of divine order and ultimate moral purposes, interpreting one's own experiences as pious people have long interpreted theirs, as if everything were providential, a hint, designed and ordained for the sake of the salvation of the soul—that is *over* now; that has conscience *against* it; every refined conscience considers it to be indecent, dishonest, a form of mendacity, effeminacy, weakness, cowardice.³⁷²

The self-undermining character of Christianity fulfils a 'logic of abjuration'. Because slave morality commences in the *renouncement* of affirmation, renunciation is elevated to the level of instinct. Nihilism is accomplished because the logic of abjuration states that life-denying values cannot sustain the *strength* of deceit. Belief in the unbelievable requires unsustainable energy: denial enforces a negative potency that further intensifies negation. A will to negation is self-undermining.

Nihilism as a psychological state will have to be reached, *first*, when we have sought a "meaning" in all events that is not there: so that the seeker eventually becomes discouraged. Nihilism, then, is the recognition of the long *waste* of strength, the agony of the "in vain," insecurity, the lack of any opportunity to recover and to regain composure—being ashamed in front of oneself, as if one had *deceived* oneself all too long.³⁷³

According to Nietzsche, denial terminates in weakness and shame. The 'death of God' names the cataclysmic event that passes when the will to negation finally loses the strength to sustain negation

³⁷² Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §357.

³⁷³ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §12 A.

itself. The deceit is revealed and the 'true world' of slave morality is finally exposed as 'fable'. The slave has become *too weak* to hold on to his belief in God.

A commencement in denial ends in weakness. Because the analysis describes nihilism in terms of denial, weakness and decline, Nietzsche envisages its 'antidote' to lie in affirmation, strength and activity. Active nihilism is the 'struggle out of passive nihilism'.³⁷⁴ For Nietzsche, active nihilism embraces a great freedom that liberates humanity from illusory historical structures. Nietzsche's position appears to be one that celebrates this newfound freedom as a power whereby one can set one's own values. The philosopher's task is therefore to 'create values'.³⁷⁵ As argued above, the affirmative values that Nietzsche celebrates are established in conjunction with 'life'. Nietzsche calls himself an 'immoralist' for the reason that morality is associated with life-denying will; his aim is to create or describe a life-affirming will that will potentially end in affirmation. Goals cannot therefore be rejected in themselves; rather new goals are required.

Nietzsche's position is therefore somewhat paradoxical. There is a destructive and constructive element to his thought. His concept of philosophy concerns, in the words of Schacht, 'the twin tasks of interpretation and evaluation'.³⁷⁶ Nihilism is the condition in which we find ourselves after genealogy has uncovered the finite nature of value-setting in history. Active nihilism is a direct *response* to passive nihilism. However, the task that is set for active nihilism is immense. As we collapse into the despair generated by the mass capitulation of all religious meaning, 'Schopenhauer's question immediately comes at us in a terrifying way: *Does existence have any meaning at all?*'³⁷⁷ The legacy of slave morality and the logic of abjuration attack all foundational concepts and beliefs. Under the duress of questioning one foundational account of morality, all foundational accounts appear dubious. Nietzsche's devastating reflection entertains the thought that *all morality* describes a life-denying will: morality *is* the will to negation. The spectre of nihilism implies that morality, as a vehicle for meaning, is a system of deceit. Existence may have no meaning at all. Morality is exposed as 'the

³⁷⁴ Joan Stambaugh, *The Finitude of Being* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 21.

³⁷⁵ Nietzsche, 'Beyond Good and Evil,' §211; Cf. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, I 10, where Nietzsche states that *ressentiment* is due to the *creation of values* by a slave morality. In essence, slave morality would have to be judged 'a philosophy.'

³⁷⁶ Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche's Kind of Philosophy in The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, p. 161.

³⁷⁷ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §357.

great *antidote* against practical and theoretical nihilism'.³⁷⁸ For Nietzsche, it is morality that is the mask, and nihilism the true state of affairs.

³⁷⁸ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §6.

6.4 Preliminary Assessment

Genealogy and nihilism purport to tell a story about the history of morality and the origin of values. Nietzsche's story, as I have established, locates the origin of nihilism in the victory of the life-denying values consecrated in Christian morality. This victory resulted in the formalisation of a system of self-negating values that were intrinsically self-deprecating. Under the logic of abjuration, the highest values devaluation themselves. On account of this diagnosis, Nietzsche prescribes a means of recuperation and renewal. Nietzsche's active nihilism attempts to supplant life-denying values with a new hierarchy of values by way of the Overman and the resurrection of life-affirming Dionysian practices. Via these means active nihilism hopes to overcome the infirmity intrinsic to slave morality. Consequently, it is clear that Nietzsche's solution or 'antidote' to nihilism is dependent upon his diagnosis of the problem. Nietzsche's story is, however, deeply contested.

Nietzsche is described as introducing a concept of cultural decline that situates the highest form of humanity in a distant past from which we are increasingly separated.³⁷⁹ A declining culture does not escape meaning; it posits meaning in reverse. The *'telos'* occurs at the beginning and meaning is gathered via cultural deterioration. Nietzsche's account of the origin of morality in resentment and his lauding of 'superior' ancient civilizations vis-à-vis 'inferior' modern civilizations consequently gives theoretical provenance to revolutionary conservatism in the twentieth century.³⁸⁰ The historical implications of this reading of Nietzsche 'offends our democratic sensibilities' and yet many commentators still consider him to be the architect of a model of pluralism and meaning in difference.³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ Cf. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 126.

³⁸⁰ The case of Oswald Spengler is representative of the 'hard decisions' that Nietzsche is said to have introduced to Europe. Cf. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, pp. 20-21, chapters 2, 4 & 8. For a defence of Nietzsche's position see Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, pp. 8-9, 284-306. For a more recent appraisal of the biological aspect to Nietzsche's work see Gerd Schank, *Race and Breeding in Nietzsche's Philosophy in Nietzsche and the German Tradition*, ed. N. Martin (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003) pp. 237-244.

³⁸¹ Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p. xii. Deleuze would be a prime example of Nietzschean pluralism: cf. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp. 1-36.

Gillespie argues that Nietzsche is persuasive because his description of nihilism renders the terrors of the twentieth century coherent.³⁸²

This long, dense succession of demolition, destruction, downfall, upheaval that now stands ahead: who would guess enough of it today to play the teacher and herald of this monstrous logic of horror, the prophet of deep darkness and an eclipse of the sun the like of which has probably never before existed on earth?³⁸³

For this reason, Nietzsche's account attains prophetic status. However, as Gillespie continues, although we concur with Nietzsche's *diagnosis* concerning the origins of nihilism we are less comfortable with his *solution*, which appears to make a case for the glorification of man in preparation for the era of the Overman. It is hard to deny the force of Nietzsche's thought when taken in conjunction with the widespread pessimism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The discrepancy between the acceptance of Nietzsche's diagnosis and the rejection of his radical solutions leads Gillespie to suspect that there has been an error in our analysis. Why do we accept the diagnosis of nihilism but reject the solution when the two narratives are clearly interwoven?

Gillespie questions the accuracy of Nietzsche's account. His thesis is that nihilism is better explained by a growth rather than a diminution in the power of the human will. He argues that nihilism was initiated by the nominalist revolt in late-medieval theology.³⁸⁴ Thinkers such as Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus and William of Ockham produced a theological hypothesis that situated divine will above the natural rational order of scholastic thought. Gillespie argues that Ockham's rejection of the Aristotelianism prevalent in scholasticism also involves a rejection of universal categories and the analogy of a rational cosmos with divine essence. The outcome of this rejection is the fracturing of the relationship between natural science and theology. Natural science was no longer bound by theological rule and, decisively for his account, nor was divine will bound to the rational order. For Gillespie, nihilism is a consequence of unleashing an omnipotent will into the European imagination rather than the attempt to sustain a deteriorating will.

[N]ihilism is not the result of the death of God but the consequence of the birth or rebirth of a different kind of God, an omnipotent God of will who calls into question all

³⁸² Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, pp. xi-xii.

³⁸³ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §343.

³⁸⁴ Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, pp. 12-32.

of reason and nature and thus overturns all eternal standards of truth and justice, and good and evil.³⁸⁵

Hence, for Gillespie, the growth in natural science and scepticism towards that science occur contemporaneously because a fundamental schism between meaning and value has been set in motion. However, this innovation does not question the basic assumption of Nietzsche's thought, which maintains that Christian morality has a self-depreciating logic that devalues itself. The split between scholasticism and nominalism can be interpreted as an inner consequence of theology's suppression of the active will. Gillespie's thesis is enlightening in that it attempts to trace the path of natural science and theology after their division. Natural science liberated from theology was free to pursue an empirical method that relegated God to a patron of mechanistic laws. However, the subsequent rejection of God as guarantor of nature as well as Hume's rejection of the principle of causality do not appear to me to be inconsistent with Nietzsche's narrative. If anything, it appears to be confirmed by such examples. Gillespie's point is that the omnipotent will that results from the nominalist division is a latent force that undermines reason. The reprise of scientific systems is explained as a repression of the omnipotent will and not its destruction. By way of Descartes, German Idealism and German Romanticism, the omnipotent will is fused with modernity's notion of reason. The menace of omnipotent will causes human reason to seek greater strength and cunning in order to subdue the omnipotent God and to conquer a now independent nature. Thus, Nietzsche's notion of nihilism as a form of weakness is described as being the opposite of an earlier form of nihilism, which grasps nihilism in terms of the *magnification* of will. Because the cause of nihilistic will is due to the separation of God's will from the rational cosmos which allowed God, as it were, to be 'kept in order,' the 'solution to nihilism thus can only arise out of a deeper understanding of the collapse of the scholastic synthesis that gave rise to the nominalist notion of will.'³⁸⁶ Hence, Gillespie implies that a reintegration of God and the rational cosmos is the solution to the perceived defects in modernity.

Andrew Bowie's account of the advent of modernity is somewhat different. For Bowie, modernity begins with the rejection of theological foundations and the attempt to describe the universe on its own terms. This is generally accepted as a positive move except for the problems caused by the withdrawal of God as guarantor of unity between human beings and nature. For Bowie, the absent

³⁸⁵ Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p. xxii.

³⁸⁶ Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p. xxiv.

unity is best repaired by aesthetic philosophy. Aesthetic philosophy, particularly early German Romanticism, attempts to describe a liberated subjectivity that is also critical of the reductive methodology of science. Nature and productive art displace rational theology, science and transcendental reason. Bowie agrees that liberation from theology was necessary, but opposes the domination of nature and humanity by self-sufficient reason. Unrestrained reason is destructive for the development of subjectivity. However, Bowie also cautions against the radical anti-rational forces uncovered by Nietzsche and his postmodern decedents. Bowie's project wishes to rescue human subjectivity from radical theories that describe the subject as an 'effect' of language or a necessary 'illusion'.³⁸⁷ Hence, Bowie's description of modernity highlights the ambiguous effects that Enlightenment philosophy engenders: rational subjectivity and the aesthetic critique of rational subjectivity.

According to Bowie's description, Nietzsche is a child of the aesthetic tradition, and his work sanctions two common features of post-Enlightenment thought: the desire to liberate humanity from theology, and a deep suspicion of the freedom that such liberation brings. Hence, Nietzsche's involvement with art and aesthetics represents an attempt to deliver both a new vision of unity to the world and to inform us that this vision is the last veil of illusion enabling us to live in a meaningless world.³⁸⁸ Bowie's repair to the onset of science and radical meaninglessness is to be found in Hamann and Schleiermacher's aesthetic theory, which makes a case for the reliance of reason on language and aesthetics. Linguistic and aesthetic theories, correctly calibrated, have the potential for tempering radical meaninglessness via non-repressive, non-representational individuation and community. Therefore, Bowie's story involves describing modernity as the increased control over nature and the emergence, *and repression of*, new forms of individuality.³⁸⁹ Bowie wishes to draw attention to philosophical narratives that have been repressed by a simplistic emphasis on dominant modes of subjectivity. Nietzsche, then, is interpreted as a participant in the liberation of subjectivity and, through his espousal of radical meaninglessness, as a contributor to the repression of alternative forms of subjectivity.

³⁸⁷ Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, pp. 8ff.

³⁸⁸ Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, p. 4.

³⁸⁹ Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, p. 12.

Habermas agrees with Bowie that modernity is both liberatory and problematic. Habermas celebrates the liberation from theology but he too decries a history of modernity that terminates in the autonomous subject. For Habermas, subjective freedom is achieved at the price of alienation from the ethical context of life.³⁹⁰ However, his aim is not to support an aesthetic or ethical 'subject' in opposition to rational subject per se, but to challenge the version of reason described by Nietzsche and postmodernism. Habermas consents to the critique of the rational subject but disagrees with the 'totalisation' of all critiques of reason. In place of the rational subject, Habermas hopes to describe an 'intersubjectivity' that is generated and tested via 'communicative action'.³⁹¹ For Habermas, reason cannot be separated from social practice. Very much in line with Gillespie's critique of nominalism, once reason and social practice are sharply segregated from each other theory and practice lack the capacity to justify and validate. For Habermas, reason's role aims at validation and argumentation by way of intersubjective practice.

Habermas reads Nietzsche as the key figure in the pathway towards postmodernity. One of Nietzsche's bequests to modernity is his endorsement of aesthetic and rhetorical schemes of truth. An attack on rational truth theory undermines the everyday practical reason that Habermas associates with problem solving. Nietzsche's suppression of the rational and regulatory aspects of reason reveals truth as a 'sensuous' event of the 'lifeworld'. This aesthetic element is picked up in Heidegger's foray into truth as disclosure and his reflection on art and language.³⁹² However, aesthetic truth is not necessarily contrary to subjectivity, as Bowie has suggested. The other major innovation that Nietzsche brings to philosophy is his attack on subjectivity itself through the promoting of meaninglessness and the foundational role of will to power. Nietzsche's suspicion of anything resembling a metaphysical 'subject' is manifest in his theory that all 'subjects' are simply a balance of various 'forces' or 'powers'. Nietzsche's theory, according to Habermas, directly influences virulent forms of postmodernism and the eradication of the subject. For Habermas, virulent or totalising critics of

³⁹⁰ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 83-84.

³⁹¹ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 294-326.

³⁹² Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 131ff.

reason and subjectivity are counterproductive to all critique: they inhibit reason's capacity to be critical and the subject's capacity to protest and liberate *itself*.³⁹³

The three commentators mentioned present a challenge to the more radical Nietzsche interpretations prevalent in postmodernity. However, the ambiguity that Nietzsche brings to philosophy is revealed in their basic concurrence on the problematic nature of subject-centred reason. Bowie and Habermas particularly represent a line in modern philosophy that consents to the liberation of the subject from theology and yet, as Gillespie articulates, disagrees with Nietzsche's proposed solutions. To differing degrees all three thinkers wish to re-integrate a form of reason, be it theologically, aesthetically or communicatively inspired, back into post-Nietzschean philosophy. However, Nietzsche's genealogical method and his description of nihilism have weakened all values that have been previously guaranteed by 'conditions'. The 'death of God' attacks the 'unconditioned condition' of the creator of the world and all the metaphysical concepts linked to this belief, whereas genealogies also attack historical and causal conditions in time. Hence, one of the consequences of a sustained attack on religious and metaphysical truths is the inability to justify or ground all truth claims, especially the claims of theology and reason. Nietzsche's famed response to metaphysicians reads as follows:

Henceforth, my dear philosophers, let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject"; let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as "pure reason," "absolute spirituality," "knowledge in itself": these demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective "knowing"; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity" be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this – what would that mean but to *castrate* the intellect?³⁹⁴

Nietzsche hopes to undermine traditional metaphysical claims while simultaneously upholding a site for interpretation. The observation concerning the 'aim' of perspectivism and the refusal to eliminate the centrality of the will, point to an interpretative position that maintains a central, yet non-rational, role. When rational opponents portray Nietzsche's perspectivism as relativistic and incoherent, they

³⁹³ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. xvii. Manfred Frank also makes this point suggesting that if the 'subjectless subject' is really an option, then all attempts to liberate the subject from the repressive action of reason are pointless as it is not clear that any 'subject' or 'thing' is suffering under such action. Cf. Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, p. 13.

³⁹⁴ Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals,' III §12.

do so from a reasoned perspective. Relativism only has coherence in antagonism with rational claims. Therefore, in Nietzsche's opinion, *after* rationalism perspectives can be affirmed without executing relativism. Absolutism and relativism describe a similar method, both being 'equally childish'.³⁹⁵ Nietzsche has no wish to annihilate the 'subjective' nature of the will or intellect absolutely; to do so would be counterintuitive to life's experience. If we accept Nietzsche's criticism of metaphysics, we are forced into a different world of thought. What is distinctive about European philosophy after Nietzsche is the growing prevalence of non-metaphysical modes of thought. Even reason-based philosophers such as Habermas wish to re-describe philosophy using a non-metaphysical theory of reason. His communicative reason avoids the metaphysical world of ideals and institutes an empirically based rationality that hopes to transcend its local status and achieve a universal 'consent'. After Nietzsche, the foundational or grounding concepts that have been the cornerstones of Western thought have now been dislodged and we are required to think differently.

However, Nietzsche and Jacobi's methodologies share a debt to rationality. Jacobi's is detailed in section 6.31 above, whereas Nietzsche's debt is more tangential. Briefly stated, Nietzsche's destructive philosophy rests on revealing contradictions between opposing arguments, stories or cases whereupon he adopts a sceptical position. Habermas names this a 'performative contradiction' whereby the language of reason is used to criticise and deny reason.³⁹⁶ Therefore, genealogy, particularly, becomes another academic analysis. However, Nietzsche strengthens his attack by instigating a 'modal movement' from rational contradiction to moral or aesthetic judgements. By 'modal movement,' I mean that the object of criticism may remain the same, for example, the origin of a concept, but the interpretive capacity switches to a separate method or measure of validity. Nietzsche supplies a moral or aesthetic 'motive' to rational arguments. Thus, a rational retort that cites the 'contradictory' nature of argumentation is disarmed. A moral or aesthetic criticism appears to stand as a 'fact' beyond rational critique, which can be criticised as being 'just another point of view'. The reading of a supposedly 'objective' position as just another point of view is Nietzsche's most effective weapon. Nietzsche welcomes similar attacks against his position, for if one were to accuse him of 'mere interpretation' based on 'will to power,' he would quite happily accept the attack as a

³⁹⁵ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, § 345.

³⁹⁶ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. xv.

vindication of his argument. Hence, rational critics are forced to remain within their 'mode of analysis'. Moreover, when proof cannot be provided for a rational argument, Nietzsche's alternative strategy appear as 'coherent'. Paradoxically, many commentators esteem Nietzsche for ridding the world of illusory metaphysical ideas; yet also reprimand him for being 'incoherent' as regards his judgements on 'truth'.³⁹⁷ It is Nietzsche's discovery of modality that causes difficulty for rational opponents and supporters alike. Where previous descriptions of epistemology, morality and aesthetics could be linked via a central concept, for example, a Kantian conception of reason, Nietzsche's relations and categories are not immediately intelligible. To judge the world via rationality is internally valid, but illusory. Rationality, morality and art are linked through interpretation and the will yet they express different modes of assertion, and it is not clear that the connections uncover a dialectical 'two-way street'. How, for example, does one go back to God or the illusion of reason once their veils have been removed? However, although Nietzsche's categories (art, will, perspectivism, eternal recurrence, slave morality etc.) are related to each other consistently, this does not mean a modal description of life and events is necessarily systematic. As Solomon explains, Nietzsche is interested in the traditional issues of philosophy: truth, morality, religion, social structures, the self and its freedom and rationality.³⁹⁸ Instead of extending or finding new solutions to an argument he is asking, how have such arguments and solutions arisen? The nature of a modal shift from rationality to *ad hominem* attack based on the moral character of an individual or institution certainly wrong-foots opponents and classifies Nietzsche as some form of anti-philosopher or rhetorician. An *ad hominem* argument in Nietzsche's hands seeks a 'motive' to rational categories. The 'motive' is, as 'motive,' located in the psychology, will or *ressentiment* of an individual or institution 'inventing' (rather than 'discovering') the category. To locate a category in a motive is to locate a cause (or even a principle) in finite history rather than in eternal reason or a theological God.³⁹⁹ Thus, the traditional philosophical method is short-circuited. However, Nietzsche is, through his search for motives, influenced by causal process and the principle of sufficient reason. Nietzsche could be read as exploring the formulae, 'everything has a reason for why it is rather than it is not'. However, he is removing the rational necessity from a sequence or action. Rather, the action is transferred to a

³⁹⁷ Nehamas, 'Nietzsche, Modernity, Aestheticism,' p. 233-251. Habermas can be included in this criticism.

³⁹⁸ Robert Solomon, 'Nietzsche *ad hominem*: Perspectivism, Personality and Ressentiment,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, p. 184.

³⁹⁹ Later Heidegger will quote Nietzsche: 'Not "to know" but to schematise—to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require.' WM 515.

‘moral’ motive that exists in either spontaneous will or what Nietzsche names ‘instinct’ or ‘drive’.⁴⁰⁰ What is suggested is that Nietzsche is interested in the ‘*condition* for the occurrence of categories and values’ and that he is demonstrating that the principle of ‘reason,’ can be understood in different ways. Conditions need not be ‘reasoned’; they can be ‘motivated,’ that is, created by human will. Traditional inquiries into conditions employ abstract reasoning that transcends the self and the world. In concert with the genealogical attack on the principles of rationality, conditions are repositioned, not *in* reason or *outside* of history, but in the present will. Nietzsche’s modality accepts conditions and morality only through discarding the traditional rational foundation of such categories. Where then does conditionality and morality lie? In an active subject? In will? It is the initial incoherence of metaphysical concepts and principles that causes an abandonment of metaphysical grounds. However, through pursuing the implications of this rejection, Nietzsche finds himself unable to reject *all* inquiry and *all* conditions. Hence, the problems addressed by reason are transferred to the modality of motivation by the will. The great ‘whys’ of philosophy become the great ‘whys’ of human conduct: the why of human finitude. This shift can facilitate a move in different directions—toward subjectivism and will, but also toward sociology.⁴⁰¹

What I have attempted to demonstrate in this section is the relation between conditionality and nihilism as being internal to Nietzsche’s reading of metaphysics. For Nietzsche, metaphysical conditionality is the underlying cause of nihilism. As Nietzsche makes clear concerning Kant’s ‘discovery’ of the faculty of synthetic a priori judgements: a condition of possibility is not an explanation, it is the repetition of the question when philosophers ‘could not yet distinguish between “finding” and “inventing.”’⁴⁰² A condition simply postpones the question of ground. Nietzsche is suggesting that conditions and faculties are ‘invented’ rather than being true ‘discoveries’ and that this method of fabrication is a consequence of philosophy’s inability to provide ground. That is, philosophy is inherently nihilistic because an ultimate ground cannot be obtained. As a result, the description of a faculty or condition becomes a necessary contrivance that justifies life and human experience.

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. Paul-Laurent Assoun, *Freud and Nietzsche*, trans. R.L. Collier Jr (London: Athlone Press, 2000), pp. 53-64.

⁴⁰¹ Gillian Rose, *Dialectics of Nihilism*, (London: Blackwell, 1984), p. 211.

⁴⁰² Nietzsche, ‘Beyond Good and Evil,’ § 11.

Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysical tradition is compelling; however, although we acknowledge the philosophical limits involved in metaphysical conditions, Nietzsche cannot avoid the question of ground altogether. When offering an antidote to the errors of the metaphysics, Nietzsche employs his own account of conditions or grounds. He frames his philosophy with 'instincts,' 'drives,' the 'subject' and the 'will to power,' which function as conditioning elements. These base concepts are essential for Nietzsche's post-metaphysical philosophy. In spite of this, Nietzsche attempts to avoid a relapse into metaphysical conditions by denying the existence of an infinite condition that resides behind or beyond the finite world; and secondly, by rejecting the idea that his 'conditions' describe a 'true' world. For Nietzsche, instincts, drives and the will to power are necessary inventions for the furthering of life. Nevertheless, I have argued that conditionality is transformed or mutated to something approximating an immanent condition or 'modality,' and that Nietzsche cannot divest himself of conditionality entirely. He remains within the limits of metaphysics, which he denies an ultimate base. What is interesting in Nietzsche's analysis is that in order to respond to the challenges of philosophical nihilism a re-encryption of metaphysical conditions becomes necessary. Hence, Nietzsche prepares the way for post-metaphysical life by describing the 'self-overcoming' of metaphysics.

7. Heidegger's Reading of Nietzsche

This chapter explains Heidegger's association with Nietzsche and nihilism. I distinguish between contrary accounts of nihilism and describe how Heidegger subsumes Nietzsche under the metaphysical tradition. Heidegger's method seeks to reveal a foundational concept beneath Nietzsche's multifaceted positions. That is, Heidegger attempts to read Nietzsche's philosophy as a totality that aims at a description of the whole of beings. Heidegger's interpretation addresses Nietzsche's theories on art, will to power, eternal return and nihilism and concludes in a description of value-philosophy. Nihilism and the end of metaphysics are related as they both abandon transcendent conditions and result in meaninglessness. Heidegger's response aims at restructuring the meaning and essence of philosophy. Heidegger argues that the relation between beings and their essence must be informed by a non-metaphysical account of meaning in opposition to meaninglessness. I demonstrate that Heidegger's reading retains traditional metaphysical structures denying the possibility of renouncing essence. For Heidegger, only its definition can change.

7.1 Why Nietzsche?

In examining 'Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche' I hope to enquire into the philosophical structures in the work in order to gain insight into the trajectory of Heidegger's philosophy. I am attempting to answer why Heidegger turns to Nietzsche for an assessment of metaphysics and nihilism. I have offered a general reading of Nietzsche's themes in order to provide a framework for Heidegger's interpretation. The framework will permit a development of Heidegger's unique interpretation of Nietzsche while allowing for key disagreements with conventional readings. This approach is valid for understanding Heidegger's text and the uniquely Heideggerian development of Nietzsche's thoughts. However, Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche is a contested and controversial reading and there are other commentators who dispute this methodology.

Heidegger's 1936-40 lectures appeared in 2 volumes in 1961 and cover four areas of Nietzsche's philosophy: *The Will to Power as Art*, *The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, *The Will to Power as Knowledge and Metaphysics*, and *Nihilism*.⁴⁰³ In these texts the overriding concern is to gain a 'fundamental' insight into Nietzsche's thought, that is, to read will to power, eternal return and the reevaluation of all values together as a metaphysical unity. To that end, Heidegger construes will to power as the principal expression of Nietzsche's philosophy. The stance is problematic in several ways. First, it is volatile due to the historical context of the interpretation. Heidegger is ignominiously associated with National Socialism through his endorsement of the party and his ill-fated term as rector of the University of Freiburg.⁴⁰⁴ Heidegger explains that his attraction to National Socialism was due to the movement's confrontation with technology and the need 'to find a national, and above all a social, point of view'.⁴⁰⁵ However, as Heidegger's own work and various scholarly investigations suggest, the connection runs longer and deeper than Heidegger is willing to admit.⁴⁰⁶ Hence Heidegger appears to 'contaminate' Nietzsche by further associating him with Nazi ideology.⁴⁰⁷ To complicate matters, Heidegger notoriously claims that the Nietzsche lectures demonstrate his declared opposition to Nazism: 'Anyone with ears to hear heard in these lectures a confrontation with National Socialism.'⁴⁰⁸

Secondly, as we have described in chapter 6, Heidegger's reading is disconcerting for many who read Nietzsche as a way out of metaphysical unities. Poststructuralist readings such as those by Bataille, Deleuze and Derrida are representative of the so-called 'new Nietzsche' interpretation that champions

⁴⁰³ First published as Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche I & II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961). Volume I contains the lectures *The Will to Power as Art* and *The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, Volume II: *The Will to Power as Knowledge and Metaphysics* and *Nihilism*. These volumes correspond to the Krell translation as *Nietzsche: Volumes I & II* and *Nietzsche: Volumes III & IV* with additional essays from volume II of the Neske edition translated by J. Stambaugh in Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*.

⁴⁰⁴ In his inaugural speech as Rector of Freiburg University, 1933, Heidegger cites Nietzsche and the phrase 'God is dead,' as well as linking himself to Hitler's autobiography and suggesting that aesthetics and poetry were the means to conquer the onset of science. See Martin Heidegger, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität* (Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 1983) trans. by K. Harries as 'The Self-Assertion of the German University' (1933) in *Philosophical and Political Writings*, ed. M. Stassen (New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 5; cf. Victor Farías, *Heidegger et le nazisme* (Paris: Éditions Verdier, 1987) trans. as *Heidegger and Nazism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), pp. 250-56. Farías's controversial book looks into the direct political connections between Heidegger and the Nazi state. Nietzsche is cited as an important influence; Jacques Taminiaux, *Lectures de l'ontologie fondamentale* (Paris: Éditions Jérôme Millon) trans. by M Gendre as *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), pp. 175-190. Taminiaux explores Nietzsche's influence in *Sein und Zeit*; Philippe, Herman, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation*, (New Jersey: Princeton, 1998), pp. 184ff & 276-86. Philippe locates Heidegger's interest in Nietzsche in the early 1930s and the rise of Nazism.

⁴⁰⁵ Martin Heidegger, Interview (1966), *Der Spiegel*, May 31st, 1976 trans. by M.P. Alter and J. Caputo as 'Only a God Can Save Us' in *Philosophical and Political Writings*, p. 27.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Heidegger, Martin, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 213.

⁴⁰⁷ Lacoue-Labarthe reverses this contamination in that Nietzsche has contaminated Heidegger with his style of writing: cf. David Farrell Krell, *Infectious Nietzsche* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 145.

⁴⁰⁸ Heidegger, 'Only a God Can Save Us,' p. 33.

a pluralistic, non-metaphysical Nietzsche who indeed triumphs over the limitations imposed by metaphysics. Therefore, Heidegger's description of Nietzsche as a metaphysician who cannot complete the overcoming of metaphysics owing to internal contradictions in his thought is considered an 'unjust' reading and is generally negatively received. Derrida in particular accuses Heidegger of 'logocentrism,' that is, repeating the metaphysical gesture of unifying and closing by relying on the centrality of *logos* or speech.⁴⁰⁹

Thirdly, an apologetic study that exclusively focuses on a 'correct reading' of Nietzsche, and Heidegger's departure from that reading, is not appropriate. An essentialist analysis would afford insight into Nietzsche but only provide a negative appraisal of Heidegger.

Finally, I would also like to highlight a 'sympathetic' interpretation of Heidegger's Nietzsche, where those familiar with Heidegger's work take him at his word and explicate the lectures as a stepping stone on Heidegger's path to his own philosophy. As David Farrell Krell suggests, 'Heidegger tries to pinpoint Nietzsche's uncertain location on the historical path of metaphysics. That is the only way he can estimate his own position, the only way he can discern the task of his own thinking.'⁴¹⁰ The reading suggests that Heidegger is engaged in a process of 'self-overcoming,' and advises that there are internal necessities to the confrontation. This construal is to be viewed as suspicious as it downplays the controversial elements of Heidegger's association with Nietzsche and suggests that what is at stake is simply 'internal' to philosophy rather than an attempt to radically extend the boundary of debate into the socio-political arena. As Babette Babich obligingly advises, there *are* controversial elements in Nietzsche's work, and any engagement with Nietzsche '*should* produce provocative readings'.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 18ff.

⁴¹⁰ Krell, *Analysis to Nietzsche I, Nietzsche: Vol. I & II*, p. 232. Babette Babich suggests that this reading has a history originating in Nietzsche interpretation and the work of Watsuji Tetsuro. Cf. Babich, Babette, *Heidegger's Relation to Nietzsche's Thinking: Connivance, Nihilism, and Value*, *New Nietzsche Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1&2, Winter 1999, p. 24, n8.

⁴¹¹ Babich, *Heidegger's Relation to Nietzsche's Thinking*, p. 23.

The central thought in need of evaluation would appear to be Heidegger's enquiry as a confrontation (*Aus-einander-setzung*) with Nietzsche.⁴¹² What is Heidegger confronting? Heidegger's overcoming of metaphysics investigates truth and its potential to reveal the 'condition of being'. He has been attacking a correspondence or propositional theory of truth and suggesting that the metaphysical truth theories employ an untested conception of 'accordance'. Hence one of the reasons that Heidegger turns to Nietzsche is to weigh his philosophy against the great adversary of truth and meaning: value-philosophy. On account of Heidegger's open desire to overcome or 'destroy' a tradition that prides itself on rational inquiry into truth, this point may seem surprising. Nevertheless, we may recall that Heidegger's original foray into phenomenology in the early 1920s was taken against the value-philosophy of Heinrich Rickert and others.⁴¹³ A value-philosophy may replicate the correspondence theory that Heidegger is challenging. Thus at this stage of his career a confrontation with the *bête-noir* of value-philosophy is pertinent. That is not to say that Heidegger regards Nietzsche to be a value-philosopher in the sense of a neo-Kantian rationalist or that Nietzsche promotes historical relativism and the relativism of all truth statements as such. For Heidegger, Nietzsche provides truth with a 'ground' or 'ontology of truth' in the will to power. Therefore, Nietzsche is considered to invoke the end of metaphysics for the reason that his diagnosis is judged to be a progression from truth as correctness, to truth as value and finally to truth as will to power. When correspondence truth has been finalised as ontology, there are grounds for claiming the end of metaphysics *as* the philosophy of correspondence and representation. Nevertheless, according to Heidegger, Nietzsche's self-overcoming of nihilism offers will to power as the ultimate *value* and not the ultimate *meaning* of life and therefore fails to liberate itself from metaphysics.

We have learned from our investigation into Nietzsche of his debt to aesthetics and, in particular, German Romanticism. Nietzsche opposes religious and scientific truths with genealogical and aesthetic principles. Heidegger has likewise been confronting the metaphysical tradition (which

⁴¹² *Auseinandersetzung*, in its normal usage means an argument or examination; however, Heidegger use of '*Aus-einander-setzung*' in his forward to the *Nietzsche* lectures splits the word into its component parts and literally means 'a setting apart from one another.' Cf. Krell, *Nietzsche I*, pp. 230-31.

⁴¹³ Cf. Heidegger, Martin, *Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität), Gesamtausgabe*, volume 63, ed. K. Bröcker-Oltmanns (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988) trans. by J. van Buren as *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), sections 8 & 11; Frank Schalow, *At the Crossroads of Freedom: Ethics without Values, A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 250-62; Charles M. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) pp. 112, 117; Ingo Farin, 'Heidegger's Critique of Value Philosophy,' *Journal for the British Society of Phenomenology* 29:3 (Oct. 1998), pp. 268-80.

includes religion) and the centrality of the Cartesian subject with ontological and hermeneutic theory. Hence the thinkers share a certain 'kinship'. What is at stake is the proximity of this association. Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics employs aesthetic and genealogical 'truth' against metaphysics. Genealogical truth could be described as historical and finite. The values at stake are finite rather than infinite values; they exist in historical context rather than transcending history altogether. Aesthetic truth operates against the background of genealogy. It is described as one of the essential features of life that permits us to live in an otherwise meaningless world. Therefore, for Nietzsche, aesthetics is equated with 'meaningfulness'. Bowie especially highlights the romantic tradition's endorsement of the disclosive nature of sensuous, aesthetic truth and its potential for providing unity after the collapse of theology. Similarly, Heidegger has been criticising the deficiencies of truth as correspondence and investigating the relevance of ontological truth as truth as disclosure. If this is read concurrently with Heidegger's 1935 lecture, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, where Heidegger explicitly investigates the truth giving potential in the work of art, then we can observe the Heidegger-Nietzsche confrontation as a contest of aesthetic, as well as metaphysical, ontology.⁴¹⁴ His argument with Nietzsche does not posit eternal meaning against a value-relative truth. Rather Heidegger is testing the merits of an aesthetic theory that may yet rescue truth from subjectivism and relativism. Consequently, we arrive at rival theories. Heidegger characterises Nietzsche as a thinker who terminates in *subjective* aesthetics, whereas Heidegger announces an *ontological* aesthetics that claims to overcome subject-object duality with a description of truth as disclosure. A kinship is found in the willingness to criticise rational metaphysics; however, the confrontation terminates in competing aesthetic theories. What is revealed in Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche is the dependency of Heidegger's philosophical innovations on the metaphysical and aesthetic traditions and, subsequently, the limitations of those traditions. Heidegger can be read as searching for a way to overcome those limits and address the 'ground' of nihilism with a newly described truth.

7.2 The Countermovement of Art

⁴¹⁴ Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in *Off the Beaten Track*, pp. 1-56.

In the first lecture series, *The Will to Power as Art*, Heidegger states his intention. *The Will to Power* is named Nietzsche's 'chief philosophical work' that was planned but never finished and that will to power describes the 'basic character of all beings'.⁴¹⁵ As Gadamer recounts,

Heidegger was attracted to the desperate boldness with which Nietzsche questioned the foundations of the whole of metaphysics and with which he recognized everywhere the "will to power." Not the reevaluation of all values—this seemed to him to be a superficial aspect of Nietzsche—but rather that human beings in general were thought of as the being that set and estimated value.⁴¹⁶

Heidegger is concerned with the setting of value and the possibility of value estimation that occurs in Nietzsche's philosophy. What is this 'desperate boldness' that questions the 'whole of metaphysics'? Gadamer's view (undoubtedly influenced by Heidegger's interpretation) is that Nietzsche employs will to power to cross-examine the assumptions of metaphysics. Secondly, human value estimation is set also against metaphysics. If will to power and human evaluation are thereby correlated, then Heidegger is attempting to measure this 'boldness' against all beings. Will to power and human evaluation perform the same function, which is to question all beings. He wishes to expose the fundamental position or 'basic relation' that Nietzsche adopts toward beings.⁴¹⁷ Heidegger is essentially asking, what is a being for Nietzsche? The hypothesis being that will to power serves as the foundation of beings. With this 'guiding question' he hopes to determine Nietzsche's thought as an enquiry into 'ground': 'the fundamental position within which Nietzsche unfolds the guiding question of Western thought and responds to it.'⁴¹⁸ Thus Nietzsche's assessment of beings will be informed by a structure that conditions all of those beings and can be considered to be the 'ground' of Nietzsche's thought. Heidegger is therefore unifying Nietzsche's thought by reading it as a metaphysical essence. To ask what a being is, is to inquire into essence.⁴¹⁹

However, why does an investigation into will to power or the essence of beings begin with art?⁴²⁰ In order to establish the question of will to power as foundation, Heidegger assesses the relationship between art and truth as the prospective 'ground' of beings. The initial hypothesis is that will to power describes an *aesthetic relation*. For Heidegger, art potentially provides a better mode of access to

⁴¹⁵ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p 3. Heidegger quotes Nietzsche, 'Will to power is the ultimate *factum* to which we come.'

⁴¹⁶ Gadamer, *The Religious Dimension*, in *Heidegger's Ways*, p. 179.

⁴¹⁷ For an account of basic relations cf. chapter 5, §5.2 above.

⁴¹⁸ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p 4.

⁴¹⁹ Cf. Haar, Michel, 'Remarks on Heidegger's Reading of Nietzsche,' *Critical Assessments*, Vol. II, pp. 293ff.

⁴²⁰ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p. 67.

being and the truth of being because of art's inherent capacity to open and display. However, the display requires a ground or condition that is *in opposition to* or *a reversal of* philosophy's previous attempts to ground. If the conditions of being are concealed to previous philosophy, which sought them in religion, morality and Platonic ideals, then where do truth and being converge? Heidegger is investigating Nietzsche's proposition that this convergence occurs in art and offers us five statements with which Nietzsche supports his new evaluation.⁴²¹

1. Art is the most perspicuous and familiar configuration of will to power.⁴²²
2. Art must be grasped in terms of the artist.⁴²³
3. Art is the basic occurrence of all beings; to the extent that they are, beings are self-creating, created.⁴²⁴
4. Art is a distinctive countermovement to nihilism.⁴²⁵
5. Art is worth more than truth.⁴²⁶

The thrust of the analysis describes art as a countermovement to Platonic philosophy. As a countermovement the relationship between art and truth is reversed. For Nietzsche, art is worth more than truth. Accordingly, Heidegger situates Nietzsche in the history of philosophy and the oppositional tension that exists between being and becoming and truth and art. Plato's conception of being has been traditionally realized as an eternal and stable metaphysical category that is in opposition to transient world of becoming. 'True being' is to be found in the eternal and separate realm of being—the supersensuous. What is transient—the sensuous—is not considered to be true being. The sensuous world of becoming is distrusted for its ability to deceive: it has *less* truth than the supersensuous world. Thus the world of becoming is devalued in comparison to the true world of being. As art is associated with the sensuous world of becoming, art is also devalued when contrasted with truth. For Nietzsche to say that art is worth more than truth is to upset the traditional priority of philosophy and elect art over truth. One of the consequences of a radical critique is to separate rational from aesthetic truth rather than attempting an integration of the two. Therefore, Nietzsche's attack on rational truth may appear more pointed than some of the romantic critiques of transcendental idealism

⁴²¹ Cf. Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, pp. 69-76.

⁴²² Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §797.

⁴²³ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §797.

⁴²⁴ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §853: II & IV, §794.

⁴²⁵ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §794.

⁴²⁶ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §853: IV.

that attempt integration.⁴²⁷ However, Heidegger is reading Nietzsche as a reversal of metaphysics.⁴²⁸ Therefore, the segregation of aesthetics from *Metaphysica Generalis* does not necessarily introduce a separate philosophical discipline; rather it pioneers an inversion. Thus when Heidegger approaches art as will to power he is assessing the potential of the philosophical inversion. However, the inversion of this established opposition in Western thought implies that some form of relation still remains that affects both art and truth.

According to Taminiaux, Heidegger's introduction of Nietzsche's speculations on art is interpreted in terms of 'connivance'.⁴²⁹ Heidegger focuses on the concept of will to power in alliance with aesthetic philosophy in order to suggest a recovery of the Aristotelian notion of the unity of *dynamis*, *energeia* and *entelecheia*.⁴³⁰ Hence the connivance is an attempt to draw philosophy out of a subject-centred rational consciousness and towards a participation in an active *physis*: the relation engendered is thus one of activity in nature. The comparison of German thinking with Greek philosophy is said to 'reverse' the rationalist direction of aesthetics and return to Greek philosophy in a manner only before achieved by Hölderlin.⁴³¹ The comparison with Nietzsche is then an attempt to accomplish a national act of self-identity: knowing what one is through knowing what is truly foreign—Greece.⁴³² However, while the link with tragic Greece is an indubitable ideal of romantic philosophy, the unifying element that turns Heidegger toward *physis* and *energeia* is missing. *Energeia* is read in both Aristotle and Leibniz as an incomplete attempt to think being as active substance. Leibniz thinks substance as an active indwelling monad but one that fails to unify.⁴³³ Likewise, the later *Nietzsche* lectures describe Aristotle's *energeia* as a failed attempt to think the individual as the actual (rather than the Platonic ideal), because *energeia* is limited to presence and endurance: 'what beings are' in appearance. For Heidegger, 'that beings are,' is not asked.⁴³⁴ Heidegger is questioning the unity that philosophy hopes to explain and the relation that any unifying structure proposes. One of the reasons for enquiring into

⁴²⁷ An approach that he shares with Jacobi. Jacobi could not see how religion and rationality could integrate and preferred a radical separation of reason and faith.

⁴²⁸ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p. 29.

⁴²⁹ Jacques Taminiaux, *On Heidegger's Interpretation of the Will the Power as Art*, *New Nietzsche Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1/2, Winter 1999, pp.5ff.

⁴³⁰ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p. 64.

⁴³¹ Taminiaux, *On Heidegger's Interpretation of the Will the Power as Art*, p. 14.

⁴³² Babich, *Heidegger's Relation to Nietzsche's Thinking*, p. 46.

⁴³³ Heidegger, Martin, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, pp. 70-107.

⁴³⁴ Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, pp. 5-12.

Nietzsche and art is to assess the mode of unity that art offers. However, the unity or self-understanding that Heidegger seeks,

is not the self-knowledge of Hegel's absolute spirit. It is not a self-projection. Rather it knows that it is not the master of itself and its own Dasein, but comes upon itself in the midst of beings and has to take itself over as it finds itself.⁴³⁵

In keeping with his critique of Kant, Heidegger's notion of finitude and being-in-the-world maintains that Dasein is not the creator of its own object. Therefore, the unity that Heidegger seeks is always beyond the capacity of the individual to know absolutely. Unity is greater than what is knowable. As Gadamer also states, 'Nietzsche was for Heidegger not simply the one who diagnosed nihilism—with the surfacing of the "nothing," being becomes visible.'⁴³⁶ The condition of nihilism that reveals the nothing in values also reveals *that* values are absent. Hence meaning and values do not disappear; they are concealed or forgotten. The play between being and nothing and concealment and disclosure is informed by German aesthetic theory, and Heidegger is questioning the continued relevance of that theory: 'is art still an essential and necessary way in which that truth happens which is decisive for our historical existence, or is this something that art no longer is?'⁴³⁷

This interpretation of aesthetics is uncontroversial in that the philosophy of art is associated with the condemnation of scientific rationalism and the philosophical absolute. Where Heidegger conceivably does invite controversy is his extension of the horizon of artistic creation to will to power as a condition that conditions the whole. Art as will to power is grasped as the basic occurrence of *all beings*. It appears that Heidegger is totalising aesthetic theory and turning it into an act of absolute subjectivity.⁴³⁸ Heidegger is asking aesthetic judgement to be what it is not claiming to be: metaphysical ground.

The concept of will to power as the ground of Nietzsche's thought is likewise contested by scholars who read it as an extraneous ingredient of the *Nachlass* or as a description of a psychological state rather than a metaphysical or ontological ground.⁴³⁹ Nevertheless, will to power appears in

⁴³⁵ Gadamer, *The Truth of the Work of Art*, in *Heidegger's Ways*, p. 99.

⁴³⁶ Gadamer, *The Religious Dimension*, in *Heidegger's Ways*, p. 179.

⁴³⁷ Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in *Off the Beaten Track*, pp. 51.

⁴³⁸ Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, pp. 8ff.

⁴³⁹ Cf. Ivan Soll, 'Reconsiderations of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*,' in *Reading Nietzsche*, eds. R.C. Solomon & K.M. Higgins, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) pp. 104-31. Soll argues that Nietzsche's interpretation of

Nietzsche's published works and when it occurs it is in connection with aesthetics, the will to truth and the extension of power in nature.⁴⁴⁰ Heidegger wishes to ask that if we are to make assertions concerning all beings, then what is the beingness of those beings? Thus what is being? For art to be a countermovement to nihilism, that is, to supersensuous 'true being,' one conceivably needs an understanding of the newly inscribed being of the sensuous world. Heidegger will not allow questions of ground to dissolve for the reason that when thinkers make claims about things, for instance attempting to think the state of truth or art, they also include 'beingness' as a presupposition in their description. Therefore, the attempt to simply escape the unifying element of beingness is incoherent; Heidegger rather hopes to re-inscribe what unity might mean.

