

# Knowledge and Thought in Heidegger and Foucault: Towards an Epistemology of Ruptures

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KNOWLEDGE AND THOUGHT IN HEIDEGGER AND FOUCAULT:  
TOWARDS AN EPISTEMOLOGY OF RUPTURES

by

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ABSTRACT  
KNOWLEDGE AND THOUGHT IN HEIDEGGER AND FOUCAULT:  
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Arun Iyer, B.E., M.A.

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This dissertation shows how Martin Heidegger and Michel Foucault, by questioning the very understanding of the subject-object relationship on which all epistemology is grounded, challenge two of its most cherished beliefs: 1. Thought and knowledge are essentially activities on the part of the subject understood anthropologically or transcendently. 2. The history of knowledge exhibits teleological progress towards a better and more comprehensive account of its objects. In contrast to traditional epistemology, both Heidegger and Foucault show how thought and knowledge are not just acts, which can be attributed to the subject but also events which elude any such subjective characterization. They also show us how the history of knowledge exhibits ruptures when the very character of knowledge undergoes drastic transformation in the course of history. The dissertation concludes by hinting at how these new accounts of thought and knowledge have the potential to shake the very foundations of epistemology and lead us to a new framework for discussing the most basic questions of epistemology, towards an epistemology of ruptures.

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## Introduction

Heidegger and Foucault have advanced a strong challenge to two beliefs that we take to be commonsensical. The first one is that human intellectual history progresses from error to enlightenment, that is to say we progress by solely recognizing our errors and correcting them. The second one is that intellectual achievements can be cast solely in terms of human subjectivity. The human subject thus becomes the sovereign cause of these intellectual achievements and intellectual history is the history of human failures and human successes addressed in terms of the transcendental and the psychological capacities of the human subject. Heidegger launches his most sustained assault on these beliefs in the 1930s in his reflections on what he calls the history of being, which he discusses chiefly in his work, *Beiträge zur Philosophie: Vom Ereignis*; Foucault's most systematic assault on these two beliefs comes with his archaeological works such as *Les mots et les choses* and *L'Archéologie du Savoir* in the 1960s in which he develops the notion of discursive formations.

We must be clear that neither Heidegger nor Foucault considers himself to be an epistemologist and both thinkers are suspicious of traditional epistemology. However, what their respective frameworks allow us to do is to broaden our conception of knowledge and the knowing subject by attempting to articulate a broader conception of thinking that goes beyond conceptual thinking. In doing so they are able to do greater justice to an aspect of thought and knowledge that has been traditionally ignored in any discussions concerning epistemology. This is the historical dimension of thought and

knowledge. Both Heidegger and Foucault make the historicity of thought and knowledge a part of their very essence.

In the case of Heidegger, with the notion of the history of being, Heidegger strives to understand and articulate the relationship between thought and its object in the starkest of senses. According to Heidegger, epistemology starts out with the dichotomy between intuition and concept where thought is taken to be synonymous with concept without questioning how this dichotomy came to be in the first place. In addition, intuition is understood to be subservient to concepts. Heidegger cites as evidence of this development, the disproportionate amount of attention given to Kant's transcendental logic over Kant's transcendental aesthetic in the commentary tradition for which Kant himself might have been responsible. Traditional epistemology thus gets bogged down in dualisms like subject and object, thought and being, from which it never seems to emerge in a satisfactory way. Heidegger of course has the Neo-Kantians in mind when he makes these observations, but his remarks can be seen to apply broadly to all of traditional epistemology. What Heidegger is in search of is that obscure origin from which intuition and concept first emerge. It is his challenge that intuitions can correspond to concepts and vice versa only because there is an underlying unity from which they emerge. Heidegger also sees in Kant a reversing of the roles between intuition and concept whereby concepts become subservient to intuition. For Heidegger, Kant himself could not understand the implications of his insights and did not seem to recognize their significance. This underlying unity between intuition and thought suggests the existence of a kind of thinking that is even more fundamental than logical thinking or conceptual thinking (which latter exists only at the level of the dichotomy of concepts and intuition).



This primordial thinking is, for Heidegger, a thinking of the being of beings. At this level, the distinction between thought and object is still not present and it is from here that it emerges. In the 1920s, especially in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, Heidegger working within the Kantian framework identifies it with the transcendental power of the imagination. In the 1930s shorn of its transcendental pretensions, it becomes originary thinking (*anfängliches Denken*) in the radically ontological framework of the *Beiträge*. Originary thinking and the subject of originary thinking Da-sein, are now parameters in the very history of being (*Seyn*) which is prior to even the ontological difference between beings (*Seiendes*) and being (*Sein*). Because it involves a pre-subjective understanding of the history of being our knowledge of beings cannot be understood solely from the standpoint of subjective human capacities. Knowledge has now to be also understood from the standpoint of the history of being. Moreover the history of knowledge ceases to be something completely linear. As a parameter of the history of being, the history of knowledge is now prone to ruptures whereby one historical configuration of knowledge can be replaced by another. Heidegger sketches this out very clearly in his lectures under the title *Die Frage Nach Dem Ding*. Heidegger's thought thus seems to contain the potential for a radical alternative to traditional epistemology because he seems to turn some of its most fundamental presuppositions on their head. Again, as we have already reiterated, we should be absolutely clear that Heidegger is not simply making modifications at the level of epistemology. Heidegger's interventions are pre-epistemological in the sense that they challenge the ground on which any theory of knowledge stands. That is why his work is so crucial and has such significant consequences for any future theory of knowledge.