In what is described as a 'hinge section' of the lecture course, Heidegger discusses the 'raging discourse of truth and art'.⁴⁴¹ For art to be worth more than truth art must be *more in being* than the being of Plato's ideas. Furthermore, art must replace Plato's ideas as paragons of 'truth' and perform a similar unifying function. Using Plato as an example, Heidegger makes a distinction between truths (beings) and *the true* (being). Beingness is displayed in truths about beings, whereas 'the true' aims at universal validity. For Heidegger, it is coherent that a universal essence is attained via an investigation into particular truths. However, Heidegger also states that this does not mean that the resulting essence is to be considered as a constant. It can change. If an essence changes then all the examples that rest in its essence also change. This is not a universal in a traditional sense. For Heidegger, it affirms the active nature of essence that he wishes to express through verbal forms such as 'essencing' (*wesen*). Any change in universal essence does not endorse a freefall into relativism but marks the transformation of essence and universality. Hence, for Heidegger, change and transformation illustrate *the finite nature of universal essence*.

will is basically Schopenhauerian; Bernd Magnus, "Nietzsche's Philosophy in 1888: The Will to Power and the 'Übermensch,'" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 24 (January 1986): 79-99. Magnus minimize the importance of will to power in Nietzsche's philosophy; Ernst Behler, "Nietzsche in the Twentieth Century," and Alan D. Schrift, "Nietzsche's French Legacy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* discuss the relevant disputes.

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. 'Beyond Good and Evil,' 'On the Prejudices of the Philosophers,' sections 22-23; 'On The Genealogy of Morals,' III section 27; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 'Of Self-Overcoming,' p. 138, 'Of Redemption,' pp. 162-63; *The Gay Science*, V, 349.

⁴⁴¹ Krell, 'Analysis,' in Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, pp. 142-50. He is surely thinking of Heidegger's use of *Fug* and Derrida's use of 'La Brisure,' cf. *Of Grammatology*, pp. 65.

It is in this manner that Heidegger reads Nietzsche's task of creative transformation. Heidegger upholds the structures of traditional philosophy in terms of the relation between beings and their condition; however, the definition and placement of such structures are transformed. Thereafter, all that stands within the modifications of universal essence is likewise affected. Heidegger's interpretation of revaluation does not disturb the structures between universal and particular (understood as ground and grounded; being and beings). What it does do is to provide a procedure or explanation of how transformation occurs. Via his method of calling for the essential and the conditional in Nietzsche's argument the outline of Heidegger's interpretation becomes visible once more. Heidegger is drawing Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics back into the complexity of metaphysics. However, Heidegger actually appears *more* metaphysical than the target of his critique. Commentators such as Habermas and Derrida view Heidegger as maintaining a metaphysical structure that supports being as either a mythical authority or metaphysical signifier over and above the ontic beings that persist in that structure.⁴⁴² How does Heidegger justify his methodology?

The answer revolves around unity and ground. Nietzsche is to all intents and purposes an *inessential* thinker, as Heidegger recognises.⁴⁴³ What does this mean? By this we understand that Nietzsche deviates from the 'essential' path. Owing to Nietzsche's assault on conditions he seeks to think without the aid of essences, that is, he thinks 'inessentially'. Without truth and its unification in essence Nietzsche is left with the world that 'is'—the sensuous world. But, as Heidegger suggests, is this not a simple inversion of Platonism? The denial of the supersensuous leaves the sensuous as the 'true world'. As Nietzsche rids philosophy of the supersensuous that serves as the condition of the sensuous, he *cannot* think of essence in the manner of Plato. He does not describe a universal essence. However, Nietzsche would be required to justify, for example, the appearance of phenomena, their persistence through time and the forces and mechanisms that appear to act in our world. Nietzsche will explain these phenomena through a variety of hypotheses: perspectivism, will to power, eternal return. Each of these theses asserts a pluralism that cannot be reduced to universal essence, and a plurality of competing forces replaces the eternal nature of essence and the order of law and regulative

⁴⁴² Cf. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 154: 'Already at this point, the world-project disclosive of meaning, which is inscribed in the totality of a linguistic world view...is raised above every critical forum: The luminous force of world-disclosive language is hypostatized. It no longer has to prove itself by its capacity to throw light on beings in the world.' Cf. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 18-20.

⁴⁴³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p. 148.

principles. For Heidegger, Nietzsche does not escape the question of unity. With no unifying 'principle' to explain why beings share their beingness with each other the world is left ungrounded. The essence (condition) of the sensuous cannot be renounced; for Heidegger, only its definition can be surrendered.⁴⁴⁴ Therefore, we are led to believe that Heidegger hopes to uncover a relation that will account for the unity between beings and their condition. If the Nietzsche lectures are to be read as an act of self-examination, then Heidegger is opposing Nietzsche (as the last metaphysician) and the innovations that his philosophy proposes. Heidegger is estimating the real potential of his theory of truth as disclosure and its ability to unify truth and art. How does Heidegger's theory offer an advance over Nietzsche's?

Heidegger interprets Nietzsche's perspectival truth as a condition of life.⁴⁴⁵ Perspectivism is a condition of life in that 'to be' is to be sensuous and to be guided by the being that one is. Every being has a guiding perspective governing its appearance in being. Heidegger's investigation insists that Nietzsche lacks a total perspective. One does not gain access to the whole. 'True being' is to be in a sensuous embodied perspective that is *in error* only in that a total perspective is denied to it. Thus 'true being' has the characteristic of stability and fixation to one perspective. This is a necessary condition of life that enables beings to appear.⁴⁴⁶ In the face of this Heidegger raises a familiar detail: 'all appearance and all apparentness are possible only if something comes to the fore and shows itself at all. What in advance enables such appearing is the perspectival itself.'⁴⁴⁷ Heidegger prioritises 'the open' or 'what goes before' over and above the posterior, which is assumed to stand in the shadow of the 'what goes before'. This is a traditional structure that Heidegger is attempting to think in terms of the truth of art rather than knowledge. That Heidegger has already described truth as disclosure agrees, in principle, to the possibility of art being thought of as disclosive. Art, as involved in appearing and 'shining forth' (*Schein*), transfigures life. Truth acquires the sense of fixing and art that of creative scintillation (becoming). 'Art and truth are equally necessary for reality.' Yet at the very point of contact that Heidegger seeks to describe he says, 'As equally necessary they stand in

⁴⁴⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p. 160.

⁴⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p. 212.

⁴⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p. 214-15.

⁴⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p. 215.

severance.⁴⁴⁸ Because they execute different roles they are 'in strife' and separated from each other. It is Nietzsche's way of thinking being and becoming together. Art takes over the creative force of life after the death of God. Truth, which may not be excluded altogether, remains in the paradoxical state of fixation and illusion. The two are thought of as existing in balance with each other: 'We possess *art* least we *perish of the truth*.'⁴⁴⁹ However, it is not clear that Heidegger is offering a clear advance over Nietzsche's work. He appears to be procuring many of Nietzsche's innovations and simultaneously confining Nietzsche to a position that Nietzsche himself is seeking to overcome.

In spite of this, there does appear to be important differences that develop in Heidegger's work. Heidegger's positioning of the truth of being as a condition for Nietzsche's deliberations on life without conditions alters the balance of power in Nietzsche's work. It allows Heidegger to shift priorities from beings to being in itself. As exemplified by Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art*, the shift of emphasis to art *in itself* rather than the artist is characteristic of the structural priority of being over the beings that participate in being and the essence of truth.⁴⁵⁰ The modal shift back to a language of conditions, however redefined, returns us to familiar problems but with much of the traditional content of conditionality left behind. We are asked, or forced, to think through the conditionality of things without metaphysical concepts. We are thus confused as we lack pertinent tools to think conditions without concepts. Heidegger appears to be assuming that he is providing the tools for thinking the revised modality of conditions and as such his confrontation with Nietzsche is invaluable. Both thinkers are stepping beyond familiar territory yet their directions and responses are quite different. Heidegger, through imposing his basic ontological distinction on Nietzsche's philosophy, includes Nietzsche in the traditional discipline of metaphysics as philosophy that cannot think being. Nietzsche, for his part, would perhaps set a time-honoured accusation before Heidegger: 'being' is just another residue of Platonic-Christian idealism that is destined for overcoming.

7.3 Will to Power and Eternal Recurrence

⁴⁴⁸ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p. 218.

⁴⁴⁹ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §822.

⁴⁵⁰ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Off the Beaten Track*, pp.1ff.

Nietzsche's basic metaphysical position may be defined by two statements. First, the basic character of beings as such is "will to power." Second, Being is "eternal return of the same."⁴⁵¹

If the enquiry into art highlights the need for a unifying description of beings and truth, then Heidegger is obliged to explicate Nietzsche's interpretation of unity and any alleged failure that occurs. Therefore, Heidegger names will to power and eternal return as the two basic features of Nietzsche's metaphysical position and attempts to unravel the implication of this thought. However, as Heidegger has already stated his intention to read will to power as the fundamental aspect of Nietzsche's thought, we will now ask, 'what does the Nietzschean Will to Power mean for Heidegger?'⁴⁵²

Haar suggests that there are three phases to Heidegger's comprehension of will to power. The 1936-37 lecture, *Will to Power as Art*, names will to power as a form of transcendence which is exhibited through creative artistry and the concept of intoxication (*Rausch*).⁴⁵³ Intoxication facilitates transcendence through exploding the subjectivity of the subject. The second stage is found in Heidegger's 1940 lecture, *Nietzsche's Metaphysics*, where will to power is described as an immanent 'will to will' that has no external or separate manifestation.⁴⁵⁴ The final phase is found in Heidegger's 1943 *Holzwege* essay, *Nietzsche's Word 'God is Dead'*.⁴⁵⁵ Here Heidegger finalises his metaphysical interpretation of Nietzsche and names will to power as the culmination of value thinking. Consequently, the will to power is implicated in the 'murder of being': the technological manipulation of beings for one's own sake.

For Haar, the analysis of will to power exemplifies Heidegger's basic interpretive violence. When Heidegger attributes deficiencies in Nietzsche's work to metaphysical principles of which he is unaware, he ignores the physical 'realism' that Nietzsche intends. For example, in the 1936-37 lectures, Heidegger describes will to power in terms of the intentional of transcendence. Will to power is the transcendence of subjectivity beyond the confines of the subject. For Haar, this replicates the Husserlian structure of consciousness and ignores the 'real increase' in strength in the powers of the

⁴⁵¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p. 25.

⁴⁵² Haar, 'Remarks on Heidegger's Reading of Nietzsche,' pp. 293ff.

⁴⁵³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, pp. 92-106

⁴⁵⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p 244.

⁴⁵⁵ Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, pp. 157-99.

body.⁴⁵⁶ Will to power is also described as the 'essence' of the world, which passes over all the critiques of metaphysical essence and substantiality that can be found in Nietzsche's work. Nietzsche attacks the notion that a universal essence or unity *precedes* the multiplicity. All essence is, for Nietzsche, a theory of meaning that is imposed on phenomena: essence as perspective.⁴⁵⁷ Every form of meaning is a perspective and therefore also 'fictitious'. There is hence no 'ground'. Rather the chaos of multiplicity sustains all perspectives. Finally, Haar asks can values be reduced to rational representation and calculative thinking. Haar makes the critical point that reason aims at describing the 'best' calculation for its purposes (Leibniz's theory of 'the best of all worlds' springs to mind). Reason and calculative thinking champion directive *causal* sequence: why a thing is rather than not. This question begs a 'reason' for one occurrence rather than another. Nietzsche's multiplicity of forces in the will to power claims to support all possible 'reasons'. Hence the 'rather this than that' of the principle of reason is disarmed as within a multiplicity of reasons there is no reason to validate one thing as 'true' and exclude another as 'false'. The principle of contradiction, as well as the principle of identity, is also threatened by a multiplicity. However, for Nietzsche, 'a fictitious interpretation can have tremendous strength.'⁴⁵⁸ Nietzsche's values do not transfer to an objectivity or non-ambiguous rationality. Thus Haar considers Heidegger's interpretations to be unwarranted.

Deleuze also supports a pluralistic reading of will to power as a complement of force that allows for differences through differential distribution of powers not dissimilar to the four elements that accounted for all beings in ancient Greek science.

This is what the will to power is; the genealogical element of force, both differential and genetic. The will to power is the element from which derive both the quantitative difference of related forces and the quality that devolves into each force in this relation.⁴⁵⁹

Will to power as force makes difference possible by the infinite play of forces in differing quantitative and qualitative tensions. Therefore, what is not entirely clear is why Heidegger opposes the description of force and is at pains to describe it as metaphysical and calculative when he offers a very different interpretation. Heidegger appears to covet unity and ground but not of the type that Nietzsche is offering. Why is Heidegger hesitant?

⁴⁵⁶ Cf. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §800.

⁴⁵⁷ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §556.

⁴⁵⁸ Haar, 'Remarks on Heidegger's Reading of Nietzsche,' p. 296.

⁴⁵⁹ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 50.

Deleuze provides an indication when he cites *Will to Power* §619 as the most important of Nietzsche's texts on the meaning of will to power.

The *victorious* concept 'force,' by means of which our physicists have created God and the world, still needs to be *completed*: an *inner* will must be *ascribed* to it, which I designate as 'will to power'.⁴⁶⁰

Nietzsche's will to power accounts for an inner will or 'force' in contrast to the 'physicist' who can only account for change and action through external causes and external will. The will to power is an immanent force that explains the existence of activity as self-generating force. Nietzsche's will to power is anti-metaphysical and anti-theological because it opposes all *mechanism*. Metaphysics and God are considered to be mechanisms that do not explain 'active force'; they only describe 'symptoms'. Will to power as force answers mechanism *and* theology because it provides an immanent force which accounts for change, will, diversity, reproduction and generation without resorting to law-abiding mechanisms or an external force or creator to initiate those mechanisms. A self-generative multiplicity attacks the narrative of creation *ex nihilo* and the mechanical nature of science. Metaphysics and theology are considered the 'origin' of nihilism as both repress the active side of nature and will. Will to power, as a reversal of metaphysics and theology, is anti-metaphysical and anti-theological. Consequently, anti-metaphysics and immanence provide a solution or antidote to the problem of nihilism: they both describe a movement toward an immanent will to power. Moreover, Heidegger is wary of this linkage. It seems that he is prepared to sacrifice metaphysics but is suspicious of immanence. If immanence is the solution to metaphysics, then the linkage puts a question mark over Nietzsche's anti-metaphysics. Heidegger's suspicion is justified in the sense that Nietzsche's will to power appears to be another version of metaphysics and is hence thought of as an inversion, an anti-metaphysics, rather than a complete liberation. Heidegger can accede to the overcoming of Platonic metaphysics but if Nietzsche's various admonitions against essence, substance and the self are not strong enough to prevent will to power from reformulating its own metaphysical evaluation, then Nietzsche is included in the rejection of metaphysics. Heidegger's reading is swayed by his suspicion of metaphysical immanence that he sees in Nietzsche. Immanence is a problem for Heidegger for the reason that it appears to sanction the forgetting of being. Immanent force, for

⁴⁶⁰ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 49.

Heidegger, describes beings in their presence and does not acknowledge the unifying nature of beingness nor does it acknowledge being as absence: it does not get near to Heidegger's understanding of being. Heidegger is therefore questioning the necessity of this linkage: does an overcoming of metaphysics necessarily lead to immanence? Can this link be broken?

Is there evidence of an 'inner connection' between anti-metaphysics and immanence? Haar notices that Heidegger is keen to apportion will to power as *essence* of the world and eternal return as *existentia*. It is reasoned that this is due to the inner necessity of metaphysics that Heidegger is employing for his reading: 'Will to Power "exists" as Eternal Return.'⁴⁶¹ However, what is the nature of the connection between will to power and eternal return?

Nietzsche's published thoughts on eternal return are found in three locations: *The Gay Science*, §341, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and *Beyond Good and Evil*, III, 56. Heidegger explains the occurrences as a progressive process. The stages of eternal return appear as thoughts that are reacting to the 'death of God' and the modifications necessary for an interpretation of the world that does not rely upon a creator and the conditions that a God has traditionally supported.⁴⁶² Consequently, an anti-theological argument ensues.

The first occurrence in *The Gay Science* considers the thought as the 'greatest burden'. That a demon would 'steal upon you' and suggest that life is to be lived countless times with 'nothing new to it, but every pain and every pleasure, every thought and every sigh.' Nietzsche wonders if the event would crush a person or make them more godly. How great would a person have to become to bear the burden of this thought? This question introduces the character of Zarathustra with the phrase: *Incipit tragoedia*, ('the tragedy begins').

The second occurrence of the doctrine of return in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* tries to think the full import of the tragic life. The discussion is found principally in Part II, in the section 'On Redemption,'

⁴⁶¹ Haar, 'Remarks on Heidegger's Reading of Nietzsche,' p. 297.

⁴⁶² The death of God appears in *The Gay Science* (1882), section 108 & 125. The thought of eternal return is found in section 341 immediately followed by the 'going under of Zarathustra' in 342. Nietzsche then publishes *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in four parts over 1883-85. The fifth book of *The Gay Science* is added five years later after a full exploration of eternal return in *Zarathustra*, it begins with section 343 on the death of God.

and Part III in sections 'On the Vision and The Riddle' and 'The Convalescent'. 'On Redemption' specifies that eternal return is thought in opposition to traditional notions of time as redemption. Traditional notions are described in terms of a 'spirit of revenge' and the will's antipathy toward time. Redemption is understood as comprising an unconstructive attitude toward the past. To wish to 'redeem' something is to wish for recompense or atonement for a past event thereby 'converting' it to something other than it is. A yearning for redemption is described as *ill-will* to past deeds. Eternal return intends to liberate human being from this 'theological' attitude. The thoughts aim at the redemption of humanity from an ill-will toward the past and future, from the annihilation of past deeds through theological structures of forgiveness and judgement. How is liberation to be achieved? It is in this section that Nietzsche articulates creative will, as will to power, as the means of surmounting ill-willing or its counterconcept – *not-willing*. Eternal recurrence is the antidote to redeemed time. Events must be 'willed' and not forgiven, regretted or refused.

The third occurrence in *Beyond Good and Evil*, III, 56 describes eternal return as *circulus vitiosus deus* – 'a vicious circle made god,' or 'defective ring of god'.⁴⁶³ Nietzsche suggests that the doctrine of eternal return, thought of as joy, is in direct opposition to the pessimism of his age.

When reading Nietzsche we are presented with the 'real' consequences of thinking without conditions. The consequences extend to the reevaluation of time, justice and the nature of punishment. The power of his philosophy is his attempt to answer the question, what would life be like to *live* without conditions? The uncompromising nature of Nietzsche's work is found in the thoroughness with which the thought is applied. Hence eternal return is an attempt to think life and time without the support of God. What does that entail? As regards time, it means thinking time without a beginning and messianic end as revealed through Jewish religious experience and the Christian theology of redemption; it also means leaving behind Plato's concept of time as motion that is set in play by a changeless eternal god.⁴⁶⁴ 'Let us think this thought in its most extreme form: existence as it is, without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale or nothingness: "*the eternal*

⁴⁶³ See Walter Kaufmann's translation 'Beyond Good and Evil,' III, 56, note 17 with Heidegger's: *Nietzsche Vol. II*, p.65. These translations are not unproblematic. A more literal translation is: 'vicious circle god.'

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. Tanach, Berishit, 1, (Genesis 1.1) *The Stone Edition: Tanach* (New York: Mesorah, 1998); Plato, 'Timaeus,' *Complete Works*, 37a-39e; Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §462, 'In place of "metaphysics" and religion, the theory of eternal recurrence (this as a mean of breeding and selection).

recurrence.”⁴⁶⁵ Not even a final *telos* that terminates in nothingness is contemplated. In contradistinction to existential philosophy, death is perceived as a metaphysical end or ‘completion’ that must be denied when thinking time and existence without God and metaphysics.

For the reason that eternal return replaces redeemed time with meaningless existence, which is without completion, it is anti-theological and anti-metaphysical. Redeemed time is nihilistic because events are not willed as they occur; they are regretted. Only the will that is represented by Zarathustra is deemed strong enough to accept the recurrence of life as it was lived first time. The nihilism engendered in redeemed time is overcome by the will that wills eternal return: will to power.

A temporal connection between Nietzsche’s anti-theology and his anti-metaphysics is established in eternal return. Nietzsche describes an immanent conception of time within will to power. As Heidegger describes, Nietzsche requires three presuppositions for eternal return: the infinity of past and future time; the actuality of time; and the finitude of things.⁴⁶⁶ All of these interpretations of time appear to be material, that is, immanent to the finitude of the world and not located in another metaphysical space. A more common interpretation of eternity is to think it as being outside of the finite world or as within the nature of the universe yet with individuals retaining free action and renewed possibilities within endless time. As a Platonic-Christian concept, the former is abhorrent to Nietzsche while the latter is likewise desultory. Eternity as an external space or time is abandoned when metaphysics and theology are rejected. Free action is problematic also as it requires an origin of spontaneity within endless time. What is often unquestioned is the origin of the spontaneous self as the site of action. This thought is straightforward enough for us to think, but for Nietzsche it is not coherent. Where does spontaneity originate? If one is questioning conditions, particularly moral conditions, then the connection between freedom and moral action is put in serious doubt. A Kantian standpoint that situates moral action based on freedom is questioned once morality is revealed as an illusion.⁴⁶⁷ For Nietzsche, the concept of ‘free will’ is a theological invention with the aim of making man ‘accountable’. Accountability of action allows the judgement of action to commence; hence the ‘theological’ notions of guilt and innocence are grounded on free action. The thought reaches its

⁴⁶⁵ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §55.

⁴⁶⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. II*, p. 43.

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, The Four Great Errors*, ‘The Error of Free Will,’ section 7 & 8.

highest absurdity when all human beings are considered 'guilty' and therefore ripe for judgement on the basis of an 'original sin' which individuals did not enact but for which they are made accountable.⁴⁶⁸ If the concord of freedom, action, morality and judgement is interrupted the meaning of free will is problematized. Nietzsche's thoughts are not unambiguous. However, to think time without unchanging eternity, without beginning or end or without theological free will is to think of life in the active present yet without recompense for that action in the past or future. As Nietzsche suggests, if the idea of eternal return were put to you you would have no consciousness, objective stance or freedom to judge that thought because the eternally recurring moment recurs 'in full' together with the *same* conditions, the *same* thoughts and the *same* insecurities that occurred first time. The recurrence 'of the whole' would prevent any 'learning process' or 'knowledge' to be extracted from that event. All knowledge requires some form of metaphysical space or concept in order to retain anything called 'knowledge'. For this reason the 'thought' of living one life as it was lived *for eternity* is considered 'the greatest burden'.

There is no place, no purpose, no meaning, on which we can shift the responsibility for our being, for our being thus and thus. Above all: no one could do it; one cannot judge, measure, compare the whole, to say nothing of denying it! Why not?...*because nothing exists besides the whole*—⁴⁶⁹

Nietzsche's thought is speculative but a speculation that takes life in the shadow of the death of God with some seriousness. A strong link between anti-metaphysics, immanent will and unredeemed time is established. All three elements aim at countering theological and metaphysical nihilism. Once the reflection is set in motion Nietzsche begins to describe the 'tragic life' as a life that lives beneath the concept of eternal return. Such a life would require a heroic coming to terms with one's hope and suffering alike and in equal measure.⁴⁷⁰ Zarathustra's life is a teaching of the doctrine of eternal return as the ground of the tragic life after the withdrawal of redemption.⁴⁷¹

Heidegger's description of eternal return as the 'ground' of will to power thus has some coherence. For, as Nietzsche illustrates, eternal return encompasses the 'whole of beings'. Haar objects to the reading as Heidegger is said to 'theologise ontology'. Eternal return, as the 'highest moment' of being

⁴⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, II, 21.

⁴⁶⁹ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §765.

⁴⁷⁰ Heidegger chose *Beyond Good and Evil*, 150 as a course motto: 'Everything in the hero's sphere turns to tragedy; everything in the demigod's sphere turns to satyr-play; and everything in God's sphere turns to what? "world" perhaps?' Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. II*, p. 3.

⁴⁷¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. II*, p. 32.

(*theïon*), is equated with the most 'common occurrence' (*koinotaton*) of will to power. The world is both divine and common feature. Therefore, a levelling occurs which does not allow for a differentiated notion of will to power. However, although commentators such as Haar and Deleuze reject the metaphysical characterisation of Nietzsche for good reason, it appears more difficult to reject the inner connection between anti-metaphysics and immanence.⁴⁷² Even Haar's description of the multiplicity, which undermines metaphysical essence, does not necessary contend with an inner link between anti-metaphysics and immanence. Consequently, if Heidegger's description is presented in order to expose the internal connection between will to power and eternal return, anti-metaphysics and immanence, then how does Heidegger propose to break the linkage and what substitutes for immanent force?

Heidegger approaches eternal return as a doctrine that advances toward the whole but is necessarily incomplete; it resembles a 'riddle'. Nietzsche's eternal return is a puzzle that masks the whole and prevents the whole from being perceived or reached. To overcome the closure of perspectives, Heidegger suggests that a 'leap' (*Sprung*) is required into the open region.⁴⁷³ Thus Nietzsche's doctrine is related to Heidegger's investigation into truth as disclosure of the concealed.⁴⁷⁴ The language of 'leap' suggests that the whole *can* be viewed by some means, and that immanence is *not* the final position. It also appears that Heidegger is employing truth as disclosure as a means to break with immanent will. If this reading is coherent, then the leap aims at providing an alternative to anti-metaphysical immanence.

However, how does Heidegger break the cycle of immanence and sanction a leap? In the following section I hope to demonstrate that the break is achieved through an immanent critique of the opponent's theory. Once the theory has been rendered 'incoherent,' Heidegger will offer us his alternative version that repairs the weaknesses in Nietzsche's philosophy. Hence, Heidegger's reading

⁴⁷² Haar comments that Heidegger reduces Nietzsche's varied interpretations to existence in order to satisfy his unified reading of Nietzsche. Haar, 'Remarks on Heidegger's Reading of Nietzsche,' p. 297; Deleuze develops a reading of eternal return that suggest one can reject the calculative nature of probability and embrace chance and necessity. Eternal return is selective because the will wills the return in the present. It becomes a rule to live by not a preceding essence. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp. 68ff.

⁴⁷³ The word 'leap' (*Sprung*) has already been linked to its etymologically related word 'origin' (*Ursprung*) or 'originary' (*ursprünglich*) in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 6-7. An originary leap (*Ur-sprung*) is a leap toward ground, it attains ground.

⁴⁷⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. II*, p. 37.

of the 'revaluation of all value' as an entrenchment of metaphysics, although unpopular with Nietzsche scholars for the reason that they refuse to accept Nietzsche as a 'coherent' thinker, is a common philosophical technique.

7.4 Truth and Value

In the third part of the lecture series Heidegger develops the concepts of unity in Nietzsche's work. The internal connection between Nietzsche's anti-metaphysics and immanence is to be stretched to breaking point. Heidegger is asking the vital question, what remains after philosophy breaks with metaphysics? It is this question that leads Heidegger to Nietzsche. Nietzsche does not assume, unlike Jacobi and Kierkegaard, that an overcoming of metaphysics is necessarily a turn toward religion. An overcoming of metaphysics is also an overcoming of metaphysical religion. Nor does Nietzsche assume that overcoming metaphysics leads inwardly to consciousness or externally to the Absolute. Therefore, Heidegger's kinship with Nietzsche is a philosophical one whereby what comes after metaphysics is philosophy. Consequently, the questions that ensue are philosophical questions: what replaces metaphysical truth? Does what follows metaphysics provide a strong enough conception of unity? What are the implications of Nietzsche's method of overcoming? Does philosophy get trapped in a single perspective or the chaos of the multiplicity?

Heidegger's answers will differ from Nietzsche's. For Heidegger, an overcoming of metaphysics does not lead to disunity, illusion and immanence; rather it presents a renewed urgency regarding questions of unity and truth. Hence the question of art as that which follows metaphysics is raised again with the intention of testing Nietzsche's perspectival truth. As a replacement for metaphysical truth, perspectival truth is asked to provide a valuation that substitutes for the infinite values of metaphysics. Heidegger frames the discussion as a conflict between being and becoming and meaning and value. As being is considered to be an inheritance of Platonic metaphysics, Heidegger is assessing the consequences that result when being is eradicated or overcome. What results if the world is described in terms of pure becoming? If values are to be set by human beings that exist in perspectives of becoming, then what are the criteria for setting these values? Are human beings and the lives that we lead the only criteria for valuation? Hence the intent of the investigation is to uncover the consequences of Nietzsche's philosophy. If any problems are discovered, then Heidegger can begin to

repair those problems as he sees fit. His interpretation is intended to force Nietzsche into his most extreme position or 'outermost point'. For Heidegger, the outermost point, thought as ground, will always comment on the whole of beings and thereby reveal the fundamental relation that Dasein exhibits towards beings. 'Fundamental relation' or 'ground' is equated with unity. For Heidegger, a description of unity necessarily includes an account of being, whereas Nietzsche's account hopes to overcome the metaphysical implications of words such as 'unity' and 'being'. Heidegger's interpretation of the history of philosophy claims that metaphysics is defined (or unified) by its forgetting of being. If the relationship between human being and beings is defined by immanent beings to the exclusion of being, then Heidegger will accuse Nietzsche of being unable to liberate himself from metaphysics. Accordingly, Nietzsche does not break the link between anti-metaphysics and immanence and remains within a relation of metaphysical correspondence between language and world. Heidegger's reading turns on the interpretation of key terms such as unity, being, becoming and truth, and we will discuss the implications that these terms have for twentieth century philosophy.

Following on from section 7.3 above, truth as disclosure relates to aesthetic principles such as the disclosive quality of art. What is not fully explicit for Heidegger is the inner mechanism by which art relates to truth. Art takes responsibility for creative force of life and, consequently, assumes various functions left vacant by the death of God. Truth, however, remains in a paradoxical state of representing fixity but essentially remaining illusory. For art and truth to be related they are to be thought of as existing in some sort of equilibrium. Hence the question 'why is art worth more than truth?' is raised again with the status of truth as the primary focus.

When looking for examples of Nietzsche's view on truth Heidegger identifies three uses: (1) truth as error,⁴⁷⁵ (2) truth as a value-estimation for use in life,⁴⁷⁶ and (3) truth as holding to be true or belief.⁴⁷⁷ Evidently, Nietzsche does not reject truth altogether. It is considered to be essential for 'a certain kind of living being' and as a 'condition of preservation and growth'. Provided that truth is rethought along new lines it remains essential to life. Therefore, truth is aligned with a 'holding to be true' or 'belief' rather than with certainty. Devoid of a priori determination, truth has the character of 'illusion' or a

⁴⁷⁵ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §493.

⁴⁷⁶ Krell's translation cited in Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 33; cf. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §507.

⁴⁷⁷ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §531.

useful 'error': it is appointed for use in life not as an atemporal concept. Although Heidegger understands Nietzsche's 'life' as a description of the whole of beings, life is not an ultimate value in itself; it is beset by conditions or what he calls 'estimations of value' that work for life.⁴⁷⁸ Truth has no absolute by which to judge; hence judgements are 'estimates' or 'values' for life. However, although Nietzsche's description of truth as 'estimation' or 'holding to be true' appears to undermine traditional truth theories by describing them in terms of their contrary—*error*—Heidegger associates the account with a traditional account of truth as correctness.

To hold something for what it is, to represent it as thus and thus in being, to assimilate oneself in representing to whatever emerges and is encountered, is the essence of truth as correctness...Nietzsche is thinking nothing other than this: Truth as correctness.⁴⁷⁹

As correctness, what is encountered must show itself against the categories of truth or reason in order to be represented to, we assume, consciousness. Hence there appears to be a set of conditions, categories or even a representing subject that precede the objects encountered. Heidegger is suggesting that Nietzsche retains a concealed metaphysics that is not far removed from, for example, a Kantian interpretation of truth.

At this instant Heidegger's Nietzsche interpretation invites controversy. By judging Nietzsche to be a representative of truth as correctness, Heidegger is claiming that he is wedded to a metaphysical understanding of truth relations. In keeping with Heidegger's deconstruction of correspondence truth, Nietzsche is reliant on the appearance of beings to generate a correspondence between mind and thing, language and world or value and life. Postmodern readers of Nietzsche, which we have highlighted above, would point to Nietzsche's repudiation of correspondence and his defence of error and artifice. For them, truth is a pragmatic necessity and not a metaphysical ideal. It speaks of multiplicity rather than of permanent fixity. Furthermore, Nietzsche's will to power as immanent force would account for the manifestation of beings. However, Heidegger has a point. A relation exists between Nietzsche's valuations and the things that take on those valuations. As Nietzsche appears to suggest, values constitute relations: "The *estimation of value* "I believe that such and such is so" as the *essence of "truth."* In estimations of value are expressed *conditions of preservation and growth.*"⁴⁸⁰ If we are interested in discovering the relations that exist after metaphysics has been overcome, then in

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, pp. 15-21, 32-38.

⁴⁷⁹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 36.

⁴⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §507

Heidegger's mind we are obliged to ask after character of those relations. Regarding Nietzsche, the question in need of attention is, why do relations appear as 'estimation of value' or as 'belief'? To know or judge anything one is required to be *in* knowledge in order to commence, and for that reason the preconditions of belief and value-estimation become an issue. We are involved in representing or measuring things according to what is already given to us in categories or rules of thought. As truth is considered to be the 'essence' of knowledge, truth as correctness involves the preconditions of knowledge. Heidegger is, therefore, attempting to understand Nietzsche by 'stepping back' into his presuppositions which, according to a traditional reading of metaphysics, disclose the unity behind the multiplicity of particular relations.

Heidegger's interpretation must be read against Nietzsche's explicit attempts to refute metaphysics and ontology. For Nietzsche, the distinction between truth and error is read as a condition *of life* and not of being. They are functional and not absolute; effects not causes. To read effects as causes is a glaring misconception. The distinction between 'true' and 'error' is maintained for the necessity of life. Nevertheless, Nietzsche does not necessarily escape the force of Heidegger's argument by this repair as it appears that the 'true world' is one of mutability and becoming that we must 'suppress' in order to live.

"The *true* and the *apparent* worlds"— I have traced this antithesis back to value relations. We have projected the conditions of *our* preservation as *predicates of being* in general. Because we have to be stable in our beliefs if we are to prosper, we have made the "true" world a world not of mutability and becoming, but one of *being*.⁴⁸¹

Through the acknowledgement of a certain form of representative thinking the dualism inherent in a distinction between true and apparent, appearance and things in themselves, seems to be forthcoming. To suppress becoming in favour of being implies a philosophical dualism. Indeed, this is the position that Heidegger wishes to push Nietzsche towards in order to demonstrate Nietzsche's metaphysics. To be able to be we need the constant fixity of a 'belief,' but this belief calls for holding something to be constant and fixed, taking something to be 'in being'. The fixation is indeed an error because it is a necessary value rather than a highest value. Nietzsche's necessity does not follow rational logic (ground and consequent); rather it suggests human need or desire. What transpires is that if the 'necessity' of truth is demoted to the realm of life (pragmatism, desire), then a higher or 'more true'

⁴⁸¹ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §507.

realm must exist for truth to be discrepant. In short, what is truth in error *from*? It appears that, in the absence of being, chaos grounds Nietzsche's valuation:

Not "to know" but to schematise—to impose on chaos as much regularity and as many forms as our practical needs require.⁴⁸²

By means of Heidegger's interpretation the ground of Nietzsche's philosophy emerges in a clearer light. As truth is traditionally associated with being, and being is no longer the foundation but rather a 'holding to be true,' the 'truth of being' is 'error'. Truth is nothing but the imposition of belief on becoming: truth is in error from chaos. The fundamental foundation of life is chaos, not read as an abyss or absolute disorder, but in the Nietzschean sense of 'unmastered richness'.⁴⁸³ It is the human being's obligation to impose a schema upon chaos in order to suit our practical needs. There appears to be nothing essential or eternal in that belief or schema, but only the necessity of some schema or another for life to progress. Heidegger describes this as a 'peculiar preliminary projection of the world as a whole and for the governance of that world.'⁴⁸⁴ As the basis and the governance of the world, Heidegger believes that he has uncovered a unifying position within Nietzsche's dualism and the chaos of becoming is Nietzsche's fundamental position.

Nevertheless, this discovery is not without its problems and the latter part of Heidegger's course is dedicated to thinking how human being exists in relation to chaos. What is being considered is that any philosophy that argues for valuation or multiplicity above meaning and ground has to face not only the rational charge that valuation leads to arbitrariness, but the more pointed accusation that valuation grounds itself in chaos. However, Heidegger explains that Nietzsche's understanding of chaos is 'directed' and 'uncontrollable' rather than arbitrary. With chaos grounding all beings, Heidegger detects a problem that focuses on value-creation. The world that we encounter is evidently not chaotic; it appears to be coherent and rule abiding.⁴⁸⁵ Where is the chaos of becoming? Fixity becomes an issue because of the coherence that appears to surround us. The central problem is that because we are already in a schematised knowing, the world appears as already ordered. Where then is the division between the true and apparent worlds? This brings us to the question that Heidegger believes we should be asking: *'What happens when the distinction between a true and apparent world*

⁴⁸² Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §515.

⁴⁸³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 80.

⁴⁸⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 81.

⁴⁸⁵ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, pp. 71-72.

falls away? What becomes of the metaphysical essence of truth?'⁴⁸⁶ Does a change in the essence of truth change the ground, the conditions of that knowledge?

Nietzsche remark in *The Twilight of the Idols*, 'How the "True World" Finally Became a Fable: The History of an Error,' clarifies the distinction between the true and apparent:

The true world we abolished: which world was left? The apparent one perhaps?...But no! *along with the true world we have also abolished the apparent one!* (Midday; moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; highpoint of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)⁴⁸⁷

In citing the beginning of Zarathustra's 'going down' in response to the collapse of the distinction between the true and apparent worlds Nietzsche, in theory, changes the essence of metaphysical truth. This is Heidegger's target. However, the change in the metaphysical essence of truth is, as Heidegger has argued, ambiguous. What do we learn concerning Nietzsche's comprehension of truth and ground after the withdrawal of the distinction between the true and apparent worlds? It is not clear that Heidegger learns much about the *content* of truth; he appears to be weighing the essence of truth in relation to ground.

What Heidegger surprisingly renders as Nietzsche's metaphysical essence of truth is 'justice' (*Gerechtigkeit*).⁴⁸⁸ It is surprising because we think of justice as a metaphysical concept but, for Heidegger, justice is the way by which the essence of truth and knowledge can be related to will to power. Certainly the definition of justice has changed, which is now described as 'assimilation to chaos' rather than a relation to a court of law *per se*.⁴⁸⁹ Assimilation becomes the essence of truth; truth is harmony with the chaos of becoming. This seems a bizarre move as we have already discussed the fact that harmony with chaos also points to fixation and hence to falsity. However, Heidegger is attempting to follow Nietzsche's thought and think being and becoming together with the distinction between the true and the apparent world removed. He conducts both truth as knowledge (fixation) and truth as art (harmony and creative transformation) together as one perspective on the whole of beings. As such, 'assimilation is not imitative and reproductive adaptation to something at hand, but

⁴⁸⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 134.

⁴⁸⁷ Krell's translation *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 135; cf. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 51.

⁴⁸⁸ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, pp. 137-49. *Gerechtigkeit* also has a sense of ordering as in 'justification.'

⁴⁸⁹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 141. Heidegger's use of this term is strongly challenge by Gillian Rose in *Dialectics of Nihilism*, pp 87-91.

transfiguration that commands and poetises, establishes perspective horizons and fixates.⁴⁹⁰ This reading does not exempt the question that keeps rebounding on us, 'Whence do holding-to-be-true and being true as assimilation take their measure and direction; on what basis is something *right* at all?'⁴⁹¹ The position Heidegger is forced into is at the limit of language and thought. The thought that 'assimilation itself' is the measure and validation, for Heidegger, becomes 'inevitable'. Justification means, for Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, the essence, activation and assimilation of beings to chaos and, therefore, to beings as a whole. Justice does not point to a 'problem' which it is commissioned to 'solve' or 'redeem,' rather justice *is* the 'whole'. 'Justice does not "have" a perspective, it *is* itself a perspective as an erecting, opening and keeping open of it.'⁴⁹² Justice is read as construction, 'in the fact that when we set up a new space another atmosphere opens up, precisely through what is set up.'⁴⁹³

Clearly, Heidegger is thinking here of himself and the open region he has constructed and hence opened up making possible another atmosphere of thought. Hence Heidegger relates himself closely to Nietzsche's project. However, the difference and distance between Heidegger and Nietzsche is, in the eyes of Heidegger, vast. In order to dissociate himself from the metaphysical tradition, he interprets Nietzsche's aspect to one of a self-creation and self-positing of being. Nietzsche's setting of perspectives, while necessary, is a self-overcoming; a self-surpassing where one becomes master of oneself through climbing to a higher height. As an 'overpowering' it relates to will as power or force. However, as power it empowers only through the human being as the supreme representation of life itself, 'the thoroughgoing interpretation of beings as a whole as will to power amount to an anthropomorphizing of all being.'⁴⁹⁴ The world is given to the 'paradigm of man'. Nietzsche wishes to use the paradigm of man in opposition to the metaphysics of conceptual conditions and the anthropomorphizing of the supersensuous world. Yet the move appears, quite coherently for Nietzsche, as a systematisation of the immanent world of becoming. Becoming sets itself through itself. Rather than seeing this as an opposition to the permanence of being that characterises the history of Western philosophy, Heidegger characterises Nietzsche as remaining in permanence by

⁴⁹⁰ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 140.

⁴⁹¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 140.

⁴⁹² Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 148.

⁴⁹³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 144.

⁴⁹⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 154.

idealising the permanent in becoming, the 'remains' of the fixation. As being and conditions are ordered and set *for life*, life remains the prerogative and 'goal'.

The question as to where the truth of this first and last metaphysical interpretation of Being is grounded, the question as to whether such a ground is ever to be experienced within metaphysics, is now *so* far away that it cannot be asked as a question at all. For now the essence of Being appears to be so broadly and essentially grasped that it is also equal to whatever becomes, to "*life*," indeed as its concept.⁴⁹⁵

Heidegger criticises Nietzsche's immanence in a manner that recalls Tugendhat's criticism of Heidegger.⁴⁹⁶ Nietzsche's condition of life appears to float off toward an unregulated conception that mirrors the universals that he first attacks. For this reason, Heidegger contests a Nietzschean conception of beings as a whole for its sole concern with beings. For Heidegger, becoming does not touch upon being proper as it is rendered as a self-condition. Being is not fixation in Heidegger's lexicon; it is the concealed ground of both becoming and being as fixation, both being and nothingness. Nietzsche is separated from all ground and grounding questions and therefore from being and the truth of being as disclosure. In its place Nietzsche forces us to think becoming as an immanent self-creative force freed of the ground and conditions that, as Heidegger argues, linger in all beings. Heidegger explains Nietzsche's pursuit of immanence as the final move of 'being's abandonment of beings'. When the question of being can no longer be asked 'meaning' is jeopardised and meaninglessness as the consummation of Western thinking takes hold.⁴⁹⁷

What remains is uncertain. Heidegger condenses his views in Part II and III of the lecture series in opposition to the meaninglessness that he sees building in Nietzsche's relation toward beings. In raising the question of meaninglessness, he turns toward an earlier designation of meaning in *Being and Time* where meaning is described as 'projection' and 'clearing' in connection with the 'meaning of being'.⁴⁹⁸ If projection unfolds the meaning of beings through opening possibilities and relations with truth (and therefore being), then meaninglessness obstructs the opening and unfolding of possibilities. Meaninglessness is a decision that has already been decided and therefore imposes set relations. It is contrary to Heidegger's account of 'already-thereness'. He describes meaninglessness

⁴⁹⁵ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, p. 157.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. section 5.8 above. Tugendhat claims that Heidegger's reduction of truth to truth as disclosure destroys the functional distinction between truth and error, truth and lie.

⁴⁹⁷ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, Part II pp. 171-78.

⁴⁹⁸ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, Part II p. 174; Cf. *Being and Time*, section 32.

as the 'prepotence of beingness,' a preordained securing of beings for human use and 'accessible disposability'.⁴⁹⁹

The prepotence of Being in *this* essential configuration is called *machination* (*Machenschaft*). It prevents and kind of grounding of the "projections" that are under its power and yet are themselves none the less powerful...When meaningless comes to power by dint of machination, the suppression of meaning and thus of all inquiry into the truth of Being must be replaced by machination's erection of "goals" (values).⁵⁰⁰

Heidegger's account of Nietzschean immanence is hence linked with what he calls machination. Machination erects obstacles to meaning; it constructs and controls the values that human beings display towards each other and other beings. For Heidegger, this does not constitute meaning; meaning is unity and the projection and opening of relations with being. By way of this description, Heidegger is able to associate Nietzsche's thought with technology (and indeed with Western capitalism and Soviet communism) by explaining that they share a similar attitude towards the beings that they encounter: beings exist for manipulation by human beings.

What we arrive at is somewhat ambiguous. Nietzsche is now asked to be both metaphysical and immanent, that is, he retains basic dualisms yet his philosophical position is regarded as non-transcendent. Being and chaos, the true and apparent, life and value represent dualities. However, the arbitrariness of the schemata and the internal characteristic of becoming suggest a form of immanence and the dualities appear as immanent dialectics. What state of affairs are we in? Where are the criteria for the setting of schemata found? If the schemata are to be found 'in life,' we appear to be asking the conditioned to set its own conditions. Hence Heidegger's critique is employed to illustrate that inversions of metaphysics do not necessarily escape from the traditional questions of philosophy. For Heidegger, an intense confrontation with Nietzsche is imperative for discovering what follows the overcoming of metaphysics.

Despite the attempts to pass judgement on Nietzsche, his theory does affect the essence of metaphysical truth. There are now at least two possible modes of truth. One functions as traditional truth: fixing values in 'being'. The other, which subsequently looks like error, is portrayed as being adequate to becoming, a 'harmony (*homoiósis - adequatio*) with chaos'. Nietzsche's truth is

⁴⁹⁹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, Part II p. 174.

⁵⁰⁰ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, Part II p. 175.

problematic because once truth is destabilised there is no independent, eternal quantifier that guarantees access to a Platonic realm called 'the truth'. In the face of truth as determinate meaning is opposed chaos.