In the case of Foucault, as he explains in this interview in 1966:

By ‘archaeology’ I would like to designate not exactly a discipline but a domain of research, which would be the following: in a society, different bodies of learning, philosophical ideas, everyday opinions, but also institutions, commercial practices and police activities, mores – all refer to a certain implicit knowledge [*savoir*] special to this society. This knowledge is profoundly different from the bodies of learning [*des connaissances*] that one can find in scientific books, philosophical theories, and religious justifications, but it is what makes possible at a given moment the appearance of a theory, an opinion, a practice. Thus, in order for the big centers of internment to be opened at the end of the seventeenth century, it was necessary that a certain knowledge of madness be opposed to nonmadness, of order to disorder, and it’s this knowledge that I wanted to investigate, as the condition of possibility of knowledge [*connaissance*], of institutions, of practices.<sup>1</sup>

Foucault thus employs his archaeological method to reveal a stratum of knowledge that makes possible the knowledge as it is understood in epistemology. The stratum of knowledge that Foucault seeks to isolate thus cannot be understood in terms of subjective capacities. What the archaeological method discovers is the radically a-subjective core of knowledge that epistemology simply takes for granted as its starting point but fails to investigate. Knowledge is thus characterized not as an achievement of the subjective capacities of the knower but as a discursive event, a discursive field that makes possible the very relationship between knower and the known. However this discursive field is an event that comes into being at the particular time and in a particular space. It is not to be understood as a set of universal rules that could be laid out once and for all and would govern all knowledge in general. Thus one such discursive event may give way to another. Foucault can thus say that he has “tried to make, obviously in a rather particular style, the history not of thought in general but of all that ‘contains thought’ in a culture, of all in which there is thought. For there is thought in philosophy, but also in a novel, in

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, “The Order of Things,” *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, 261-262 (New York: The New Press, 1998)

jurisprudence, in law, in an administrative system, in a prison.”<sup>2</sup> That is to say he has revealed to us a kind of thought that makes possible the thought that is able to grasp its object by means of concepts. It is this thought that makes it possible for conceptual thought to grasp particular objects such as a novel, a law, a scientific theorem, an administrative policy, an institution like the prison. The latter is the kind of thought that epistemology deals with. Thus we have in Foucault an understanding of knowledge as a discursive formation which does not trace a linear history but a discontinuous history of one discursive formation replaced by another. In addition to that, we have a specific conception of thought that is not to be understood either psychologically or transcendently but which seems rather to make possible our understanding of the psychological and the transcendental subject.

Commentators have noted an affinity in the thought of these two thinkers but they have focused mainly on the ontological and the ethical upheavals that result from their new stances. And even the work in these areas is still in its infancy. In the ontological sphere there have been discussions on the analogical nature of Heidegger’s understanding of being and Foucault’s understanding of power, on the similarities and the differences in their respective historical ontologies – the epochs that punctuate Heidegger’s history of Being and the *epistemes* that punctuate Foucault’s history of the human sciences.<sup>3</sup> In the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 267

<sup>3</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus, “‘Being and Power’ Revisited,” in *Foucault and Heidegger: Critical Encounters*, ed. Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, 30-54 (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Béatrice Han, “Foucault and Heidegger,” in Milchman and Rosenberg, *Foucault and Heidegger*, 127-162; Michael Schwartz, “Epistemes and the History of Being,” in Milchman and Rosenberg, *Foucault and Heidegger* (see note 1), 163-186; Stuart Elden, “Reading Genealogy as Historical Ontology,” in Milchman and Rosenberg, *Foucault and Heidegger* (see first citation), 187-205; Jana Sawicki, “Heidegger and Foucault: Escaping Technological Nihilism,” in Milchman and Rosenberg, *Foucault and Heidegger*, 55-73; William V. Spanos, “Heidegger, Foucault, and the ‘Empire of the Gaze’:

ethical sphere commentators have articulated the consequences of their anti-humanism and the ethical alternatives it reveals. They have also concentrated their attention upon the criticism of technology and modernity in general that their works offer.<sup>4</sup> It is not the case that they have simply ignored the epistemological implications latent in the thought of Heidegger and Foucault.<sup>5</sup> But a comprehensive and systematic reflection on the far-reaching epistemological implications of their work is still lacking.

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Thinking the Territorialization of Knowledge in Milchman and Rosenberg, *Foucault and Heidegger* (see first citation), 235-275

<sup>4</sup> Jana Sawicki, "Heidegger and Foucault: Escaping Technological Nihilism," in Milchman and Rosenberg, *Foucault and Heidegger* (see first citation), 55-73; William V. Spanos, "Heidegger, Milchman and Rosenberg, Foucault, and the "Empire of the Gaze": Thinking the Territorialization of Knowledge in Milchman and Rosenberg, *Foucault and Heidegger*, 235-275; Ladelle McWhorter, "Subjecting Dasein," in Milchman and Rosenberg, *Foucault and Heidegger* (see note 1), 110-126; Edith Wyschogrod, "Heidegger, Foucault, and the Askeses of Self-Transformation," in Milchman and Rosenberg, *Foucault and Heidegger* (see first citation), 276-294; Leslie Paul Thiele, "The Ethics and Politics of Narrative: Heidegger + Foucault," in Milchman and Rosenberg, *Foucault and Heidegger*, 206-234; Charles E. Scott, "Lightness of Mind and Density in the Thought of Heidegger and Foucault," in Milchman and Rosenberg, *Foucault and Heidegger*, 324-346; Steven V. Hicks, "Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Foucault: Nihilism and Beyond," in Milchman and Rosenberg, *Foucault and Heidegger*, 74-109; Charles E. Scott, *The Question of Ethics: Nietzsche, Foucault, Heidegger* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990)

<sup>5</sup> We have systematic work within the framework of analytic philosophy showing how Foucault and Heidegger individually challenge some of its traditional epistemological ideas (mainly truth) and help solve some problems faced by different epistemological theories. On Heidegger see the following: Timothy J. Nulty, "Davidson and Disclosedness: An Analysis of Heideggerian and Davidsonian Truth," *Idealistic Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 25-38; Brian O' Connor, "Adorno, Heidegger and the Critique of Epistemology," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 24, no. 4 (1998): 43-62; Mark A. Wrathall, "Intentionality without Representations: Heidegger's Account of Perception," *Philosophy Today* 42 (1998): 182-189; Stephen Mulhall, "Can there Be an Epistemology of Moods?" in *Verstehen and Human Understanding*, ed. Anthony O' Hear, 191-210 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Leslie Stevenson, "Heidegger and Cartesian Scepticism," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (1993): 81-98; Jose Luis Bermudez, "Skepticism and Subjectivity: Two Critiques of Traditional Epistemology," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 35, no. 2, 141-158 (1995): 141-158; Robert C. Scharff, "Rorty and Analytic Heideggerian Epistemology—and Heidegger," *Man and World: An international Philosophical Review* 25, no. 3-4 (1992): 483-504; Patrick Bourgeois, "Martin Heidegger: Schemata and the Return to Foundations," *Southwest Philosophy Review: The Journal of the Southwestern Philosophical Society* 3 (1986): 132-143; Cayard W. Wallace, "Bertrand Russell and the Existential Phenomenologists on Foundations of Knowledge,"

*Journal of the West Virginia Philosophical Society* (Fall 1976): 17-22; Gunnar Skirberk, *Truth and Preconditions approached via an Analysis of Heidegger* (Bergen: Univ. of Bergen, 1972); Nils Holtu, "Heidegger's Concept of Truth: Semantics and Relativism," *Danish Yearbook of Philosophy* 27 (1992): 7-22; Mario Garitta, "Heidegger on the Nature of Truth," *Auslegung: A Journal of Philosophy* 26, no. 1 (2003): 1-22; Mark Wrathall, "Heidegger and Truth as Correspondence," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 7, no. 1 (1999): 69-88; Marvin Faber, "Heidegger on the Essence of Truth," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 18 (1958): 523-532; Alejandro G Vigo Pacheco, "Sinn, Wahrheit und Geltung: Zu Heideggers Dekonstruktion der intentionalistischen Urteilslehre," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 86, no. 2 (2004): 176-208; John Tietz, "Heidegger on Realism and the Correspondence Theory of Truth," *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review* 32, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 59-76; Bernard Harrison, "Heidegger and the Analytic Tradition of Truth," *Topoi: An International Review of Philosophy* (September 1991): 121-136; Carleton B Christensen, "Heidegger's Representationalism," *Review of Metaphysics* 51, no. 1 (1997): 77-103; Henry Pietersma, *Phenomenological Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), Pietersma's book might be an exception because it does attempt to systematize the epistemological implications of Heidegger's early works up to to 1930.

However it does not trace the similarities between what Heidegger and Foucault are doing and his account of Heidegger is not comprehensive because it fails to take into the account Heidegger's works after 1930 which contain some of his most sustained critique of conceptual thinking and which I argue have the potential to provide us with a most radical alternative to traditional epistemology;

On Foucault see the following: Ian Hacking, "Michel Foucault's Immature Science," *Nous* 13 (March 1979): 39-51; Thomas E. Wartenberg, "Foucault's Archaeological Method: A Response to Hacking and Rorty," *Philosophical Forum* (Boston) 15 (Summer 1984): 345-364; James Wong, "Can Power Produce Knowledge? Reconsidering the Relationship of Power to Knowledge," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 105-123; Martin Bunzl, "Archaeology without Excess," *Philosophical Forum* 27, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 27-36; Linda Alcoff, "Foucault as Epistemologist," *ibid* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 95-124; Alain Masse, "La Représentation chez Foucault," *De Philosophia* 6 (1986): 85-91; Yunusa Kehinde Salami, "Foucault and Epistemology: Knowledge, Discourses and Power," *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research* 21, no. 1 (2004): 29-47;

We also have textual and historical studies of their works that incidentally touch upon epistemological topics and compare their use of certain basic epistemological terms such as truth and thought/cognition. On Heidegger see the following:

John Richardson, *Existential Epistemology: A Heideggerian Critique of the Cartesian Project* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Charles Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983); Kenneth Maly, "Toward Ereignis," *Research in Phenomenology* 3 (1973): 63-93; Dermot Moran, "Heidegger's Critique of Husserl's and Brentano's Accounts of Intentionality," *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 43, no. 1 (March 2000): 39-66; Thomas A. Fay, "Heidegger: Thinking as 'Noein'," *Modern Schoolman: A Quarterly Journal of Philosophy* 51 (1973): 17-28; Rainer Schubert, "Zum Problem der Erkenntnis in Heideggers Sein und Zeit," *Studia Phaenomenologica: Romanian Journal of Phenomenology*; 4, nos. 1-2 (2004): 173-188

On Foucault see the following:

Phillipe Sabot, "L'expérience, le Savoir et L'histoire dans les Premiers Écrits de Michel Foucault," *Archives de Philosophie* 69, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 285-303; Roger Deacon,

In line with what I have discussed above, I wish to argue in this work that it is by questioning the very nature of thought and its relationship to being that Heidegger and Foucault are able to reveal discontinuities or ruptures in intellectual history, which simply cannot be explained as a progress towards truth and at the same time are able to move away from a transcendental-anthropological characterization of intellectual history. Their programs if taken seriously, I will thus show, have serious epistemological implications and can provide us with a radically new understanding of knowledge and thought. I seek to accomplish these tasks by asking the following question: What is the object of thought in Heidegger and Foucault?

The first chapter traces Heidegger's quest for a thinking that is more original than conceptual or logical thinking. Conceptual thinking consists of subsuming a particular object under a universal category. Conceptual thinking presupposes the existence of sensation which is passive and receives representations of the particular object that the subject encounters. Conceptual thinking is able to interact with sensation and the result is knowledge. From the standpoint of traditional epistemology we start out with the dichotomy between the subject and the particular object and try to explain how the subject can make judgments or statements about the object by predicating universal categories of particular objects. In contradistinction to this, Heidegger tries to show that any encounter between the subject and object is possible only if there is a pre-conceptual

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"Theory as Practice: Foucault's Concept of Problematization," *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Critical Thought* 118 (Winter 2000): 127-142; Todd May, "Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault," *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review* 37, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 404-406; Rudi Visker, "From Foucault to Heidegger: A One-Way Ticket?" in *Foucault and Heidegger* (see footnote 1), 295-323; Timothy Rayner, "On Questioning Being: Foucault's Heideggerian Turn," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 12, no. 4 (2004): 419-438;

awareness of the very being of the object. It is this pre-conceptual awareness of the being of beings which makes the subsumption of particulars under universals possible in the first place. Heidegger's arguments point to the existence of a more fundamental pre-conceptual awareness of being as a whole prior to logical or conceptual thinking of individual beings. In this chapter I chart Heidegger's attempts to describe this pre-conceptual awareness of the being of beings from *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* to the *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* [*Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*]. In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, this pre-conceptual thinking takes the form of the transcendental power of the imagination (*transzendente Einbildungskraft*). In the *Beiträge*, it takes the very different form of inceptual thinking (*anfängliches Denken*) of be-ing (*Sein*). I show how Heidegger's quest for a pre-conceptual thinking that began in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* finally reaches its fruition in the *Beiträge* and the very significant epistemological implications these two formulations carry with them.