For Derrida, in his 1973 text, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, the antagonism that Heidegger brings to bear is symptomatic of Heidegger's method of hermeneutics. It is 'the question of interpretation itself'.⁵⁰¹ Heidegger's attempt to reduce Nietzsche to a point of determinable meaning suppresses the differences within Nietzsche's texts. The singular moment, represented as the 'essence' or 'ground' of his thought, is hence portrayed as a universal or totality that colours the whole. Derrida illustrates Heidegger's textual violence by way of a castration theme. He observes that Heidegger's development of truth conceals a famous character in Nietzsche's texts: truth as woman.⁵⁰² For Derrida, woman represents alterity, difference and the genealogical method that Heidegger necessarily disregards in order to arrive at a unified meaning. Hence, according to Derrida, Heidegger reinforces the metaphysical methodology that he wishes to overcome. Moreover, in doing so he refuses the way to multiplicity and difference that, for French poststructuralism, offers the best path out of metaphysics. A hermeneutical method that reads unified meaning into texts is, for Derrida, to authenticate only one side of a philosophical equation. Derrida's strategy against metaphysics is to render the text 'undecidable' and deny Heidegger access to Nietzsche's inner meaning. Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche becomes emblematic for a fundamental problem in textual analysis.

7.5 Nihilism and the End of Metaphysics

Heidegger's Nietzsche course of 1940 gathers together his previous lectures to determine Nietzsche's place in the history of metaphysics. Nietzsche's philosophy is depicted as value-philosophy set in a metaphysics of subjectivity. Consequently, Nietzsche remains in the nihilistic tradition that he described. The argument turns on the definition of metaphysics and the attendant term—nihilism.

⁵⁰¹ Derrida, Jacques, *Éperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche Spurs* (Paris: Flammarion, 1973) trans. by B. Harlow as *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 73.

⁵⁰² Derrida, *Spurs*, pp. 83ff. Cf. Nietzsche, 'How the Real World at Last Became a 'Myth,' *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 50; Nietzsche, 'In the South,' 'Songs of Prince Vogelfrei,' *The Gay Science*, pp.251-52.

Nietzsche's definition of nihilism can be summarised as '*the highest values devalue themselves*'.⁵⁰³ Constructing our belief systems on metaphysical categories causes nihilism. Nihilism is the state of affairs that results when metaphysical categories are unearthed as falsehoods. The fact that we have judged the world by untrue values devalues the world we are in; therefore, Nietzsche strongly links nihilism with the transcendent categories of religion and metaphysics. In order to overcome metaphysical belief systems, Nietzsche turns toward life, beings and finite history.

In contrast, Heidegger's definition is somewhat different.

Merely to chase after beings in the midst of the oblivion of Being – that is nihilism. Nihilism thus understood is the *ground* for the nihilism that Nietzsche exposed in the first book of *The Will to Power*.⁵⁰⁴

Nihilism is the *consequence* of a metaphysical dependence on beings. However, although the logic is similar to Nietzsche's, the cause of nihilism is located in beings and not in metaphysical categories as such. Metaphysics, for Heidegger, is the construction of 'entities' that are not distinct from the beings that they describe. It is representative thinking that is unaware of its grounding in being. Metaphysics would be, on this account, an *effect* of philosophy's lack of ground. Accordingly, metaphysics and nihilism both rest upon an unquestioned conception of beings. The implication is that the 'truth concerning beings' (what a being is) is jeopardised by an undeveloped attitude toward those beings thus preparing the ground for nihilism. By means of a direct correlation of nihilism with metaphysics, Heidegger is able to relate nihilism to his inquiry into truth. Any answer to the problem that presumes truth to be transparent or hopes to account for truth through the beings that exist in the truth relation is, on this reading, potentially nihilistic because of its uncritical posture toward beings. The positive aspect that Heidegger draws from the encounter with Nietzsche is that, through completing the metaphysical journey from its beginning in the conditional thought of Plato to its end in the conditionality of the subject, Nietzsche prepares the ground for a new departure in thinking.

Owing to the contrasting accounts of nihilism, the solutions or responses to the problem will differ. Nietzsche, as we have described, goes towards beings and describes life independent of metaphysical structures such as 'being'. Heidegger, however, finds Nietzsche's solution a recurrence of the

⁵⁰³ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §2.

⁵⁰⁴ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 217-18.

problem. Any solution that simply aims at beings runs the risk of repeating the errors of metaphysics. Consequently, Heidegger's response to nihilism lies in the recovery of being by way of a retrieval and transformation of philosophical language.

With the intention of progressing out of metaphysics, Heidegger first describes the implications that an 'end of metaphysics' would bring. He restates the proposition that the death of God signifies that transcendent conditions no longer provide meaning for beings. Thus all that stood in the shadow of transcendent conditions (i.e. all of beings) suffer from an acute withdrawal of meaning. 'In short, the categories "purpose," "unity," "being," by which we used to invest some value into the world—we *withdraw* again; and now the world seems valueless.'⁵⁰⁵ Nihilism and the end of metaphysics are related through their joint objective of the abandonment of transcendent conditions: '[T]he end of metaphysics does not mean the cessation of history. It is the *beginning* of a serious concern with that "event": "God is dead."⁵⁰⁶ In light of this 'historic event,' conditions, meaning or that which upholds meaning must be thought again without the support of the transcendent realm. It is for this reason that Nietzsche's philosophy is also a revaluation: the thinking of new values. The freedom *from* values requires a freedom *for* a revaluation.⁵⁰⁷ However, the deep-rooted problem that is inherent to post-transcendent reasoning is that one is no longer arguing solely over values as competing concepts (good versus evil, for example); rather it is the disappearance of the very location that values once occupied. The problem concerns a complete restructuring of meaning-location-production. Where are new values to be 'placed'?

But if the interpretation of beings as a whole cannot issue from a transcendent that is posited "over" them from the outset, then the new values and their standard of measure can only be drawn from the realm of beings themselves.⁵⁰⁸

For Heidegger, a new valuation will have to take its measure from a new principle that affects the whole of beings. Consequently, the situation resembles or repeats the basic structure of metaphysics: the thinking of beings as a whole in relation to principles that govern the whole of beings. Accordingly, Nietzsche's principle of measure is the will to power. Furthermore, because of the withdrawal of all transcendent principles and conditions, will to power cannot move toward a

⁵⁰⁵ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §12, trans by Krell cf. Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, pp. 24-26.

⁵⁰⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 5.

⁵⁰⁷ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 5.

⁵⁰⁸ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 6.

transcendent space. It cannot 'go' anywhere. Strictly speaking, it cannot not even move toward death as a negative *telos* that supplies meaning through completion. Will to power cannot move toward *any* end. All beings as will to power extend from, and return to, themselves: the same. Consequently, the anti-metaphysical characteristics of will to power are consummated in eternal return. Eternal return, 'obliterates any end above and beyond beings'. '[O]nly through the adequately conceived essence of will to power can it become clear why the being of beings as a whole must be eternal return of the same.'⁵⁰⁹

The individual elements of Nietzsche's metaphysics constitute what may be called the 'system of nihilism': Nihilism, Revaluation, Will to Power, Eternal Return and The Overman.⁵¹⁰ Each of the five rubrics displays a perspective of Nietzsche's metaphysics; however, together they constitute a whole. Nietzsche's rubrics are metaphysical because of his attachment to evaluative thinking which reproduces new aims and measures (values) based upon a principle which is true of all beings: will to power. One schema replaces and dominates the old schema. For Heidegger, it does not approach a measure that could be called ground, and therefore meaning, because it is not conscious of its essence. This is put in the following terms. 'Does something become a ground because it has validity as a value, or does it succeed in validating values because it is a ground?'⁵¹¹ Owing to value and ground ostensibly remaining on the same value-plane, it is extremely difficult to position the question so as to extract a stable 'meaning'. Heidegger's ontological impulse impels him to obtain 'meaning' through the search for essence.⁵¹² Meaning upsets the value-plane by arguing for a rank or asymmetry between beings and their essence. As remarked in section 7.5 above, Derrida has explained Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche as a confrontation with interpretation itself and key issues of meaning, essence and unity. Heidegger's method aspires to describe a unified meaning through prioritising ontological essence. Therefore, the attempt to describe a system of nihilism is an attempt to bring Nietzsche's philosophy to fruition in unified meaning. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche fails to

⁵⁰⁹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 8. Deleuze in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp. x-xii, 47-49, 68-71 opposes this reading. Deleuze describes eternal return and will to power as a process that selects and measures and in so doing creatively transforms beings so that they *do not* return to 'the same.' Negative, reactive power is transformed to active affirmative power, and thereby human being returns 'transformed.'

⁵¹⁰ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 9.

⁵¹¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 16.

⁵¹² Cf. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 43-44, where Heidegger distinguishes his task from traditional ontology. Heidegger's task is 'the effort to put Being into words.'

realise the unity of his system and therefore culminates in meaninglessness. Because Nietzsche's diagnosis obstructs the essence of the system he cannot organise a 'correct response' to nihilism.

The idea that Heidegger is contemplating is that nihilism has everything to do with a refusal of thinking. However, it is not merely the refusal to perceive transcendent conditions as illusory; it is a refusal to think essence, particularly of the nothing. Heidegger declares that Nietzsche cannot think the essence of nihilism because he has already decided on values as the sole source of thought. What is not a value is not examined. Hence nihilism is a recurring process of devaluation and re-valuation based on valuative thought. This agrees with Nietzsche's description of nihilism in that it is based on illusory conditions that subsequently must be refused in order to transform the nihilistic process into affirmative creativity. However, through focusing on the nothing as an unexamined presupposition, Heidegger unsettles the line of reasoning in a way that evokes deconstructive textual readings. 'In valuative thought the essence of being is—unwittingly—thought in a definite and necessary aspect, that is, in its nonessence.'⁵¹³ The claim suggests that in nihilism being as a whole excludes the nothing from its essence. Moreover, it is this exclusion that provokes philosophy to remain with metaphysical limits and opens up the 'inner logic' of nihilism.

Heidegger describes the inner logic of nihilism in three stages: the metaphysical necessity of humanity's searches for meaning in the world of becoming, the disappointment experienced when the world and meaning do not work exclusively through man, and the escape from the world of becoming to a stable Platonic realm. However, what is different about Nietzsche's account of nihilism is the self-consciousness involved in these stages. The 'origins' of nihilism are presented as 'known' quantities. That is, Nietzsche reasons that nihilism is caused by the meaningless essence of prior values and the psychological and metaphysical necessities for ordering and schematicising the meaninglessness. Thus the new valuation is built upon the self-consciousness of meaninglessness of this process. Self-conscious moralists literally 'catch themselves moralising' and setting values. '[T]his consciousness becomes an essential movement and a driving force in the whole of behaviour.'⁵¹⁴ Although this process is acknowledged as a wilful act it also appears as necessary owing to the metaphysical need

⁵¹³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 23.

⁵¹⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 50.

for purpose and meaning. Subsequently, we are intrigued by the failure of the procedure, and yet it remains a necessity. It is as though Nietzsche is circumscribing a defect in human existence that cannot be rectified but must be revealed as error. Becoming stands as a presupposition that cannot be fully 'known' and from which we are forever 'in error' because we require the 'lawfulness' of the process.⁵¹⁵ The inner logic of nihilism aims at producing lawfulness built upon valuation and re-valuation. The lawfulness of valuation enables will to power to dominate through the requirement for purpose and meaning. 'Values are bound to will to power; they depend on it as the proper essence of power.'⁵¹⁶ The logic of this system is finally traced to human being and the role that subjectivity plays in the positing of values. The will to power requires someone or something to posit and hence extend power. Human subjectivity becomes a necessary function of the will to power.

Heidegger has searched for a way to extend or overcome these structures. The essence of truth and the truth of being designate attempts to take the question of being beyond metaphysics. The nothing serves as a means to think being itself and undetermined the metaphysical reliance upon content and presence. Heidegger understands that in order to think conditions, which are inevitably not in full attendance in the beings that they condition, one has to leap beyond the content of metaphysics. This requires redefining the role of the 'essential' and liberating it from a meaning that attaches itself to 'quiddity'. For Heidegger, this amounts to announcing an end to metaphysics. Not in the sense that the metaphysical is no longer possible but that through Hegel and Nietzsche it has explored its 'logical' extremities. The results are absolute subjectivity in knowledge (Hegel) and absolute subjectivity in power (Nietzsche). In opposition to the Hegelian rational knowing, Nietzsche's system of power rests in the subjective body driven by its instincts for the extension of will to power.⁵¹⁷

For Heidegger, the necessity of the inner logic of nihilism is located in the history of metaphysics itself. Consequently, Heidegger demonstrates the passage from Plato to Nietzsche as an 'inevitable consequence' of the Platonic description of being as Idea.⁵¹⁸ In brief, Heidegger's argument locates the problem in Plato's conception of being as a condition of beings. The ideas serve as conditions for

⁵¹⁵ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 53.

⁵¹⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 50.

⁵¹⁷ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, pp. 147-49.

⁵¹⁸ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, pp. 68-176.

beings and describe things and virtues 'in themselves'. The highest idea is named as the *agathon*, which is traditionally translated as 'the good'. Heidegger preserves a sense of this translation but states that *agathon* indicates 'suitability,' that which benefits a being and 'makes it possible'.⁵¹⁹ Although the idea as *eidos* is involved in beings and makes beings visible, the idea is understandably read as that which is prior to the being that it makes possible. The idea stands as a necessary and prior condition: the a priori.⁵²⁰ This interpretation allows the idea to be read as a prior property of beings. Hence the conditionality and differentiation of beings is thought as a sequence in reference to the encounter by knowledge: the condition is prior to the conditioned, being is prior to beings. Heidegger does not think that being is best described in terms of the logical sequence of conditionality. Though not explicit in Plato, the sequencing of the encounter prepares the way for conditionality to pass over to beings, the *perceptio* and thus to what is represented to subjectivity.⁵²¹ The way is open for conditions to be interpreted as subjective representations or 'values'.

The subjective nature of conditionality is fortified through the Cartesian detection and identification of error and deceit in the nature of representation of perceived objects. The revelation drives Descartes to define a stable certitude for the production of truth. Once the search for a stable condition and ground is governed by the 'untruth' of objects, the pursuit of truth is turned inwards toward the certitude of the subject. Moreover, error also produces the additional certitude, 'that man is free, and being is founded on himself. *Error* directly attests to the priority of subjectivity.'⁵²² In Nietzsche, the subjective nature of conditionality (as values are conditions for life) is controlled by an evaluative subject freed of the rational conditions of metaphysics. The subject measures conditions based on subjective value or enhancement of power. The conditions appear to be self-set for beings '*from out of beings*'.

When do "conditions" come to be what is evaluated and valued; that is, come to be values? Only when the representing of beings as such comes to be that representing which absolutely posits itself on itself and has to constitute of itself and for itself all the conditions of Being; only when the basic character of beings has become the sort of essence that itself demands reckoning and estimating as an essential requirement for the

⁵¹⁹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, pp. 165-66.

⁵²⁰ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 161.

⁵²¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, pp. 173-77.

⁵²² Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 143.

Being of beings. That happens when the basic character of beings is revealed as will to power.⁵²³

Heidegger hence arrives at a description of nihilism as the subjective setting of conditions that forgets the being that conditionality once described. He is describing the forgetting of the question of being and the differentiation between being and beings. However, if Heidegger's reading of events is correct, and the forgetting of being is equated with the forgetting of 'original conditionality,' then the question that needs to be addressed is how to reply to the logic of nihilism. *What constitutes an adequate response?*

Heidegger returns to the subject of the *nihil*, the nothing, as a means of formulating a 'correct response' to nihilism: 'Perhaps the essence of nihilism consists in *not* taking the question of the nothing seriously.'⁵²⁴ Heidegger's audacious claim is that if the question of the essence of nothing remains undeveloped, then this leads to the abandonment of meaning. The nothing is described as being part of the essence of being. Heidegger raises the possibility that an 'entity' may be said to occupy an 'unsighted' position whereby it is described neither in terms of 'being' nor 'nullity'. Being and nothing both fulfil this description as the concealed condition or essence of that which appears in being. Hence the nothing of concealment is involved in the essence of being and beings. Heidegger's implication is that a misinterpretation of nothingness may constitute or even *cause* nihilism.⁵²⁵ The reflection suggests that Nietzsche's diagnosis is not entirely correct and that a developed question regarding the nothing may provide an antidote to nihilism. If the inquiry into essence and the nothing are neglected, then meaning and ground are likewise ignored. Thus Heidegger re-describes the question of nihilism as 'the essential nonthinking of the essence of the nothing'.⁵²⁶

7.6 Preliminary Assessment

Lacoue-Labarthe describes how in the wake of Heidegger's 1961 publication of the *Nietzsche* lectures philosophers in France, Germany and the English-speaking world hurried to get beyond Heidegger's

⁵²³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 177.

⁵²⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 21.

⁵²⁵ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 22.

⁵²⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. IV*, p. 22.

Nietzsche without pausing to read or learn from the encounter.⁵²⁷ According to Lacoue-Labarthe, we cannot separate Heidegger from Nietzsche: 'Our access to "Nietzsche himself" is through "Heidegger himself."' This is due to Heidegger's pre-eminence in describing Nietzsche's most difficult themes as an 'integral conception of the entire development of Western thought,' and it is this integral interpretation that comes into conflict with postmodern readings of Nietzsche.⁵²⁸

Derrida's later interpretation of the Heidegger's *Nietzsche* specifically contends with the unification of will to power as knowledge and eternal return.⁵²⁹ Derrida's question are concerned with unity in the form of Nietzsche's signature and the concept of totality. For Derrida, Nietzsche's signature represents a body of thought and not a single meaning by which 'he' or his thought can be known. He also has misgiving concerning the unity of Heidegger's history of metaphysics. In contrast to Gadamer, who accepts Heidegger's version of metaphysics, Derrida contests that there is not only one version of metaphysical history.⁵³⁰ Derrida's critique involves turning the concept of unity back upon Heidegger and asking, what are Heidegger's inner thoughts; what is Heidegger's unity? These questions prove instructive for Derrida's observation on the nature of interpretation. Heidegger appears to confirm his association with the hermeneutical method in the 1961 forward to the *Nietzsche* volumes.⁵³¹ Here he substantiates Derrida's suspicion that hermeneutics (and the history of metaphysics itself) is to be read according to Heidegger's own path of thinking. For Derrida, the essential thinking that Heidegger sets against Nietzsche's diverse stratagem is again a confirmation of Heidegger's method of reading texts and a verification of traditional metaphysical strategies.

In what has been called the 'Gadamer-Derrida Encounter,' Gadamer supports Heidegger against Nietzsche and Derrida. For Gadamer, Heidegger's uncovering of Nietzsche's value-thinking is 'fully persuasive and irrefutable'.⁵³² Gadamer is convinced by Heidegger's method that attempts to step behind Nietzsche's thought and uncover the presuppositions and conditions required for any account

⁵²⁷ Cf. Krell, *Infectious Nietzsche*, p. 139.

⁵²⁸ David Allison's Preface to *The New Nietzsche* (Cambridge, Ma: MIT Press, 1985), p. ix. Cf. Krell, *Infectious Nietzsche*, p. 139.

⁵²⁹ Derrida Jacques, *Interpreting Signatures (Heidegger/Nietzsche): Two Questions* (1981) in *Dialogue And Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, eds. D. P. Michelfelder & R. E. Palmer, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 58-71.

⁵³⁰ Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Letter to Dallmayr* in *Dialogue And Deconstruction*, p. 94.

⁵³¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. I*, p. xxxix-xl.

⁵³² Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Letter to Dallmayr*, p. 94.

of value of life. As Heidegger 'steps behind' Nietzsche he simultaneously effects an overcoming of the value-thinking that Nietzsche represents. However, what is dissatisfactory about Heidegger's attempt is its termination in the darkness of myth and being's mystery. Gadamer finds his own response, which appeals to conversation and reciprocal understanding, more appropriate.⁵³³ 'One must look for a word that can reach another person. And it is possible for one to find it; one can even learn the language of the other person.'⁵³⁴ Gadamer's response is courteous but it does not silence Derrida's critique; rather it serves to highlight the different approaches to the problem of meaning. Gadamer's textual-linguistic project wants conversation; it wants to be 'understood'. Conversely, Derrida uses text and language to disturb the understanding. Derrida wants to replicate and disseminate Nietzsche's many masks, whereas Gadamer wants to ask, *what do the masks mean?*⁵³⁵ For Derrida, meaning is inseparable from unity and coherence, and he constantly opposes coherence with strategies that aim at incoherence. As regards Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, both Gadamer and Derrida agree that Heidegger's strategy attempts to 'read' Nietzsche, that is, to 'understand' him. Once Heidegger does understand Nietzsche, he accuses Nietzsche of 'failure'. The failure concerns Nietzsche's inability to determine the unity of his thought regarding will to power, eternal return and the truth that emerges from supporting becoming. Nietzsche fails to unify his own thinking. Hence Nietzsche's failure is a failure of meaning, which culminates in meaninglessness or nihilism. Once the failure is isolated a strategy for the overcoming of nihilism can be formulated which, necessarily, goes towards meaning. We are left to suppose that meaninglessness or nihilism is a failure of unity. However, the solution is set in motion by the diagnosis which Derrida disputes. For Derrida, and the majority of French poststructuralists, Nietzsche does not aim at disclosing meaning as a metaphysical unity and to accuse him of such is an act of bad faith. Nietzsche's body of thought dissolves established meaning as a means of overcoming metaphysics. Hence, for Derrida, *meaning is nihilistic* because it valorises unity and the totality of unitary coherence. Derrida sponsors Nietzsche and the multiplicity contra essential meaning. Consequently, we are left with two alternatives delivered to philosophy at the end of metaphysics: essential thinking or the multiplicity and meaninglessness.

⁵³³ Cf. Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Destruktion and Deconstruction in Dialogue And Deconstruction*, pp. 102-113

⁵³⁴ Gadamer, *Destruktion and Deconstruction*, p. 106.

⁵³⁵ Krell, *Infectious Nietzsche*, p. 151.

The enquiry into meaninglessness allows Heidegger to examine the destructive side of conditions and law-setting. Meaninglessness does not protect or liberate beings. For Heidegger, it further extends the influence of nihilism and does not approach questions of unity, meaning and being. When tackling this problem, Heidegger looks for a presupposition that 'steps away' from meaninglessness and its method of ordering. He reasons that the base position that we must 'advance from' (rather than 'step back into') is the opening that allows beings to show themselves in their relation to being. The open is the disclosure that allows being and beings to function. Meaning is found in the order of the open; *it* sets the possibilities. Heidegger has been contesting the nature of rule and ground-setting. He is questioning the capability of human being to set the ground of its own conditions. He doubts whether a change in attitude or the assertion of knowledge and/or art can reset grounds; an assertion is more likely to block and impede new possibilities. What is required is a different approach to the problem and deeper understanding of attunement to and by being. What is at stake is now clearer. Heidegger is concerned with meaning as opposed to value. However, we remain yet to be convinced to whether or not Heidegger can describe and supply meaning through an investigation into the open region. Words such as 'possibilities,' 'meaning' and 'being' are not explicit in themselves and we are required to push Heidegger on these issues or remain in a speculative state that delivers little more than a structure with undeveloped content. If we are asking the right question, and it is not always clear that metaphysical questions concerning structure and content are a fortuitous path to take, then what is still missing from Heidegger's account is the measure by which 'meaning' or 'being' is made known.