In the second chapter, I explain what the object of thought is for Heidegger by exploring the distinction between thinking (1) and thinking (2) that Heidegger makes in the *Beiträge*. Thinking (2) is conceptual thinking. This is how thinking has been understood in the history of western metaphysics. Thinking (2) is thus, for Heidegger, a metaphysical thinking. By metaphysics Heidegger does not mean simply the different metaphysical theories and systems that have been propounded throughout the history of philosophy. By metaphysics he means the specific way in which the being of beings has been interpreted in Western history since the ancient Greeks. Heidegger claims all the different ways of understanding the being of beings in western history boils down to

some variation of beingness (*Seiendheit*): what is most general in all beings or what is most universal to all beings. Beingness (*Seiendheit*) has always been understood in terms of generality or universality. According to Heidegger, it is this understanding of the being of beings that underlies thinking in western history. Thinking (1) is pre-conceptual or pre-metaphysical thinking. It is this pre-metaphysical awareness of be-ing (*Seyn*) that, according to Heidegger, makes metaphysical thinking possible in the first place. As opposed to metaphysical thinking [thinking (2)] which takes the universal as its object, the object of pre-metaphysical thinking is be-ing (*Seyn*). In his essay *What is called Thinking?* Heidegger makes a similar distinction between science and thinking. Only here it is science that takes the place of thinking (2) and thinking that takes the place of thinking (1). By clarifying clearly the relationship between thinking (1) and thinking (2) in the *Beiträge* as well as the relationship between thinking and the sciences, I lay out exactly what the object of the thinking is.

In the third chapter, I take up the question of knowledge in Heidegger by asking what he understands by knowledge of a thing in his work *What is a Thing?*. In order to bring into sharp focus the significance of Heidegger's position I appeal to Husserl and his conception of the knowledge of the thing as it is presented in notes and lectures collected under the volume XXXVIII of the *Husserliana* titled *Transzendentaler Idealismus*. Reacting against what they see as an over-simplification of the subject-object relationship in realism and idealism, both philosophers recast the very relationship between subject and object in an attempt to do justice to the complex and elusive nature of this relationship. While Husserl, with the framework of his transcendental idealism recasts the relationship between subject and object as a dynamic correlation between



consciousness and object and reformulates knowledge as a process within this correlation, Heidegger attempts to recover the ground of the subject-object relationship in a prior metaphysical projection of the being of beings by thought. The relationship between subject and object is fundamentally metaphysical and so knowledge would be impossible were it not for this prior metaphysical projection of being of beings. It is this metaphysical projection that gives knowledge its distinctive character. Heidegger shows how the being of beings is projected differently in ancient Greece, the medieval age and the modern period. So the character of knowledge in each of these epochs is fundamentally different. The history of knowledge from the standpoint of the history of being is thus not continuous but exhibits discontinuities or ruptures. Knowledge is thus not just a simple act of representation or constitution on the part of a subject. It is also a concrete metaphysical event in the history of being.

In the fourth chapter, I articulate what Foucault means by thought within his archaeological framework by a careful reading of his major work *The Order of Things*. In this work, Foucault gives us a very novel reformulation of thought as a discursive formation. Rather than starting out with the subject-object distinction and describing the transformation in the ways in which the subject represents the object to itself through an idea, Foucault shows us how the subject and the object and the relationship between the subject and object are parameters of a prior discursive formation and how the being of the subject, the object and the manner in which the subject and object relate undergo drastic non-linear transformations in the course of history in accordance with the drastic changes in the discursive formation. Instead of a history of ideas what we have here is a history of thought as discursive formation.

In the fifth chapter, I again summon Husserl as a contrast and compare Husserl's and Foucault's account of the historicity and ideality of scientific objects through an exegesis of Husserl's *Origin of Geometry* and Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. In this chapter I show how both Husserl and Foucault take the historicity of an ideality such as a scientific object very seriously and try to show how an ideality need not be ahistorical but can retain its ideality despite emerging in history. What makes an ideality ideal for Husserl is the permanent possibility of its reactivation. Even though the ideality originates in history in the mental confines of a historical subject, it is not just an unrepeatable psychological event in the mind of the subject, but an intentional act which can be reactivated by anyone in the course of history. It is this possibility of reactivating the ideality and repossessing its very genesis that makes it an ideality in the first place. For Foucault, the ideality is not something that can be reactivated. It is a material unity, a statement that is part of a discursive formation but which can be repeated under strict conditions. For Foucault, the ideality becomes a repeatable materiality rather than an intentional act that can be reactivated. Knowledge as a material whole consisting of statements is a significant departure from the traditional understanding of knowledge as justified true belief.

## Chapter I

### Heidegger's Discovery of Non-Conceptual Thinking: From the Transcendental Power of the Imagination to Inceptual Thinking.

#### 1. Introduction

In the preface to the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of his work, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*,<sup>6</sup> we find Heidegger referring to a note he made on the title page of his own personal copy of the first edition, in which he mentions a connection between the ideas in the Kant-book (especially the fourth part) and what he does in the *Beiträge*,<sup>7</sup> although he does not explain precisely what the connection is. In the *Beiträge* too, Heidegger makes specific remarks about the Kant-book to the effect that that reading of Kant was intended in the service of a bigger task – the thinking of the very truth of Be-ing (*Seyn*).

How do we understand these remarks made by Heidegger? Is there a connection between the ideas in the Kant-book and the *Beiträge* and if so what is the connection? In this chapter, I argue that Heidegger's quest in the Kant-book for a new kind of non-conceptual thinking, one that is more original than logic, is in fact brought to fruition in the *Beiträge*. My thesis has two advantages. Firstly, by charting the development from the Kant-book to the *Beiträge* I shed some new light on what this new kind of non-conceptual thinking is and I explain the epistemological stakes involved therein. And

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1973); The English translation of the book is Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990). The English translation will be referred to as KPM

<sup>7</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999); from now on will be referred to as CP. Original published as *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989)

secondly, I also clarify the rather cryptic remarks made by Heidegger about the connection between the Kant-book and the *Beiträge*.

In the first part I illustrate how the transcendental power of the imagination that is isolated in the Kant-book is an attempt to arrive at a new kind of non-conceptual thinking of the Being of beings. In the second part I explain precisely how Heidegger's quest attains fruition in the *Beiträge* where he develops the notion of the inceptual thinking of Be-ing (*Sein*). To be absolutely clear, the emphasis here is on Heidegger's discovery of a mode of thinking that is not acknowledged within epistemology. I will not concern myself directly here with the object of this non-conceptual thinking, which I will be doing in the next chapter. In the third part I focus on the epistemological stakes of Heidegger's quest by indicating its potential to pose a severe challenge to traditional epistemology.

## 2. The Transcendental Power of the Imagination as Non-Conceptual Thinking in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*

### 2.1. Heidegger on the Relationship between Intuition and Thinking in Kant

In the Kant-book, Heidegger takes it upon himself to show precisely what Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* leaves unsaid or at least what Heidegger thinks he leaves unsaid.<sup>8</sup> Heidegger's primary focus is ontological knowledge. In opposition to the

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<sup>8</sup> There are a number of articles discussing the validity of Heidegger's Kant interpretation. See F. Joseph Smith, "Heidegger's Kant Interpretation." *Philosophy Today* 11 (1967): 257-264; Henri Declève, "Heidegger et Cassirer interpretes de Kant," *Revue Philosophique De Louvain* 67 (1969): 517-545; Charles M. Sherover, *Heidegger, Kant and Time* (Bloomington/London: Indiana University Press, 1971); Edwin Alexander, "Hermeneutical

commentators of Kant, which includes the neo-Kantians, Heidegger makes the controversial claim that Kant's project in his *magnum opus* is concerned with "ontological knowledge" (KPM: 7) which concerns itself with the "constitution of Being" (KPM: 7) and not ontic knowledge (KPM: 7) which is only concerned with beings. In fact, it is certainly not controversial for us to claim that ontic knowledge is precisely what epistemology has taken knowledge to be. As he himself admits, Heidegger thus wants to claim Kant as an advocate for his own project, that he at that time called fundamental ontology.<sup>9</sup> Heidegger's interpretation of Kant, by introducing this inquiry into the ontological knowledge, significantly broadens the scope of epistemology.

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violence: Heidegger's Kant-interpretation," *Philosophy Today* 25 (1981): 286-306; Janusz Miziera, "Some remarks about Heidegger's interpretation of Kant," *Reports on Philosophy* 6 (1982): 35-48 on this topic. I refrain from taking any explicit position on this issue as my thesis concerns Heidegger's interpretation of Kant and not the validity of his interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism from the perspective of a historian of philosophy.

<sup>9</sup> In the preface to the fourth edition of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger says, "Kant's text became a refuge, as I sought in Kant an advocate for the question of Being which I posed." (KPM: xv) Fundamental ontology is the philosophical program outlined by Heidegger in his *Being and Time* [Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996)] wherein one attempts to answer the question: What is the Being of beings? not directly but indirectly through an "existential analysis of Dasein" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 11). Heidegger's aim in this work is to accomplish what he considers to be first part of the task of fundamental ontology, which is to show how "time is the transcendental horizon of the question of being" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 35). Starting with the ontological difference between the being of beings and beings themselves, fundamental ontology attempts to articulate what being is, taking care not to reduce the Being of being itself to an entity or another being. According to Heidegger philosophy has persisted in doing this since its inception in the Greeks. Plato understands Being as the form (*eidōs*) of a thing. Aristotle understands the unity of being as a unity of analogy, on the one hand, and as the highest being (unmoved mover), on the other hand. Much later Hegel equates being and nothing. Desisting from any such moves, Heidegger attempts to articulate what being is by starting his inquiry with one specific being for whom being is always a question. That being is Dasein, which in the context of *Being and Time* can be understood to be the human being.

Heidegger interprets Kant as saying that knowing is thinking intuition and not an intuitive thinking. Only if we recognize, as he takes Kant to be doing, the predominance of intuition in human knowledge can we do justice to its finitude. As Heidegger says here:

...however, we must maintain that intuition constitutes the authentic essence of knowledge and that, despite the reciprocity of the relationship between intuiting and thinking, [intuition] does possess authentic importance. This stands out clearly, but not just on the basis of Kant's explanation... which emphasizes the word "Intuition." Rather, only with this interpretation of knowledge is it also possible to grasp what is essential in this definition, namely the finitude of knowledge. (KPM: 16)

With this in mind, Heidegger focuses mainly on the relation between intuition/sensibility and thinking/understanding, noting how for Kant "all thinking is merely in the service of intuition" (KPM, 15). This relation of subservience between thinking and intuition is, according to Heidegger, extremely important and it is completely ignored, he exclaims, by all the commentators who interpret it hylomorphically as a relation between form and matter. To speak with Heidegger here:

Precisely this order of precedence concerning the reflexive belonging-together of sensibility and understanding must not be overlooked, it must not become leveled off to an indifferent correlation of content and form, if we want to come closer to the innermost course [*Zuge*] of the Kantian problematic. (KPM: 23)

So, for Heidegger, it is now a question of teasing out this relationship of subservience between intuition and thinking and showing precisely what it entails. Heidegger's wager is that this subservience entails a radical reformulation of the very nature of thinking itself by uncovering a kind of non-logical creative thinking which precedes logic and sensation and makes both of these possible. He believes that Kant himself shrinks back from exploring these entailments by settling completely for a tame dualism of thought and intuition.