However, this highlights one of the key splits in modern philosophy. Bowie, Habermas and other supporters of new forms of subjectivity are brought into uneasy alliance with Heidegger. Heidegger criticises the chaos of Nietzsche's interpretations and their inability to unify. Heidegger judges Nietzsche's chaos as anthropomorphism and views it as a form of absolute subjectivity. Bowie and Habermas agree that absolute subjectivity is problematic, as is unchecked assertion of rationality. However, they differ on solutions and directions. Bowie and Habermas defend a notion of subjectivity, the aesthetic and the intersubjective subjective. They ask, who is Nietzsche's 'I'? The balance of forces does not begin to explain the existence of a consciousness. Likewise, Heidegger finds that Nietzsche cannot explain the basic 'sameness' or unity of being. Meanings may change, i.e., interpretations, but that does not explain the beings that are and how they exist thorough time. For Heidegger, there is something that precedes interpretation.

Heidegger cannot disagree with the history of metaphysics, for if he disagrees on the subjective basis of 'dislike' or 'assertion' then, what is achieved? In order to oppose the subjectivist reading he must think being in a reverse logic than that which prevails when the subject encounters beings; that is, through being itself. In conditionality being itself necessarily passes before the beings that it conditions. Heidegger must give the authorization over to being. In which case the unfolding of being in time cannot be given over to the subject to schematise or assert a valuation. However, if valuation and nihilism are the conditions of the age then they must be a consequence of being and not the subject. Hence how can we refuse the condition that grants us the age we are in? The move to the history of being and the unfolding of that history is to cede power to being. A necessary consequence of this change over is to see history as a fated or destined event. Nietzsche's *amor fati* is revisited in Heidegger's history of being. History serves being for the reason that valuation cannot be an accident product of subjective execution; it is the inner logic of metaphysics and the condition of the age. Heidegger therefore links history and nihilism in his attempt to procure power from subjective nihilism and will to power. Heidegger accepts the insignia of nihilism, to become what one is, precisely because to not accept it is to surrender to the subjectivism it celebrates.

8. Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the relationship between metaphysics and nihilism in Heidegger's work. Heidegger attempts to develop a critique of metaphysics and the philosophy of the subject. His ontological project, begun in *Being and Time*, suggests that there is a context or world of relations that is prior to the subject; hence the ontological structures that he describes constitute the 'conditions' that make subjectivity possible.

Chapter 2 explored Heidegger's interpretation of transcendental idealism in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. I describe Heidegger as identifying a problem of transition existing between the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Logic in Kant's work. A problem of transition is registered when the isolated elements require connection or unification. However, for Heidegger, synthesis is not achieved through a 'third element' that connects the other elements. If it were, then further points of transition would exist between individual elements thus replicating the problem at different levels. Rather synthesis is explained as the root or ground of the other elements. Thus the problem of transition provokes a search for the connection between isolated elements, which translates into the conditions of synthesis or unity. Heidegger's objective is to explain synthesis as a primary condition that is informed by an understanding of being and not mathematical logic. The synthesising imagination, described in terms of the 'finite transcendence' of Dasein, functions as a bridge between ontological ground and isolated transcendental elements. Transcendence unifies the finite subject with its world. Heidegger's radical initiative is to implement the subjective transcendence at a general level. His reading of Kant explains that there is no unifying element to Kant's system. However, instead of responding to the problem with a logical self-grounding procedure associated with neo-Kantianism, Heidegger responds by describing an ontological 'step-back' or 'transcendence' into being. For Heidegger, the unity of being occurs earlier than the transcendental division. This is provocative to Kantians because Heidegger appears as a retrogressive thinker who takes philosophy backwards to places that Kant has already delimited as unknowable. Heidegger's description of a mystical realm of being appears to be beyond the boundaries of reason. Secondly, his use of radical finitude employs a nihilistic attack on metaphysics. Inspired by romantic attacks on reason, the infinite or eternal nature of metaphysics is questioned and described as a derivative form of finitude.

These fundamental differences in modern philosophy are sharply exposed in Heidegger's disputation with Cassirer at Davos.⁵³⁶ For Cassirer, Heidegger relativises all acts of knowledge and truth by placing the analysis in historic human finitude. The inclusion of time in the form of 'finite transcendence' leads to relativism. Cassirer asks how do you account for things that are not time-bound and raises familiar metaphysical concerns over universal truths. The central difficulty is the basic orientation of philosophy and human existence: Is the human being a creature of finitude informed by original unity (Heidegger) or does the finite human being form its own spirit through self-description in universal truths (Cassirer)?

What we witness in such confrontations are arguments disputing the nature of philosophy, modernity and what has become known as 'nihilism'. By presenting the inquiry into Kant as an investigation into the problem of transition between transcendental elements, Heidegger activates some of the fundamental problems of modern philosophy. A problem of transition raises a question over the unity of parts. Common solutions to the problem are (1) to provoke a unity by abolishing or neutralising one side of a duality, or (2) to find an additional theoretical means of negotiating the problem. The predicament that we repeatedly find in modern philosophy is that these two steps are interrelated and often confused, with new dualities forming in different localities. For example, after the Enlightenment much of modern and postmodern philosophy participates in the rejection or neutralisation of religion. Religion is recognised as a historic unifying authority which had served as a guarantor of theoretical and material systems. With the rejection of religious unity, which through Jewish and Christian narratives was conceived as an external creator, philosophy sought to establish unity and meaning on its own grounds. Subsequently, philosophical validation relies on a description of ground that is frequently regarded as either eternal (in the metaphysical sense of atemporal reason) or self-generating. However, the attempts, which are often systematic and inspired by mathematical foundations, reveal disunity or isolation at the level of, for example, subjectivity. Consequently, philosophy discovers a need to invoke an auxiliary means of bridging regional aporia. Hence, one can suggest that, broadly speaking, regional problems of transition are triggered by the attempt to unify at a more general level. Unity is therefore not necessarily achieved by the abolition of philosophical dualisms.

⁵³⁶ See section 2.3 above.

Heidegger's method works in reverse: by highlighting disunity at a local level, he provokes the problem of unity at a general level. If unity is problematized, then the problem of transition at a general level is also raised. This method is relevant to Heidegger's deconstruction of Kant because the transcendental ego supposedly confesses an ignorance of metaphysical or religious unities at the general level while employing metaphysical concepts at the subjective level. However, the subject reveals many regional inconsistencies, which, for many thinkers, requires a theory of unity or what Heidegger calls 'ground'. Fichte, Hegel, Schelling and the neo-Kantians recognise this incongruence; however, most attempt to achieve unity through negotiating a form of metaphysical immanence that again conceals problems of transition. Consequently, German philosophy has countered problems of transition through describing unity in terms of finitude, immanence or a systematic form of the absolute. Solutions are commonly self-grounding as the rejection of theological explanations provides the motivation to develop immanent theories. Indeed, Critchley goes as far to say that modern philosophy *begins* with the disappointment experienced in religious meaning. The problem of meaning is created through the absence of religious meaning.⁵³⁷

What saves Heidegger from a self-generating description of subjectivity and meaning is his conviction that subjectivity does not create its own object. If this point is taken as instructive, then subjectivity cannot explain why there is an objective world and the meaning of subject and object requires clarification. Heidegger offers the ontological difference between being and beings as a productive way of accounting for the condition of being in the world. Heidegger's explains that Dasein is necessarily finite *in order to disclose being*: being provides the meaning and 'telos' to the existence of Dasein.

Chapter 3 describes Heidegger's use of the nothing in his 1929 lecture *What is Metaphysics?* Heidegger develops a theory of transcendence at a more general level than the subjective focus of his Kant analysis and attempts to move beyond the structures of German Idealism and neo-Kantianism. Heidegger distinguishes himself by disputing self-grounding or pantheistic solutions and argues for a fundamental distinction between being and beings. This further demonstrates an attempt to break with

⁵³⁷ Critchley, Simon, *Very Little...Almost Nothing* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 2.

immanence. Heidegger achieves this through raising once more the problem of transition and the nature of transcendence. Transcendence alleviates the problem of transition by providing a synthesis or unity to structures that appear to exist in isolation. The condition for beings is developed in association with 'the nothing' to address the problem of what comes before beings. For Heidegger, the nothing embodies being better than does a metaphysical method of representation. However, in order to break away from an understanding of nothingness as a metaphysical concept or abstraction of consciousness, Heidegger wishes to describe the nothing as an 'experience' underwritten by the existential mood of Angst.

Angst reveals a philosophical problem that Dasein has with beings. Beings are recognised as an obstacle to the condition of beings that must be in some way stepped-over or transcended. Angst is the mood that has no intentional object in being and thereby transcends its localised conditions. This insight is illuminating when viewed against Heidegger's definition of nihilism in his later lectures. Beings (considered as obstacles) do not reveal a relationship with being and therefore meaning. Hence the problem with a metaphysical approach to beings is that beings impede meaning and terminate in nihilism. Heidegger's identification of Angst and the nothing as a pathway to meaning and being is playful and paradoxical as it is seen as a way out of a metaphysical account of nothingness: nihilism. The paradox that is suggested is that in order for beings to be meaningless they would first have to manifest themselves as beings, which necessitates an account of the meaning of manifestation. For Heidegger, the nothing reveals beings as a whole and is part of the essence of being in that it 'gives' ('nihilates') beings their essence by providing access to the meaning of being. Nihilism is therefore a derivative condition in that it raises the *possibility* that beings have no conditions and, consequently, no meaning only after beings are manifest. Heidegger is providing an account of unity at the general or ontological level that he believes will go towards overcoming nihilism understood as a blind comportment toward beings.⁵³⁸

Chapter 4 focuses on Heidegger's essay, *On the Essence of Grounds*, and his investigation into the nature of transcendence and conditionality in connection with Leibniz's rendering of the principle of sufficient reason. The principle of reason is associated with ground and cause. The initial aim is to

⁵³⁸ See Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 217-18.

break with a logical account of the principle of sufficient reason, which appears to describe beings in causal relations that terminate in a rational ground. Heidegger dismantles Leibniz's philosophy into constituent parts in order to expose an ontological ground that is prior to both a logical ground residing in a subjective consciousness and a causal ground residing in material beings. Heidegger aims at opposing the philosophy of the subject and the truth that subjectivity establishes with an ontological version of truth that brings beings in contact with meaning. For reasons already developed in the previous chapters, meaning will not reside in a metaphysical or ontic being, but will rather reside in a re-description of unity and transcendence.

The principle of sufficient reason is associated with truth through Leibniz's principle of identity. The identity of subject and predicate generates a 'correspondence' between beings that stands for truth in formal logic. Heidegger claims that both formal logic and truth-as-correspondence require a prior knowledge of what a being is in order to correspond between 'true' beings. Truth relies on the prior manifestation of beings and the condition for the emergence of those beings. This is made factual through transcendence (the ground of Dasein). For Heidegger, the distinction between being and beings only exists through Dasein 'standing in transcendence'.⁵³⁹ Transcendence is a fundamental constitution of Dasein and provides the connection between the prior understanding of beings and their manifestation. Heidegger's transcendence does not depict isolated subjectivity that demands synthesis with a general reality. As Dasein is already in the world, transcendence is already a factual part of Dasein's being. However, the surpassing that remains necessary is one where Dasein transcends toward the condition of beings: being. Without the fulfilment of this requirement, being is forgotten and the condition of nihilism and the associated obsession with beings will be forthcoming.

However, for Habermas, this description of transcendence is essentially metaphysical. For him, there is little difference between Heidegger's descriptions and transcendental philosophy of the subject.⁵⁴⁰ Also for Macann, Heidegger's regressive movement towards being takes precedence over a progressive movement towards beings. Macann wishes to reconnect the ontological world with the ontic world and is disillusioned when Heidegger fails to relate the ontological structures back to ontic

⁵³⁹ Macann, *The Essence of Transcendence*, p. 130.

⁵⁴⁰ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 152ff.

beings. For Macann, being and beings are not 'resolved' and beings become a disenchanting feature of the Heideggerian landscape.⁵⁴¹ However, both Habermas and Macann do not accept the force of Heidegger's critique of reason. Informed by romantic critiques such as Schelling and Nietzsche's, Heidegger's account wishes to argue that life and philosophy do not exist to be 'resolved'. One of Heidegger's main contributions is to suggest that discord and difference are a necessary constituent of being in the world. To exist means to exist in separation from being: the condition of existing as a being is to be separated from being. Heidegger's conception of ground in *On the Essence of Ground* terminates in a ground that cannot be adequately grasped.

Chapter 5 analyses Heidegger's attempt to provide a prior unity to beings via a new description of truth. A re-inscription of truth is fundamental to his project as truth expresses as the basic relationship that beings have towards ground. However, Heidegger, wisely or otherwise, strongly associates original manifestation and unity with 'truth'. Therefore, truth describes the relationship beings have toward unity and meaning. Heidegger's truth develops the ideas presented in *On the Essence of Ground* and claims that both formal logic and truth-as-correspondence require a prior knowledge of being in order to correspond between beings. Traditional truth theory presupposes the prior manifestation of beings and the condition for the emergence of those beings to posit any truth at all. This is described in terms of truth-as-disclosure or *aletheia*.⁵⁴² *Aletheia* is the Greek word for truth; however, Heidegger describes it as a privative form of the Greek term *lethe* ('bringing to word' or 'revealing') suggesting that in the process of revealing truth it also conceals the ground of its truth. Heidegger explains such disclosure in terms of an 'open region' that reveals and conceals, making possible ontic versions of truth. The innovative element in Heidegger's theory is the development of a region that contains *both* beings and their condition of being. Hence the ontological difference is internal or immanent to the open region: the region of concealment and revelation. For Heidegger, and sympathetic readers such as Stambaugh, this marks a departure from metaphysics owing to the elevation of the relation over the content of the relation: the open over what appears in the open.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴¹ Macann, 'The Essence of Transcendence,' pp. 133ff.

⁵⁴² See 5.1 above.

⁵⁴³ See 5.3 above.

However innovative this may appear, Heidegger's truth theory is considered by many to be a philosophical sleight of hand. When attempting to 'think being without regard for beings,' Heidegger is accused of hypostatizing the condition of beings.⁵⁴⁴ Rorty charges Heidegger with attempting to escape from temporal actuality into atemporal conditions. According to Rorty, the philosophical transgression that Heidegger commits is to account for empirical objects by way of metaphysical concepts that are prior to the objects but thought to condition their appearance.⁵⁴⁵ Tugendhat, on the other hand, accuses Heidegger of immediacy. For Tugendhat, Heidegger's conditionality maintains no distinction between truth and lie; hence his theory does not have to account for error or certainty. All beings are included in truth-as-disclosure, which resembles a philosophical ether that requires no elucidation. Tugendhat states that Heidegger has broadened a transcendental standpoint to a 'transcendental in general' and described it as an ontological horizon.⁵⁴⁶ However, like Habermas, Tugendhat does not see this as being a significant departure from a transcendental standpoint in the subject. Although the horizon has a prior ontological status, it remains contingent upon the world of existence. If the ontological horizon is judged to be free of the existential world, then, under these conditions, the relationships between being and beings, subject and object, truth and lie break down. The ontological horizon serves as an absolute whereby all meaningful divisions are 'absolved' in being.

The degree of intolerance that this state of affairs provokes is dependent upon the philosophy that a critic follows. For Tugendhat and Habermas, it is objectionable because there is no reason or measure for truth or ethics to function and account for the beings that are in existence. Hence both thinkers support an approach that does not abandon all aspects of reason. For Rorty, Heidegger's thinking is not necessarily unhelpful. Rorty is opposed to Heidegger's pseudo-metaphysical structures and therefore Heidegger serves as an argument against ontological investigations into conditions. Rorty is happy to abandon conditions and all external metaphysical concepts in favour of a pragmatic approach to truth and value. Hence Heidegger's contribution remains valuable.

⁵⁴⁴ Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁵ Rorty, 'Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Reification of Language,' pp. 340-42

⁵⁴⁶ Tugendhat, 'Heidegger's Idea of Truth,' p. 80.

Conversely, Heideggerians will argue that Heidegger's strategy does not terminate in an undetermined absolute or a meaningless horizon. Heidegger's investigation into conditions rejects any neutral descriptions or absolution of meaning and describes the open as a region of attunement, that is, a region of original difference and productive meaning. However, although I have argued that this is his intention, the structural integrity of Heidegger's theory is stronger than its content. By which I mean that, although meaning appears necessarily prior to the existential world, the content or nature of that meaning, particularly with reference to the nihilistic condition of modernity, is undeveloped and vague. While the structural priorities appear sound, Heidegger's thought is ill-defined when exposing the *relationship* that one develops toward meaning. The undeveloped condition of meaning prepares Heidegger for a deeper exploration into the nature of meaning and its relation to meaninglessness: nihilism. However, these criticisms are instructive for viewing Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche. Given the formal characteristics of Heidegger's method, a possible reading of his investigation into the overcoming of metaphysics and its relationship with nihilism is that Heidegger is testing the structural integrity of post-metaphysical theory against Nietzsche, the destroyer of formal structure.

Chapter 6 introduces Nietzsche's philosophy and the concept of nihilism. Nietzsche's diverse themes aim at overcoming metaphysics and the nihilistic symptoms that metaphysics elicits. For Nietzsche, nihilism consists in founding our interpretation of the world on erroneous metaphysical categories. Nihilism is a *consequence* of uncovering eternal metaphysical meaning as fallacy. This process leads to the end of tradition as a source of ground. Nietzsche's genealogy is important in articulating a response to the collapse in metaphysical authority because it employs history as a finite means of critiquing metaphysical infinity. Genealogy incorporates time-bound historical contexts into a critique of metaphysics and concludes that philosophy and life require an alternative foundation. For Nietzsche, there are no external or eternal solutions and any foundation that is judged necessary is judged on the basis of utility for life and not on the basis of reason. Without rational foundations to support truth, truth becomes perspectival: 'truth from a particular perspective'. His use of genealogy recognises patterns of history as constituting a force or power, but denies that the pattern has any inherent meaning. Consequently, privileged modes of access to reality or truth are undermined. However, Nietzsche resists simple relativism. Rather Nietzsche wishes to restructure meaning to be in the service of life and not what he considers to be the life-denying capacity of Christianity and Platonic metaphysics.

Nietzsche's account of nihilism is compared with Jacobi's to illustrate the differences between interpretations. Jacobi sees nihilism as an internal consequence of philosophy that, as a result of a consistent use of reason, denies an external cause of the world thereby severing its relationship with God, the external guarantor of meaning. Nihilism is the meaninglessness that results from philosophical and rational immanence. Jacobi resolves the problem of transition between the subject, world and external creator by faith: an immediate, intuitive relationship with God.⁵⁴⁷

Nietzsche's version of nihilism is similar given that he views nihilism as an internal consequence of metaphysics. However, the difference of Nietzsche's analysis is his inclusion of metaphysical relationships with God and the supersensuous world in his diagnosis, resulting in the conviction that nihilism results from faith in external conditions. For Jacobi the problem of nihilism results from rationalism whereas, for Nietzsche, the problem is 'metaphysical'. This diagnosis leads to Nietzsche's support for the immanent condition of life as a correct response to metaphysical transcendence. Jacobi's 'solution' to nihilism is Nietzsche's 'sufficient condition'. However, Nietzsche is in agreement with Jacobi when he attacks the presumptions of reason. What results is a more extensive attack on reason, science and morality. In Nietzsche's critique, the condition of nihilism cannot be evaded through recourse to a metaphysical authority.

The narrative that Nietzsche develops, regarding Christian morality in particular, I have named the 'logic of abjuration'.⁵⁴⁸ This attempts to disclose the underlying principle of Christian morality as a system that thrives on the negation of other cultures and systems. Nietzsche explicates this as a slave morality that renounces the higher master morality that originally governed it. Slave morality erects a spiritual 'supersensuous world,' which preaches life-denying values as truth, over and against the 'sensuous world' of an older master morality. Slave morality performs this inversion in reaction to its powerlessness in the sensuous world. Nietzsche names this inversion of truth relations a slave revolt in morality. This state of affairs is not equivalent to real political power; rather the powerlessness of slave morality is a moral or ontological weakness that can function as the ruling order. However, because slave morality commences in the renouncement of affirmation, an inner logic of negation and

⁵⁴⁷ Jacobi, *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza (1789)*, pp. 370-78; also cf. Jacobi's preface to *David Hume on Faith (1815)*, pp. 538-41.

⁵⁴⁸ See 6.3.2 above.

denial inheres within slave morality. Nihilism is the direct consequence of a system of denial, because the logic of abjuration states that life-denying values cannot sustain their strength of deceit. A will to negation is self-undermining because denial enforces a negative potency that further intensifies negation terminating in the negation of belief itself: nihilism.

Because the analysis describes nihilism in terms of denial and weakness, its antidote lies in affirmation and strength. For Nietzsche, active nihilism is the struggle out of passive nihilism. Active nihilism embraces a great freedom that liberates humanity from illusory historical structures. Nietzsche's position appears to be one that celebrates this newfound freedom as a power whereby one can set one's own values. The philosopher's task is therefore to create values in conjunction with 'life'. Nietzsche's aim is to create or describe a life-affirming will that valorises affirmation.

Consequently, nihilism is the condition in which we find ourselves after genealogy has uncovered the finite nature of value-setting in history. Active nihilism is a direct response to passive nihilism. However, the task that is set for active nihilism is immense, as the collapse of religious meaning begs the question of meaning itself: does existence have any meaning at all? The legacy of slave morality and the logic of abjuration attack all foundational concepts and beliefs. Under a nihilistic critique all foundational accounts appear dubious. Nietzsche's devastating reflection entertains the thought that morality itself *is* the will to negation. Nihilism implies that morality, as a vehicle for meaning, is a system of deceit. Existence may have no meaning at all. For Nietzsche, it is morality and eternal meaning that are duplicitous and nihilism the true state of affairs.

Chapter 7 details Heidegger's reading and response to Nietzsche's account of Western nihilism. Heidegger's method seeks to reveal a foundational concept beneath Nietzsche's multifaceted positions. That is, Heidegger attempts to read Nietzsche's philosophy as a totality that aims at a description of the whole of beings. As Heidegger considers an account of unity to be equivalent with meaning, he is questioning the applicability of Nietzsche's thought as an instrument of meaning. Moreover, because Heidegger understands Nietzsche's position to be a logical consequence of the metaphysical tradition, he is judging the capacity of metaphysics to advance meaning. However, Nietzsche's power rests in his ability to define and respond to the condition of his age, which is designated nihilistic. For both Heidegger and Nietzsche, nihilism and overcoming metaphysics are equivalent. The overcoming of nihilism corresponds to what will come after metaphysics reaches its

end. However, in contradistinction to Nietzsche's method, Heidegger provides a foundational account of Nietzsche's nihilism and opposes Nietzsche's support of meaninglessness. This discrepancy is accomplished through an alternative diagnosis of the problem of nihilism.

I have described Nietzsche's account of nihilism as a consequence of founding our interpretation of the world on erroneous metaphysical categories. This is also true for Heidegger; however, metaphysics is interpreted in terms of beings. In this account, metaphysical concepts and principles are equivalent to beings, because they rely upon the appearance and presence of beings for their coherence. Hence, for Heidegger, nihilism is described as 'chas[ing] after beings in the midst of the oblivion of Being.'⁵⁴⁹ Nihilism is to comport oneself towards beings while forgetting the condition of being. Consequently, Heidegger is opposed to immanent or positive theories that are dependent upon an undefined description of positive beings.