Thinking and intuition are united in a very specific way and this unity is not merely contingent. The very nature of finite knowledge requires that for thinking and intuition to be possible at all they must be united in a specific way. Heidegger quotes Kant to show that Kant himself understood that thinking and intuition have a common root, albeit an unknown one. Heidegger gives himself the task of unveiling this unknown root.

## 2.2. The Ontological Synthesis of Intuition and Thinking in the Transcendental Power of the Imagination

The establishment of the existence of a common unknown root from which thinking and intuition can originate can only mean that there is an a priori, ontological synthesis that precedes the veritative synthesis through which the logical categories of thinking are applied to what is acquired through the senses. Let me give a preliminary explanation of what this means. In order to know beings, Heidegger argues, one must already in some sense know what kind of beings to expect. One must already, that is, be familiar with the Being of these beings. This knowledge of the Being of beings is an ontological knowledge that precedes any knowledge of beings as such (ontic knowledge). Thus, in order to make a true assertion about a being, say this table in front of me, I need to be already familiar with the way a being like a table can be encountered. I must have an awareness of the way a being such as a table can be distributed in space, for example, or the way in which it can persist through time. So before I can know about the existence and the properties of a specific object like a table, I need to be already aware of the manner of the being of objects like tables. That is to say, I need to have the knowledge of

the very Being of a being like a table, which is an ontological knowledge. Now this ontological knowledge is not a knowledge of a specific object and so it cannot come from the specific object. The knower, in this case, is not dependent upon any being outside of the knower for this kind of knowledge. Instead of an experiential knowledge, it is what makes all experiential knowledge possible and as such cannot be constituted by a veritative synthesis. It is rather the “unity of pure intuition and pure thinking.” (KPM 44) In a certain sense it is a “creation” by the knower and constituted through an ontological synthesis. This is what Heidegger means in the following quotation:

However, what should now be taken in stride, where it concerns the knowing of Being and not beings cannot be a being which is at hand and which presents itself. On the contrary, the pure representing which takes things in stride must give itself something capable of being represented. Pure intuition, therefore, must in a certain sense be “creative.” (KPM: 29-30)

Heidegger has the firm belief that Kant himself, despite the way commentators have read his work and how Kant understood himself, was really after such ontological knowledge and not a theory of ontic knowledge, like an epistemology.

What we have in ontological knowledge is a unity of pure intuitions and pure concepts. Pure concepts are not arrived through reflection by engaging in a process of abstraction from particulars. Pure concepts are what facilitate reflection in the first place. And it is Heidegger’s task to show us how pure intuition and pure thinking unite. This will require that we understand what Heidegger precisely means by “creative” intuition as well as how pure concepts in their very essence have “an inner reference to intuition.” (KPM 38) Now Heidegger is very clear that we do not actually create the very beings we come to know in the process of knowing them. This would be a disastrous misinterpretation of Kant, for it would no longer make our knowledge finite. As we have



mentioned before, Heidegger very forcefully acknowledges the Kantian distinction between finite and infinite knowledge and affirms, as we have already seen, that human knowledge is based upon sensible and not intellectual intuition. In what sense then does Heidegger mean “creative?”

Heidegger insists that an analysis of this a priori synthesis into pure intuitions of space and time and the categories of pure thinking will not get the job done. For what is really needed is to uncover exactly how the ontological synthesis of pure thinking and pure intuition takes place. A mere juxtaposition of thought and intuition cannot explain this ontological synthesis which indeed constitutes our prior awareness of the Being of beings without which experience would be impossible. As Heidegger states:

For all that, however, “analytic” does not mean an unknotting and breaking up of finite pure reason into its elements, but rather the reverse: an “unknotting” as a freeing which loosens the seeds [*Keime*] of ontology. It unveils those conditions from which an ontology as a whole is allowed to sprout [*aufkeimen*] according to its inner possibility. In Kant’s own words, such an analytic is a bringing of “itself to light through reason,” it is “what reason brings forth entirely from out of itself.” Analytic thus becomes a letting-be-seen [*Seinlassen*] of the genesis of the essence of finite pure reason from its proper ground. (KPM: 27-28)

With the aim of laying out the dynamics of this ontological synthesis, Heidegger plunges into Kant’s first version of the transcendental deduction in which he finds imagination play a central role.<sup>10</sup> The elucidation of this central role of imagination will be the answer to all the questions concerning the ontological synthesis he has posed that we outlined above. In the first version of the transcendental deduction, Heidegger discovers that pure intuition and pure thinking are synthesized by the mediating role played by the imagination, which is of course neither intuition nor thinking but shares in both.

Heidegger interprets imagination as structurally central by way of which both pure

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<sup>10</sup> See Sherover, *Heidegger, Kant and Time*, 64-67 who makes the same point.

intuition and pure thinking come together. This is not a unity after the fact – a superficial cobbling together of elements that are originally diverse. In fact, for Heidegger, it belongs to the very essence of pure thinking and pure intuition to be brought together by the imagination. For Heidegger the division of knowing into reception of sensory data and application of logical categories is not at all primordial. Rather this division of labor already suggests a primordial structural unity between intuition and thinking, and is only possible, according to Heidegger, because of such a primordial structural unity in the pure power of imagination. As Heidegger notes:

With the sameness of the synthetic function, Kant does not mean the empty identity of a tying-together which is formal and which works everywhere, but instead the original, rich wholeness of one which is composed of many members and which, like intuiting and thinking, is a particularly efficacious unifying and giving of unity. (KPM: 43)

We now have the unknown root in which pure thinking and pure intuition find their unification – the pure power of the imagination.

### 2.3. Schematization as the Key to the Role of Transcendental Power of the Imagination

In order for the finite knower to be able to encounter objects, it requires that the knower be already prepared for such an encounter. What is accomplished in this preparation is the creation of space that allows the object to be perceived by the knower. In Heidegger's own words, the object must be allowed to offer itself to the knower. This requires that the knower hold herself in anticipation for the objects in a certain manner. If she does not do so, then she would miss any encounter with beings and would be left in the lurch. The ontological synthesis thus ensures that the knower does not miss the object

by creating a prior horizon for the encounter. The ontological synthesis results in the creation of a space for the encounter of objects.<sup>11</sup> To speak with Heidegger:

Finite creatures need the basic faculty of turning-toward ... which lets-[something]-stand-in opposition. In this original turning-toward, the finite creature first allows a space for play [*Spielraum*] within which something can “correspond” to it. To hold oneself in advance in such a play-space, to form it originally, is none other than the transcendence which marks all finite comportment of beings. If, however, the possibility of ontological knowledge is grounded in pure synthesis and if ontological knowledge nevertheless constitutes precisely the letting-stand-against of ..., than the pure synthesis must be revealed as that which complies with and supports the unified whole of the inner, essential structure of transcendence. (KPM: 48)

A simple juxtaposition of thought and intuition cannot explain how this horizon, which allows us to encounter objects, comes to be formed. Kant recognized this and it is precisely the formation of such a horizon that Kant undertakes to explain, according to Heidegger, in this chapter on the schemata. The key to understanding the synthetic role of the imagination in preparing a space of play in which objects can be encountered, Heidegger believes, lies in Kant’s discussion of the schemata. In Heidegger’s controversial interpretation, this discussion of the schemata, which has continually baffled commentators looking to understand how this seemingly incongruent chapter fits into the whole schematic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, becomes the center-piece.

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<sup>11</sup> Heidegger calls this space in which we encounter objects the horizon of transcendence. It is this horizon which allows the subject to come face to face with the object in the first place. See below where I treat this notion of the horizon of transcendence in relation to the transcendental power of the imagination. However, Heidegger’s notion of transcendence is well discussed in the literature. See Sherover, *Heidegger, Kant and Time* ; Brian Hansford Bowles, “Sensibility and Transcendence in Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics,” *Philosophy Today* 44, no. 4 (2000): 347-365; Alberto Moreiras, “Heidegger, Kant, and the Problem of Transcendence,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 24 (1986): 81-93 and Mark Rölli, “Immanenz und transzendenz: Kant-Heidegger-Deleuze,” *Dialektik: Zeitschrift Fuer Kulturphilosophie* I (2005): 79-96 for more thorough accounts of this notion in Heidegger’s Kant-book and beyond.

What Heidegger means by this horizon – the space of play – is a preliminary awareness of the very objectivity of objects. Our preliminary awareness of objects, namely, the horizon, has the peculiar nature whereby objects show themselves to us through appearances. The horizon makes objects amenable to perception. We can thus say that an object is perceivable only because it offers itself to us in a look or an image of itself. Objects thus always have a way of giving themselves to us in a look, of presenting themselves to us in images. We are thus able to perceive individual objects only because we already have an awareness of the possible ways in which an object will present itself to us – by offering us a look or an image of itself. “The expression “image” is to be taken here in its most original sense, according to which we say that the landscape presents a beautiful “image” (look), or that the collection presented a sorry “image” (look).” (KPM: 61) This horizon of preliminary awareness is what makes up our ontological knowledge. This horizon of preliminary awareness is created, according to Heidegger, by an original synthesis of pure thinking and pure intuition, in short by the power of the imagination. If we are to understand how ontological knowledge is created in an original synthesis of intuition and thinking in such a way that intuition retains its priority over thinking, then the only we can do this is by trying to answer how pure concepts can be made pure sensible (the pure making-sensible).<sup>12</sup> For Heidegger this is precisely what schemas do.

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<sup>12</sup> In this regard see Sherover, *Heidegger, Kant and Time*, 58-61, who elucidates Heidegger’s argument that the table of logical judgments is not the place where Kant derived the Categories but that the key to understanding the scope of the categories and the way they relate to experience is not to be found in the Table of Logical Judgments but in the chapter on Schematism where Kant really derives the categories. Sherover concludes: “At best, therefore, the Table of Judgments from which Kant tries to derive the categories is essentially derivative; it can only conceivably provide a convenient hint that helps bring them to light: it cannot serve as their true source. Aside from this suggestion – that what Kant had actually termed a “Clue to the Discovery” of the categories can be nothing more than that – the derivation does not require further attention here because Heidegger does, in effect, suggest

Schemas are the manner in which pure concepts can be made pure sensible.<sup>13</sup> Let us recount the main highlights of Heidegger's interpretation.

Broadly construed a concept can be understood as a range of possibilities for appearance. The concept of a cat for instance includes within itself, the range of possible ways in which cats can appear to us – Siamese, Persian, Russian blue, tigers, lions etc. etc. The concept of the cat is able to delineate a particular manner of appearance by including within it a fixed range of possibilities and excluding every other possibility of appearance. The concept is thus a rule of appearance and the schema is the representation of this rule. The schema is thus not a concrete image but is related to possible schema-images, each of which can depict the rule. The adequacy of the schema-image to the concept is not one of similitude. What the schema must do is adequately represent the rule and likeness has nothing to do with this function. Although Kant starts out his discussion by explaining how empirical and mathematical concepts can be rendered sensible, he ultimately wants to move towards the sensibilisation of pure concepts. For only this would explain how ontological synthesis could take place. Empirical and mathematical concepts can be schematized in images that are empirically intuitable. In the case of a pure concept, however, they “cannot be brought into images like this... to the extent that they represent those rules in which objectivity in general as preliminary horizon for the possible encountering of all objects is formed [*bildet*].” (KPM: 70) How then are pure concepts made sensible? The pure intuition of time is the schema of the pure concepts of the understanding.

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an alternative source for their derivation from the doctrine of the Schematism as well as from the Principles of Pure Understanding.” Sherover, *Heidegger, Kant and Time*, 60-61

<sup>13</sup> Now before we can have the presentation of any object in particular, what we need to be aware of is what presentation in general is.