The situation is therefore somewhat complicated. Heidegger agrees that metaphysics is problematic and destined for an overcoming, but because his diagnosis is distinctive the solution to nihilism will require a different approach. If Nietzsche's thought is understood to be a logical consequence of the metaphysical tradition and that tradition is consumed by beings, then nihilism is a logical consequence of an immanent obsession with beings. This accounts for Heidegger's exploration of transcendence in this period of his philosophical career. Consequently, Heidegger's diagnosis appears to bear closer resemblance to Jacobi's definition of nihilism and the necessity of performing a 'leap' to the condition of beings.⁵⁵⁰ The recognition of the essential nature of the problem of transition for the existence of beings forces Heidegger, like Jacobi, to seek additional theoretical means of negotiating the leap. However, Heidegger also enlists an Enlightenment critique of religion to undermine the theological tradition's use of metaphysical beings and concepts to account for the world we are in. Therefore, a simple return to the infinite in contradistinction to the finite is precluded from the outset as evidenced by Heidegger's frequent referrals to finitude and the inclusion of religion in the metaphysical

⁵⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 217-18.

⁵⁵⁰ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 6-7, 10.

tradition.⁵⁵¹ However, I explained that Heidegger maintains a conditional structure that is formally similar to metaphysics; however, the relations between elements are altered.

Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche is employed to test Nietzsche's responses to nihilism and his diagnosis of the metaphysical tradition. Through expressing a public disagreement with Nietzsche's support of meaninglessness, Heidegger is exploring how meaning can be preserved. As Heidegger closely associates meaning with unity, the *Nietzsche* lectures seek to assess Nietzsche's ability to unify and ground. A philosophy that does not 'unify,' that is, does not understand its ground, results in 'disunity' or 'meaninglessness'. Chaos or meaninglessness denotes a failure to unify. Therefore, Heidegger first tests the Nietzschean (and, consequently, the romantic) proclivity to establish meaning and unity through art. The relationship between art and truth is judged in relation to will to power. The hypothesis is that ground, as will to power, is achieved through an aesthetic relation.

Although Heidegger employs aesthetic arguments when criticising scientific rationalism and the philosophical absolute, he causes concern when he describes the philosophy of art as a condition that conditions the whole. Art as will to power is grasped as the basic occurrence of all beings. Heidegger totalises aesthetic theory into an act of absolute subjectivity.⁵⁵² Heidegger is asking aesthetic judgement to be what it is not claiming to be: metaphysical ground. When aesthetics fails to achieve unity or ground, Heidegger concludes that Nietzsche's theory is an inversion of Platonism and within the boundaries of metaphysics. The failure is the failure to provide unified meaning. Hence Nietzsche's establishment of the chaos of becoming in opposition to being elevates disunity or meaninglessness over and above meaning and ground: art impedes unity. Hence art, in its Nietzschean aspect, cannot stand as a countermovement to nihilism because it does not break out of immanence and establish meaning. Heidegger's insistence that Nietzsche's philosophy of perspectivism lacks a total perspective is a reworking of this position. Nietzsche's perspectivism does not gain access to the whole and is in error in that a total perspective, and hence meaning, is denied to it.

⁵⁵¹ Heidegger, 'Phenomenology and Theology,' pp. 39-62.

⁵⁵² Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, pp. 8ff.

Heidegger further assesses Nietzsche's interpretation of unity as regards will to power and eternal return. Heidegger reads these two theories as corresponding to Nietzsche's conception of being and time. Will to power is described as the *essence* of Nietzsche's philosophy while eternal return, as an account of time, is the *existentia*. From the outset, we can detect a certain metaphysical structure that Heidegger builds around Nietzsche's philosophy. To state that 'will to power is the essence of eternal return' is reminiscent of Hegelian metaphysics—being as the essence of time. This is in conflict with Heidegger's declared conclusion to *Being and Time*—'Does *time* itself manifest itself as the horizon of *Being*?'⁵⁵³ If unity and hence meaning are made possible through will to power and eternal return, then the structure will bear resemblance to metaphysics for the reason that will to power is elevated above time.

Heidegger invites controversy when attempting to unify Nietzsche's philosophy in a traditional metaphysical procedure. For thinkers such as Deleuze, Derrida and Haar, will to power is better described as a multiplicity than a unitary essence.⁵⁵⁴ Will to power as multiplicity attacks metaphysics for the reason that it describes an immanent force which accounts for change, will, diversity, reproduction and generation without resorting to law-abiding mechanisms or an external force or creator to initiate those mechanisms. However, Heidegger uses the necessarily incomplete nature of will to power and eternal return to describe them as doctrines that advance toward the whole but ultimately fail to unify.

I have argued that Heidegger is forcing Nietzsche's thought to display its immanent characteristics. Heidegger is happy to endorse an anti-metaphysical attack on philosophy but he is not prepared to sanction immanence. Because Heidegger's ontological starting point requires a fundamental difference between beings and their condition, beings solely for themselves have been recognised as an obstacle to being. Nietzsche's solution to the nihilistic nature of metaphysical categories is to return philosophy to life at the cost of immanence. Difference is accounted for by a multiplicity of perspectives underwritten by will to power. On Heidegger's account, this logically leads to advanced forms of nihilism as nihilism is defined as an obsession with beings. Nietzsche's philosophy is an

⁵⁵³ Heidegger, BT, §83:488.

⁵⁵⁴ See 7.3. above.

entrenchment of metaphysics and constitutes an impediment to unity, as it cannot rejoin the difference of being at the general or ontological level. For Heidegger, this obstructs the path to meaning. This state of affairs is revealed in Nietzsche's attempt to unify by thinking eternal return as time. Nietzsche's eternal return is read as a puzzle that masks the whole and prevents the whole from being perceived or reached. Eternal return thinks time without a beginning or end. It is, 'existence as it is, without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale or nothingness: "the eternal recurrence."'”⁵⁵⁵ For Heidegger, eternal return replaces metaphysically redeemed time with meaningless existence that is without final completion. Nietzsche's time is non-metaphysical and necessarily incomplete.

What remains after Nietzsche's philosophy is unclear. As a replacement for metaphysical truth, perspectival truth is asked to provide a valuation that substitutes for the infinite values of metaphysics. Heidegger frames the discussion as a conflict between being and becoming and meaning and value. In order to evade the metaphysical associations of 'being,' Nietzsche promotes becoming as a foundational category. Heidegger pushes the implications and asks, when becoming serves as a ground what are the criteria for setting values? Hence, the intent of the investigation is to uncover the consequences of Nietzsche's philosophy. If the relationship between human being and beings is defined by immanent beings and becoming to the exclusion of being, then Heidegger will accuse Nietzsche of being unable to liberate himself from metaphysics.

Heidegger's interpretation must be read against Nietzsche's explicit attempts to refute metaphysics and ontology. For Nietzsche, the distinction between truth and error is read as a condition of *life* and not of being. Nietzsche promotes functional and not absolute categories. The distinction between 'true' and 'error' is maintained for the necessity of life, which implies that it is not occurring at general or ontological level. Nevertheless, I have argued that Nietzsche does not escape the force of Heidegger's argument, as any account of world or life requires a limited form of unity to vindicate the world we are in. Consequently, Nietzsche's thought does contain an account of a 'true world' of mutability and becoming that we are asked to 'suppress' in order to live. Being is a necessary moment of becoming. Heidegger demonstrates Nietzsche's metaphysics by exposing Nietzsche's requirement

⁵⁵⁵ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §55.

for fixity, taking something to be 'in being'. Fixity is indeed an error because it is a necessary value rather than the highest value. Heidegger's argument states that necessary values are necessary for something. What is truth *in error from*? Life appears as another necessary value *for* enhancing will to power. Hence the question of what will to power is does not disappear. Will to power is judged the essence or ground of Nietzsche's 'system'. In the absence of being, it appears that chaos grounds Nietzsche's valuation. Therefore, Heidegger believes that he has uncovered a unifying position in Nietzsche's philosophy and the chaos of becoming is Nietzsche's fundamental position. As the unifying position, chaos is responsible for meaning; hence, the meaning of meaning is chaos: meaninglessness.

For Heidegger, the becoming of chaos does not touch upon being proper as it is rendered as a self-conditioning condition. Nietzsche's method of overcoming metaphysics conceals the transitional problems that Heidegger judges to be an existential element of being. Being is not fixity in Heidegger's lexicon; it is the concealed ground of both becoming and being, both being and nothingness. Nietzsche's methodology separates meaning from all ground and grounding questions and therefore from being and the truth of being as disclosure. In its place, Nietzsche forces us to think becoming as an immanent self-creative force freed of the ground and conditions that, as Heidegger argues, linger in all beings. Heidegger explains Nietzsche's pursuit of immanence as the final move in 'being's abandonment of beings'. When the question of being can no longer be asked, meaning is jeopardised and meaninglessness as the consummation of Western thinking takes hold.⁵⁵⁶

Heidegger argues that Nietzsche's failure to comprehend the essence of his philosophy results in an inability to respond to nihilism effectively. Consequently, Nietzsche is unable to unify his thought and find a way out of consummate nihilism. For Heidegger, Nietzsche represents the end of a metaphysical history that has attempted, and failed, to provide meaning because it has separated itself from the source of meaning: being. The failure derives from a metaphysical predisposition to solicit meaning from beings and represent the condition of beings as a highest being or another concept derived from beings. For Heidegger, metaphysics evades meaning and terminates in the knowing

⁵⁵⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. III*, Part II, pp. 171-78.

subject 'regard[ing] *itself* as the ultimate ground'.⁵⁵⁷ Nietzsche is the end of this line because subjectivism has been assimilated into an absolute condition of meaninglessness as *freedom from* meaning and ground. Heidegger describes nihilism as the establishment of conditions that forget the being that conditionality once described. He is describing the forgetting of the differentiation between being and beings and the question of being itself as a variety of immanence expressed through Nietzschean will to power. However, if Heidegger's reading of events is correct, and the forgetting of being is equated with the forgetting of 'original conditionality,' then the question that needs to be addressed is how to reply to the logic of nihilism. What constitutes an adequate response?

Owing to the limits of this thesis, it is not possible to discuss all the reactions that Heidegger's work has produced; however, it is worthwhile rehearsing the exemplary criticisms that have been raised while explicating Heidegger's thought and outlining some of his strategic responses to philosophical nihilism.

One of the most effective criticisms that has been levelled against Heidegger is that, while successfully exposing the limits of metaphysical theory, he himself has not succeeded in establishing a coherent relationship with meaning and ground. Habermas's account of Heidegger explains Heidegger's beginnings in transcendental subjectivity.⁵⁵⁸ However, he claims that Heidegger does not escape its influence.

So little does Heidegger free himself from the pre-given problematics of transcendental consciousness that he can burst the conceptual cage of the philosophy of consciousness in no other way than by abstract negation.⁵⁵⁹

Heidegger's aim was to break out of the transcendental consciousness initially using ontology to concretise the subject in an external world. Habermas envisages Heidegger's challenge as one of maintaining the positive aspects of epistemological differentiation while also dissolving transcendental subjectivity.⁵⁶⁰ However, the lifeworld that is diagnosed in *Being and Time* is potentially disruptive if left ungrounded and undifferentiated. Therefore, the transcendental conditions, which guaranteed the coherence of knowledge, are sunk into the world horizon as the

⁵⁵⁷ de Boer, *Thinking in the Light of Time*, p. 291.

⁵⁵⁸ See sections 3.5 & 4.4 above.

⁵⁵⁹ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 138.

⁵⁶⁰ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 142.

conditions of possibility of being-in-the-world. Ontological horizons precede the subject and replace the transcendental conditions of knowledge. Hence, Kant's transcendental problematic concerning knowledge is included in the more general problematic of what makes beings possible. Meaning resides in beings and their relation with being as manifest in a world horizon.

For Habermas, what has occurred is the swallowing of the meaning-creative capacity of human beings into a pre-given temporal horizon and then into historical being itself. The conditional differences between being and beings that initiate the inquiry are dissolved when being is included in every event and every event is a gift of being. Heidegger's pre-understanding of being is assimilated into the history of metaphysics. Hence, without a narration confirming the necessity of every event as a destined event of being, the difference of being is lost. Meaning becomes ubiquitous and all truth and error emanate from one indeterminate source. The need for unity after the destruction of religious meaning is filled by a new mythology of being and essential thinking. Moreover, crucial for Habermas, is Heidegger's characterisation of everyday practices of mutual understanding as calculative products of self-assertive subjectivity. Because of the lack of normative practices or mutual structures of meaning, Heidegger's philosophy concludes in indeterminacy and resignation to the fate and authority of an unknown being.⁵⁶¹ The crux of Habermas's critique is that Heidegger's thought does not produce a useable account of meaning and hence does not provide an adequate response to nihilism.

Derrida's criticism of Heidegger has aimed at Heidegger's sustained use of metaphysical language.⁵⁶² Derrida accuses Heidegger of endorsing metaphysical unities and totalities by translating every difference into a difference *of philosophy*. In Heidegger's case, this unity is named being.⁵⁶³ Being, as the condition of beings, is also the origin of meaning, which inevitably leads to the hierarchical structure that Heidegger sanctions. In *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, Derrida suggests that the question concerns hermeneutics and interpretation itself.⁵⁶⁴ Hermeneutical accounts of unity achieve meaning by suppressing the differences in texts. In the quest for meaning, all non-meaning or superfluous

⁵⁶¹ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 139ff.

⁵⁶² See sections 7.2, 7.4, 7.5 & 7.6 above.

⁵⁶³ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 18ff; 'Différance' in *Margins of Philosophy*, pp. 3-27.

⁵⁶⁴ Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, p. 73.

meaning is rejected. Therefore, in order to expose the violence of the hermeneutic method, Derrida highlights the excluded moments in Heidegger's interpretation. Derrida defends a poststructuralist account of multiplicity and difference, which draws on Nietzsche's philosophy and attacks the authority of metaphysical readings. Derrida's strategy against metaphysics is to render the text 'undecidable' and deny philosophers absolute access to meaning. Derrida's response questions the intentions behind the pursuit of meaning.⁵⁶⁵

However, despite Derrida's hostility to certain aspects of Heidegger's thought, Derrida is, by his own admittance, heavily influenced by Heidegger's philosophy.⁵⁶⁶ Derrida's critique is supported by a theory of *différance*, which expounds a structure similar to Heidegger's thought. Derrida criticises metaphysics for attempting to think its 'other'. That is, philosophy defines itself by naming an 'other'—being, condition, God—through which it derives its essence and its origin.⁵⁶⁷ In thinking its other, philosophy attempts to appropriate and thereby cover over its origins. The argument bears comparison with Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. Philosophy abolishes the origin of its difference by attempting to think metaphysically and bring that origin to presence. To this, Derrida opposes a play of difference: *différance*. *Différance* describes a structure or network 'beneath' beings and language that 'cannot be exposed'.⁵⁶⁸ Derrida envisages *différance* to be the condition of possibility of every sign and its opposite or other, which is thought of as the 'punctuation' or 'space' that make signs possible. *Différance* is the unspoken relation that makes language possible. Consequently, *différance* resembles Heidegger's open region as the region of relations that makes beings and condition of beings possible. However, Derrida's innovation is to subtract the hierarchical or 'attuned' nature of the horizon to arrive at a 'non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences'.⁵⁶⁹ As a result, 'what is put into question is precisely the quest for a rightful beginning, an absolute point of departure, a principal responsibility'.⁵⁷⁰ Because Derrida rejects absolute origins and meaning, he is not concerned with a 'correct response' to nihilism (the absence of meaning). For Derrida, nihilism is a consequence of metaphysical order and priority, and a philosophy of *différance*

⁵⁶⁵ Derrida, 'Interpreting Signatures,' pp. 58-71.

⁵⁶⁶ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 18ff.

⁵⁶⁷ Derrida, 'Tympan,' in *Margins of Philosophy*, pp. x-xii.

⁵⁶⁸ Derrida, 'Différance,' p. 5.

⁵⁶⁹ Derrida, 'Différance,' p. 11.

⁵⁷⁰ Derrida, 'Différance,' p. 6.

circumvents those priorities. Derrida's encounter with Gadamer highlights the difference between a hermeneutic desire for unity and coherence and a deconstructivistic desire for dissemination of meaning. For Derrida, meaning is nihilistic because it valorises unity and the totality of unitary coherence. Derrida sponsors Nietzsche and multiplicity contra essential meaning. Consequently, we are left with two alternatives delivered to philosophy at the end of metaphysics: essential thinking or the multiplicity and meaninglessness.

Bowie follows a similar pattern in that he strongly criticises Heidegger's thought; however, he is also in agreement with it at certain junctures.⁵⁷¹ For Bowie, modernity begins with the rejection of theology and the attempt to describe the universe on its own terms. The withdrawal of God exposes the problem of meaning and unity. Consequently, the absence of unity is repaired by aesthetic philosophy. Aesthetic philosophy describes a liberated subjectivity that is also critical of the reductive methodology of science. Nature and productive art displace rational theology, science and transcendental reason. Bowie agrees that liberation from theology was necessary, but opposes the domination of nature and humanity by self-sufficient reason. Unrestrained reason is destructive for the development of subjectivity. However, Bowie associates his critique of the rationalism inherent in modernity with German Romanticism rather than Heideggerian and Derridian deconstruction. Bowie is suspicious of the radical anti-rational forces uncovered by Nietzsche and his postmodern decedents, and wishes to rescue human subjectivity from extreme theories that describe subjects as 'effects' of language or necessary 'illusions'.⁵⁷² Bowie would rather highlight the ambiguous elements that Enlightenment philosophy engenders: rational subjectivity *and* the aesthetic critique of rational subjectivity. However, Bowie's support of aesthetic subjectivity is in unstated agreement with Heidegger. Heidegger opposes chaos and absolute subjectivity with meaning. Bowie agrees that absolute subjectivity is problematic, as is unchecked assertion of rationality. However, Bowie prefers not to ascend to abstract horizons of undisclosed being; rather, he defends a notion of subjectivity: the aesthetic, intersubjective subjective. Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida's claims to overcome metaphysics do nothing to explain the existence of a conscious, active subject. Bowie's story involves describing modernity as the increased control over nature and the emergence, *and repression of*, new

⁵⁷¹ See sections 6.4 & 7.6.

⁵⁷² Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, pp. 8ff.

forms of individuality.⁵⁷³ He wishes to draw attention to philosophical narratives that have been repressed by a simplistic emphasis on dominant modes of subjectivity.

When judging Heidegger's contribution to philosophy I have been arguing that Heidegger's pursuit of meaning is connected to a form of transcendence that initially disputes the immanent character of post-metaphysical philosophy. Nevertheless, the deficiencies in Heidegger's philosophy are exposed by his critics, who regard Heidegger as inverting the relationship between subject and object and terminating in abstract objectivism. Heidegger's temporal horizons are interpreted as extensions of metaphysical objectivity. Commentators such as Habermas and Tugendhat argue that Heidegger's description of meaning is too hastily associated with truth as a horizontal form of disclosure.⁵⁷⁴ This results in the breakdown of difference at the ontic level. However, accepting the magnitude of these critiques, they do not discount Heidegger's quest for meaning.

While the criticisms are persuasive, there are points that the critics neglect. Because Heidegger's quest for meaning is portrayed by Tugendhat and Habermas as an inversion of the subject-object relation, the failure of the project results from neglecting the performative nature of a 'correct relation' with meaning. Consequently, the recovery of meaning rests in defining 'correct relations' between communicative subjects. However, from chapter two's analysis of Heidegger's critique of Kant, the transcendental horizon is extended on account of Dasein's inability to create its own object. Apriority is consented to because of the *receptive* nature of sense and not merely its objective status. For Heidegger, dependence upon sense revealed a 'teleological' requirement for extra-subjective meaning, that is, meaning is not derived from subjectivity. However, the teleology (the 'why is there something rather than nothing?') is expressed 'structurally' and not 'metaphysically'. Heidegger's refusal to expound a metaphysical or 'contentful' nature to teleological sense results in the formalisation of the structure of being over its content. The metaphysical structure of a transcendent relationship with a condition has largely been maintained in his early work. However, Heidegger has claimed that a change in the definition (language) of terms alters the relationship between elements.⁵⁷⁵ In spite of this, the attempt to incorporate a transformed notion of transcendence and difference into a wider

⁵⁷³ Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, p. 12.

⁵⁷⁴ See 5.6 above.

⁵⁷⁵ See 7.2 above.

horizon of indeterminate being causes the attempt to be viewed negatively. Critics attack the determinism that a consistent rejection of the active subject brings. However, the anti-subjective nature of Heidegger's thought is a consequence of the *passivity* of receptive knowledge extended to a general level. Heidegger associates passivity with the overcoming of immanence. Receptive knowledge asks a question concerning the meaning of receptivity. Heidegger explains that if Dasein's essence is 'receptive,' then Dasein is already prepared for the knowledge of beings. Dasein's receptivity reveals its 'need' for beings. Dasein is incomplete by itself and necessarily 'stands out into the nothing' awaiting beings. Without an account of the teleological element in receptivity, Dasein remains immanent to itself and oblivious to its world-meaning horizon. The act of going beyond the immanent self discloses meaning for Dasein.⁵⁷⁶ The movement of Dasein towards beings is described as transcendence, whereby the subject is opened to the world of meaningful beings.

The disclosure of beings reveals Dasein's prior understanding and concern for being itself. Dasein is, in Heidegger's language, already 'attuned' to being. Heidegger describes the already-thereness of world and meaning for Dasein. Meaning is never neutral or self-created; it is prior to its existential examples. Meaning passes before present beings that could be said to 'participate' in meaning. Hence meaning does not originate in human being. Heidegger describes the lack of self-created meaning as being fundamental to Dasein's finitude. Heidegger's expansion of ontological horizons opens up the meaning intrinsic to receptivity: to be Dasein is to be a finite receptive being that needs beings in order to be Dasein. However, as Heidegger's critics have noted, the negative side of this schema results in a failure to expound a coherent relation with meaning. In the process of developing the meaning of receptivity, Heidegger appears to pass the full responsibility for meaning over to the horizontal structures of being. The guarantor of meaning is being itself, which is necessarily concealed from Dasein. Dasein's inherent receptivity entails accepting meaning as a 'gift' of being. Therefore, Heidegger's pursuit of passivity at the local level concludes in a general passivity at the ontological level and the obedience of beings to being. When meaning is asked to perform at a general level meaning becomes formalised and removes human beings from a genuine participation in meaning. A description of Dasein as pure receptivity prevents Dasein from actively being involved in the meaning

⁵⁷⁶ See 4.3 above.

it is receiving. Hence the gift of meaning can result in the totalisation of meaning which gives rise to passivity and meaninglessness.

Nevertheless, the challenge that nihilism places upon Heidegger's thought is potentially more corrosive than his critiques describe. Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche reveals that he does not fundamentally disagree with Nietzsche's description of the present as the age of nihilism. What both Nietzsche and Heidegger have tried to achieve is a philosophical account of the breakdown in meaning. Nietzsche argued that the socio-political expressions of nihilism were only symptoms. His analysis provided a powerful narrative that located nihilism in a specific metaphysical paradox: Platonic-Christian morality. Morality, heretofore an authoritative system of values and principles, is said to be the cause of nihilism and not its solution. Because morality answered questions of right and wrong and questions of origin by placing the true order of things external to the sensuous world, the sensuous world became devalued and terminated in disbelief. Nietzsche's solution, as I have described it, is to revalue the sensuous world based on life-affirming values. However, Heidegger's analysis, while sympathetic to Nietzsche's inquiry, considers Nietzsche's account of nihilism to be symptomatic of a more fundamental difficulty. In Heidegger's language, Nietzsche does not attain the essence of nihilism: he does not achieve the ground of meaninglessness. For Heidegger, human beings' obsession with beings causes nihilism to proliferate. Because beings do not create meaning for and of themselves, the veneration of beings can only conclude in the veneration of valuelessness. A description of nihilism as the breakdown in meaning describes either an alienation from an original meaning or a more general condition. Although Nietzsche describes a general malaise, he also attempts to unite human beings with a more archaic and noble life-force that we have been alienated from. The overcoming of nihilism through the re-valuation of all values provides an antidote to metaphysical nihilism. For Heidegger, the problem of metaphysics is not only its tendency to position meaning in a supersensuous world; rather, metaphysics errs because it derives meaning from beings. Hence, Nietzsche's repair of the problem results in the strengthening of a nihilistic relation toward beings. Beings have been transformed into objects by human beings' propensity to objectify and make meaning function solely through the subject. Nihilism is a problem of value and human valuation rather than a problem of meaning as such. When meaning is interpreted as a human value it forces beings to operate as a human utility. Consequently, beings, as sites of meaning, become devalued as 'things in themselves'. Nihilism completes itself.

Heidegger has attempted to construct a pathway back to meaning by investing beings with 'inherent value' guaranteed by the condition of beings: being. Being and the open region as the truth of being are prior to beings and condition or attune a being's relationship with its world. However, this account of meaning is shot through with paradox. In refusing Nietzsche's final analysis of the present age and searching for the unity behind the condition of nihilism, Heidegger locates meaning in that which is beyond the subject: in the pre-subjective horizons of being. Meaning is already in the world and goes before the subject. Nevertheless, once the already-thereness of meaning is assented to and being is described as the 'giver' of the world-meaning horizon, then nihilism becomes a colossal problem. If where we find ourselves now is *not* due to the subjective creation of values, then it originates from within the compass of being. If nihilism is not something about which we have a 'choice,' then nihilism cannot be refused: it is a gift of being. To refuse nihilism would be to position ourselves 'over and against being,' which results in further alienation from meaning and the prolongation of nihilism. For Heidegger, being contains the nihilation of the nothing within its orbit and hence the repulsive power of nihilism is a gift of being. Heidegger does not wish to pursue a line of thought that only describes being and meaning in positive terms. This would be to reproduce a theological account of meaning and ascribe the positive aspect of meaning to God or being and the sinful or meaningless aspect of nihilism to human beings. Nihilism is, for Heidegger, the forgetting of the condition of beings. Therefore, to forget the nothing or the essence of meaninglessness, which is also an element of being, would be to repeat a nihilistic denunciation of meaning. It is for this reason that responding to nihilism is problematic for Heidegger. To reject nihilism through turning to human valuation and subjective will is to strengthen the nihilistic devaluation of values. Conversely, to allow nihilism to proceed without mounting a response is equally intolerable. Owing to Heidegger's diagnosis of the problem, garnering a response to nihilism is highly problematic.

Heidegger's response takes several forms. Because, after Nietzsche, nihilism implies that morality is an obsolete vehicle for attaining meaning, traditional moral inquiry is discounted from the outset. However, Heidegger attempts to recover meaning through a re-description of aesthetic theory, things in themselves and philosophical language, all of which share similar characteristics.

Heidegger raises the question of art and artworks in *The Origin of the Work of Art*.⁵⁷⁷ He explores an 'ontological aesthetics' that describes art as a projection or disclosure that reveals world and truth. Heidegger attempts to transform the perception of artworks. They no longer reflect a relation of artist to work or work to artist; rather, artworks are to be thought through a 'third thing': art itself. Heidegger describes a structure whereby art is 'the setting-itself-to-work of truth'.⁵⁷⁸ Art discloses meaning by setting out relations that do not originate in the artist or the artwork themselves. On the other hand, in *The Thing*, Heidegger describes the 'thingliness of a thing' in terms of what it 'gathers' or 'assembles'.⁵⁷⁹ The image that Heidegger wishes to evoke with artwork and thing is the gathering of being and meaning in a locale whose significance outweighs its localised position: things gather being, artworks gather truth.

This graphic illustration of the relation between things and being, things and meaning, attempts to dispute conceptual connections between mind and world or category and intuition, which miss the thingliness of real objects and their relation to meaning. Heidegger's reflections elucidate the importance of horizon and structure for the things that exist in a locale. 'Things' do not describe unilateral or bilateral relations between subject and object. Heidegger attempts to step over subject-object relations by diminishing the significance of the subject and the will that has marred subjectivity in favour of a 'donation' or 'call' (*Geheiß*) that beings respond to. Phenomena are things that gather the manifestation of being. Things or artworks replace Angst as catalysts for revealing the being of beings. Things are elevated to totemic beings, and Heidegger increasingly thinks being as a response to the 'appeal of its presencing'.⁵⁸⁰ Human Dasein responds to the call of being rather than to itself. However, one of the key difficulties that presents itself when including the being of beings in things is the historical character of things as they disclose themselves in time. For this reason, Heidegger has to rethink the relationship between Dasein and being in historical dimensions. Being is not thought of as being separate from its disclosure in history. Hence, being itself appears to be 'historical'. In order to express this newly thought relation, Heidegger endeavours to think the relationship between being,

⁵⁷⁷ Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in *Off the Beaten Track*, pp. 1-56. The essay dates from 1935-36.

⁵⁷⁸ Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in *Off the Beaten Track*, p. 49.

⁵⁷⁹ Heidegger, 'Das Ding' in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1978) trans. by A Hofstadter as 'The Thing' in *Poetry, Language Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 177ff.

⁵⁸⁰ Heidegger, 'Epilogue' in *Poetry, Language Thought*, pp. 183ff.

Dasein and beings in terms of custodianship rather than subjective activity: Dasein is described as the ‘guardian’ or ‘shepherd’ of being.

Letter on Humanism attempts to encapsulate the problem of metaphysics by discussing ‘humanism’ in association with rational subjectivity. With the intention of delivering the essence of human being from its classification as ‘rational animal,’ Heidegger defines humanism as a specific type of ‘action’. Action is described as the ‘accomplishment’—the unfolding of something to the fullness of its essence—of being. The relationship between being and the human being is realized through ‘thinking’. Thinking does not ‘create’ this relation; rather, ‘thinking brings this relation to being solely as something handed over to thought itself from being.’⁵⁸¹ In thinking, ‘being comes to language’ and hence language is named ‘the house of being’. Heidegger hopes to overturn the subjective nature of humanism by redefining action as a relationship between being and language. This task is, for Heidegger, of the utmost importance for if action remains a subjective category exploiting the needs of human beings, then the technological domination of the world’s resources appears to be the destiny of human beings. Heidegger hopes to invert that relationship and asks Dasein to ‘listen to the call of being’. The inversion of subjectivity is felt by way of the comparative passivity assigned to human Dasein. Nevertheless, the fatalism or determinism that appears to emerge from this recounting of the disclosure of being does not describe a mechanical inability to act. Dasein can respond to or ignore the appeal of being. More exactly, Dasein is not thought of as the ‘origin’ of action or the values that are associated with human activity. For Heidegger, the word ‘value’ signifies subjective valuation. It does not describe a thing’s significance in relation to being. Because this error is a product of human value-setting, the responsibility for meaning is removed to another sphere: being. The word ‘meaning’ entails that there is inherent worth in a thing beyond its convenience for human beings. This is also true for human Dasein. Dasein has a responsibility to being and to respond to being’s appeal. Dasein does not first ‘say’ what the appeal of being ‘is’. Dasein’s responsibilities are to be discharged as the ‘guardian of being’. This procedure restores meaning to humanism by embracing—favouring (*Mögen*) and enabling (*Vermögen*)—a thing or person in their essence.⁵⁸² Enabling means to preserve the possibility (*Möglichkeit*) of a relationship with being and thus meaning.

⁵⁸¹ Heidegger, ‘Letter on “Humanism,”’ *Pathmarks*, p. 239.

⁵⁸² Heidegger, ‘Letter on “Humanism,”’ *Pathmarks*, pp. 241ff.

The above descriptions build upon Heidegger's longstanding concern with the 'thrownness' of beings into the world.⁵⁸³ To be 'thrown' into existence and presented to a pre-given world that Dasein cannot control or demand of illustrates the limited capacity Dasein has for meaning-creation.

The human being is rather "thrown" by being itself into the truth of being, so that existing in this fashion he might guard the truth of being, in that beings might appear in the light of being as the beings they are. Human beings do not decide whether and how beings appear...the advent of beings lies in the destiny of being.⁵⁸⁴

Thrownness implies that meaning occurs prior to human beings and their value-setting potential. To 'guard' the truth of beings involves holding-back Dasein's subjective possibilities in order to let beings develop as independent beings. Heidegger's concept of destiny and appeal is developed as a countermovement to the essential homelessness that human beings experience when they live in a world of valuation. Heidegger's account hopes to provide an antidote to Nietzsche's description of active nihilism which seeks the further expansion of human will.

The question of nihilism is raised again in *On The Question of Being*.⁵⁸⁵ Originally titled *Concerning the Line*, this essay contains Heidegger's response to Ernst Jünger's essay *Über die Linie* and the subject of consummate nihilism. Jünger's question concerning the line is whether or not Europe has stepped over the line of nihilism and moved into the zone of a 'new turning of being'. For Heidegger, Jünger is presenting a metaphysical interpretation of nihilism, which is resolved by going 'over' (*über*) the line, whereas Heidegger wishes to talk 'about' (*über*) the line itself. The 'locale' of the line gathers the essence of nihilism: 'Gathering shelters that which is gathered in the direction of its essence. From the locale of the line, the provenance of the essence of nihilism and its consummation emerge.'⁵⁸⁶ The critique Heidegger develops is aimed at Jünger's use of language. The linguistic description that Jünger provides is *itself* the nihilistic limit that prevents a 'crossing-over' to a new turning of being. Metaphysical language prevents the unveiling of a non-metaphysical, non-nihilistic structure. Therefore, Heidegger argues that language governs the structure and possibility of thought; hence, language governs access to being. Consequently, 'To approach the essence of nihilism thinking must become other.'⁵⁸⁷ Heidegger suggests that a linguistic transformation must be achieved so as to

⁵⁸³ Heidegger, BT, §29:135.

⁵⁸⁴ Heidegger, 'Letter on "Humanism," ' *Pathmarks*, p. 252.

⁵⁸⁵ Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being, ' *Pathmarks*, pp. 291-322.

⁵⁸⁶ Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being, ' *Pathmarks*, pp. 292.

⁵⁸⁷ Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being, ' *Pathmarks*, pp. 293.

bring to language the prior condition that is named a 'clearing' (*Lichtung*). The priority of conditions over that which is conditioned passes over to language as *that which brings being to mind*. The significance of this account lies in the responsive nature of a Dasein who must 'answer the call of being'. Only then can we begin to halt the spread of nihilism.

However, the difficulty involved in attaining the essence of nihilism is that nihilism tends to dissemble its own essence and (like being) withdraw from a confrontation.⁵⁸⁸ The thought that moves Heidegger to what may be his final position on nihilism is that being, nothing and nihilism do not provide 'information' or 'definition'. They cannot be brought face-to-face with human beings. Heidegger represents this essential incapacity by striking through the word being: ~~being~~ Being, nothing and the essence of nihilism cannot be forced into appearance. They all essentially belong to the same whole and the same call which demands a response in history. Hence, human being and its experience of nihilism occur as a 'destined event' within the history of being. Therefore, nihilism is not an alternative that humanity can choose or simply avoid; it is somehow coherent within the oblivion of being.

Heidegger's more voracious opponents have demonstrated various weaknesses in his account of being, particularly in reference to being as a destined event and the destructive impact that this theory has on the truth relations between human beings and their world. Taking an generous view, the destiny of being is inherently ambiguous. To guard the truth of being is to contest homelessness as the destiny of the world, while also describing homelessness and nihilism as an advent of being.⁵⁸⁹ Both potentials lie within the history of being; however, it is not clear that Heidegger's narrative of guardianship describes a coherent countermovement to philosophical nihilism.

Conversely, commentators such as Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann and Daniela Vallega-Neu are representative of those who argue that Heidegger brings philosophy to a new beginning. Vallega-Neu argues that the early Heidegger approaches the question of being via Dasein's transcendence into

⁵⁸⁸ Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being,' *Pathmarks*, pp. 307.

⁵⁸⁹ Heidegger, 'Letter on "Humanism,"' *Pathmarks*, p. 257-58.

temporal horizons where he draws upon metaphysics and representational thinking.⁵⁹⁰ Transcendence occurs from beings to their metaphysical ground thought as 'beingness' (the representation of being in terms of permanence and presence). Heidegger remains within the metaphysical discipline when he speaks of Dasein as a finite temporalising event that has 'always-already-transcended'. This is because transcendence describes a departure *from a being (Dasein) to another being* (the temporal horizon) and the subsequent return to the being of Dasein. Being is represented as a 'kind of being' that we conceive as a deeper form of the ontic. 'Being itself is made into an object' and, consequently, we slip back into the metaphysical.⁵⁹¹ Moreover, 'conditions of possibility' are inherently metaphysical when the ontological distinction is thought as a dualism of two worlds. In *Being and Time*, horizontal time is the condition of possibility of being's disclosure as care. Conditions invite a causal, logical regress whereby the condition is separated from what it conditions. I have described this situation as the problem of transition. Thus, being and beings are thought independently, and Dasein is separated from the disclosure of being as such. Transcendence attempts to repair this situation; however, the language and structure remains metaphysical. 'Therefore the task is not to surpass beings (transcendence) but rather to leap over this distinction and thus over *transcendence* and to inquire inceptually out of being and truth (*vom Seienden her und der Wahrheit*).'⁵⁹²

In *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger outlines 'being-historical-thinking' (*seynsgeschichtliches Denken*) as a thought that moves out of metaphysical thinking.⁵⁹³ For von Herrmann, the term 'being-historical' indicates that 'be-ing's essential sway (*Wesen*) is grasped 'historically,' rather than atemporally or universally.⁵⁹⁴ Essence is experienced as *Wesung*, as an abiding in historical being, which stands in the stead of unchangeable essence enduring through time. Heidegger is attempting to think outside the problem of transition and within historically given being as an 'immanent

⁵⁹⁰ Daniela Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy: An Introduction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003) p. 24.

⁵⁹¹ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, §262:317.

⁵⁹² Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, §132.

⁵⁹³ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, pp. xxiiff. The spelling of being as *seyn* corresponds to an older German spelling of being: *Seyn*. The usage is considered significant as it attempts to separate a new description of being from a metaphysical understanding of the concept being (*Sein*). English translations attempt to capture this intention by use of the form 'be-ing' or 'beyng.'

⁵⁹⁴ Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, 'Contributions to Philosophy and Enowning-Historical Thinking' in *Companion to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy, Introduction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) p. 104.

transformation' (*immanenter Wandel*).⁵⁹⁵ In *Being and Time*, Dasein is prevented from resting in representational thinking by resoluteness and anxiety. Consequently, being-historical-thinking attempts to provide the limit or 'not-being' of Dasein with a concrete historical dimension. This attempt to think the ungraspable element of being as a 'more original insertion into history' is considered a 'new beginning' where being-historical-thinking no longer thinks oppositional thoughts *against* history, but thinks itself caught up and determined by being's historicity.⁵⁹⁶ This is thought as a historical 'enowned' event (*Ereignis*) or the 'second beginning' of philosophy. The *Ereignis* details an event where Dasein is still a thrown being; however, that thrownness is no longer separated from that which throws it. Consequently, 'metaphysics' and the representations that it took up are no longer considered to be 'errors' in the sense that they are 'wrong'. Rather, all the manifestations of metaphysics are necessarily for the reason that they are 'sent' by being. Therefore, *transcendence* is part of the first pathway of thinking and *enowning* is intrinsic to the second pathway of thinking. Heidegger gives up the transcendental perspective that transcendence generates without giving up Dasein itself. Dasein is now intrinsic to enowning. 'Enowning is that self-supplying and self-mediating midpoint into which all essential swaying of the truth of be-ing must be thought back in advance.'⁵⁹⁷

While Heidegger develops several responses to nihilism in these essays, his thought remains ambiguous. The positives that we can take from an investigation into Heidegger's philosophy of this period are (1) that Heidegger refuses to abandon the inquiry into conditions and ground that raise thought to a philosophical level. Without questions that ask why things appear they way they do and why in 'this way' rather than 'that', philosophical thought abandons its historical examination of the human condition to pragmatism and scientific investigation. (2) Owing to his conviction that subjectivity does not create its own object, Heidegger continually attempts to bring meaning back to thought through pursuing the ontological ground of meaning and truth. (3) His work attempts to overcome philosophical and theological dualisms that potentially sustain a nihilistic hold on Western thinking. Heidegger's account of the finite nature of being addresses the problem of metaphysical

⁵⁹⁵ von Herrmann, 'Contributions to Philosophy and Enowning-Historical Thinking,' p. 110. Cf Friedrich-Wilhelm v. Herrmann, *Wege ins Ereignis. Zu Heidegger's 'Beiträge zur Philosophie'* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994), p. 30.

⁵⁹⁶ Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy*, p. 31.

⁵⁹⁷ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, §34.

transcendence and post-metaphysical attempts to suppress problems of transition as they occur in philosophical thought.

However, there are several problematic elements to Heidegger's thought that we have attempted to bring to light. (1) Heidegger's description of the condition of beings does not convince many commentators that he has progressed beyond the bounds of metaphysics. His attempt to locate the meaning of beings in a unifying condition of being potentially repeats the metaphysical error of locating the meaning of beings outside of beings themselves. (2) What Heidegger does not provide in his description of meaning and truth is sufficient grammar to describe workable relationships between beings. Heidegger's comprehension of meaning is totalising and deterministic terminating in totemic words and symbols that are meant to substitute for rational inquiry. (3) Heidegger's structural innovations regarding the open region do not significantly change the configuration of metaphysical conditions. Instead, the open includes beings and their condition in a further condition that hopes to account for both being and beings. A description of the 'relation itself' does not necessarily silence a critique which regards conditions with suspicion. Moreover, the conditions which are described cannot be brought to appearance and necessarily remain concealed.

These difficulties indicate that despite the productive nature of Heidegger's thought many of the issues that Heidegger tackles remain open. What has also been revealed in this investigation is that many of the responses to nihilism, including Heidegger's, do not conclude in an indisputable account of meaning. Many of the theories that I have discussed display, perhaps inevitably, a formalisation of meaning. The relation of meaning to its content or practice is formalised owing to many of the thinkers mentioned performing their own generalisation of a particular philosophical position and judging that position to have an authoritative significance. This is due, in part, to their assenting to the conditions of nihilism as regards the rejection of religion and religious unity. The consensus is that philosophy as a form of reflection benefits or even originates from the abandonment of religious belief and practice. Hence, the attempt to form new structures of meaning is a philosophical project. Therefore, nihilism, described as a breakdown in traditional structures of meaning, is welcomed. However, formal structures do not necessarily provide meaning if the philosophical methodology supplemented entrusts structural formalisation at the cost of meaningful practice. Thus the unity or relationality that is anticipated does not materialise. Consequently, the problem that is first addressed, that of nihilism, becomes obscured. The competing attempts to secure meaning or endorse

meaninglessness are judged by formal arguments over, for example, the nature of metaphysical language. Derrida expresses this situation philosophically as metaphysics' attempt to think its 'other'.⁵⁹⁸ Philosophy, and the conditional structures or origins that we have been discussing, define themselves against an 'other'—God, being, a priori categories. That other is necessary for a description of the meaning of particulars such as the self, beings or knowledge. The difference between 'same' and 'other' creates meaning. However, that meaning may not ultimately be accessible to us. Nevertheless, in attempting to think meaningfully the inaccessible is appropriated by the philosophical argument: the problem of origins and difference is defused. Problems of transition and transcendence are obscured by 'solutions'. In Heidegger, the transitional problems are acknowledged; however, they are neutralised by providing ground and individuation in a single action. Heidegger evades problems by describing 'coincidental grounds'.⁵⁹⁹ Coincidental grounds argue for a pre-given structure, which forms an identity that appears to *explain* transitional problems. Heidegger's nothing 'includes' the existence of transcendence; essential ground appears to confirm the 'necessity' of attributes of difference. *Ereignis* is presented as a means of 'explaining' the operation of being and beings as a historical event. Heidegger imagines that he has maintained meaning by way of delineating ground and difference within a single structure. However, *Ereignis*, as a destined event, also conceals all origins and all difference in a historical account of the destiny of being. It is a form of argument that has a long history and has examples in Greek philosophy and Christian theology; nevertheless, it can only be a formal explication that does not resolve transitional problems. Rather, it serves to obscure origins by placing them under conditions of infinity, necessity or determinism. However, Heidegger has also suggested that these paradoxes are the conditions for being in existence. Heidegger addresses some of these problems through his account of truth as an attuning relation. Attunement is not neutral; it includes meaning. If truth as disclosure is an attuning relation, then it is not metaphysical: it is not 'eternal' or 'other'. However, because truth is not solely given to the sphere of the human intellect (or contingent history) it is also not relative. Heidegger 'escapes' from history at the same time as confirming it. Truth is both an 'immanent' and a 'transcendent' relation. For Heidegger, truth must relate in some manner to that which is not purely contingent: truth makes possible the distinction between truth and lie.

⁵⁹⁸ Derrida, 'Tympan,' pp. x-xii.

⁵⁹⁹ Habermas implies this reading when recognising Heidegger's tendency to 'individuate and socialise' subjects concurrently. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 149.

However, what nihilism in modern philosophy reveals is that the grammar of overcoming is fatigued, as evidenced by the various attempts to break into new language and new regions of thought. The 'performance contradiction' that is enacted is not only one of metaphysical language; it is also one whereby the refutation of traditional meaning precipitates the problem of the meaning itself.⁶⁰⁰ Philosophy re-enters Nietzsche's 'logic of abjuration': it begins in denial.⁶⁰¹ In the absence of authoritative structures, or structures that rational human beings can assent to, all meaning becomes questionable. Meaning can be used to deny meaning. Conversely, in the absence of authority all events can be judged equally meaningful. Therefore, nihilism can also appear as liberatory and positive. However, there is confusion between authority and denial. The current uncertainty that surrounds philosophical descriptions of meaning implies that philosophy as a whole is not convinced whether to assert meaning or to continue in its refutation. It is perhaps forgotten that traditional structures of meaning, religious or metaphysical, *always had problems of meaning*; however, religion or society provided the grammar to approach the problem. The interpretation of meaning, including the interpretation of authoritative texts, always included a refusal of meaning as well as affirmation. The act of interpretation is necessarily in ignorance of the full disclosure of truth. However, modern philosophy remains valuable for testing the dogmatic structures that are handed down through religious and philosophical traditions. Moreover, religious interpretation in all major traditions has included philosophical advances within its history. Nevertheless, the problem of radical nihilism is perhaps more devious than the formal accounts acknowledge. For in the withdrawal of authoritative structures meaning does not disappear. Rather withdrawal provides a void that alternative narratives can operate in. Other forms of meaning such as capitalism, nationalism or fundamentalism can function within nihilistic structures and still provide meaning. The question of meaning is not 'resolved' by religion, philosophy or nihilism, and one of Heidegger's major contributions is to remind us that meaning and its interpretation is a necessary part of existence, however strongly we disagree with his final format.

⁶⁰⁰ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. xv.

⁶⁰¹ Critchley would prefer this to be phrased, the 'denial of denial.' Cf. Critchley, *Very Little...Almost Nothing*, pp. 1ff.

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