Here we have moved away from the mere juxtaposition of time and the pure concepts of the understanding. The ontological synthesis of intuition and thinking is nothing but the schematization of the pure concepts in time accomplished by the pure power of the imagination. Ontological knowledge requires that we have intuited in some way the pure concepts, which fall under the categories of Quality, Quantity, Relation and Modality. We intuit them as schema-images of time. According to Heidegger, we have a preliminary experience of time as a succession of “nows.” This preliminary experience is however completely different from the way we experience a concrete object. This experience is not dependent upon external objects and in that sense it is creative, for it creates the conditions for experiencing objects in the first place. Now we experience the pure concepts of understanding as different forms of time. So, for example, we experience the concepts that come under the category of Quantity as forms of time-series. This preliminary intuitive awareness of the pure-concepts of the understanding is what forms the ontological “horizon of transcendence” (KPM: 74), which in turn acts “as the condition for the possibility that the being given within it can have this or that particular, revealed, indeed ontic horizon.” (Ibid.) Heidegger here gives us his own interpretation of the transcendental schematism of the pure concept of substance in order to make more precise this account of the creativity of the transcendental power of the imagination.

In order for us to be able to use the pure notion of substance we need, according to Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant, a pure intuition of this pure notion of substance, in the first place. How are we to be able to perceive individual substances that persist through time? In order to be able to this we need to have some sense of what it is for something to persist. We need to have some sense of permanence. But there is nothing

in the external world that simply corresponds to permanence or persistence. We acquire this sense of permanence through the pure intuition of substance. We intuit substance as schema image of time as permanent. It is time that as a sequence of “nows” is always and ever a now. But this being now of time is certainly not like any individual moment. The permanence of time is of a different order. It is thus the schema image of time as permanence, as a ground, on which change can occur, that allows us to intuit purely “something like lasting in general. As this pure image (immediate pure “look”), it presents that which forms the ground in pure intuition” (KPM: 73) It is only when we have such a sense of permanence or persistence, in short of substance that we can go on to perceive individual substances. That is to say it is only when the pure notion of substance is transcendently schematized that we can have the experience of individual substances.

The transcendental schematism of the pure concepts is to be distinguished from the subsumption of objects under empirical concepts which is thoroughly discussed in logic text-books. But the transcendental schematism of the pure concepts is a different kind of subsumption. Rather than “bringing under a concept,” the transcendental schematism “brings to concepts.” According to Heidegger, what Kant is in a way raising here is the fundamental problem of subsumption when it comes to pure concepts in contradistinction to empirical concepts. Empirical concepts, Heidegger explains, are homogenous with the objects they are applied to. They can be drawn from the very objects they are applied to. Hence we can speak of these concepts as universals because they can apply to objects in general and that is the case only because they are homogenous with their objects. So when I apply the universal term “triangle” to any

three sided closed figure whose sum of the angles is 180 degrees, although I am abstracting from the individual lengths of the sides of the different individual three sided figures and many other such concrete details I do find the transition from the individual triangle to the universal triangle very smooth. It is the smoothness of this transition that Heidegger calls the homogeneity between the property of the universal triangle to have its three angles equal 180 degrees and all the particular, individual triangles one may find. But when it comes to the pure concepts such as substance or quantity or quality, there now exists no such homogeneity between the concept and the appearances to which they are applied simply because there is no smooth transition from the particular instances of individual substance and the pure concept of substance in general. So the subsumption of the appearances under such pure concepts has to be accounted for very differently from that of empirical concepts. “If the pure concept of the understanding is fully non-homogeneous with the appearances, but if it is still to determine them, then there must be a mediator which bridges the non-homogeneity. ‘This mediating representation must be pure (void of everything empirical), and indeed on the one hand it must be *intellectual* while on the other hand it must be *sensible*. The Transcendental Schema is such a mediating representation.’ (KrV A 139, B 178)” (KPM: 76). It is where the transcendental power of the imagination comes in. We can transcendently schematize the pure categories only with the aid of the transcendental power of the imagination. Through the transcendental schematism of the pure concepts, the transcendental power of the imagination makes it possible for us to encounter individual objects. The subject is able to transcend itself and come face to face with the object. Although it seems the most obvious thing for a subject to encounter objects of such and such properties in the



external world and seems to require no explanation Heidegger enlists Kant in his attempt to explain this very obviousness. How is it that objects confront us as things persisting in time, that can be measured, that can be counted, that possess properties? Heidegger's answer is that without some preliminary sense of this confrontation, it would be impossible for us to confront objects. It is the transcendental power of the imagination that shapes this sense for us. It is this preliminary sense that Heidegger calls the horizon of transcendence. It is the transcendental power of the imagination that creates this horizon of transcendence making it possible for us to experience objects and have empirical knowledge. What this role of the power of imagination reveals to us is a more original synthesis of thinking and intuition that is prior to and conditions what any theory of knowledge takes to be thinking and sensation and the subsuming of the sense data under logical categories. As Heidegger puts it:

The imagination forms the look of the horizon of objectivity as such in advance, before the experience of the being. This look-forming [*Anblickbilden*] in the pure image [*Bilde*] of time, however, is not the just prior to this or that experience of the being, but rather always is in advance, prior to any possible [experience]. (KPM: 90)

On the one hand, pure intuitions of space and time are, for Heidegger, not merely forms of intuitions and cannot be reduced to categories. In pure intuition we have the intuition of a unity, which is not a universal and so cannot be conceptualized by way of thinking. This non-conceptual unity is moreover not an object. It is not dependent upon external objects like empirical intuition. It is a formative intuition and as such "is only possible in the transcendental power of the imagination." (KPM: 98) What is intuited in pure intuition is not a something but it is definitely not a nothing either. Space is not a thing to be intuited but it is rather "the representation of a possibility of Being-together" (KPM 99, quoted by Heidegger from KrV A 374) and we can say that time is similarly the

representation of the possibility of Being-in-succession. In pure intuition it is not actualities that we intuit but rather possibilities of appearing. It is these possibilities that constitute the horizon for the empirically intuitable. This is what is meant when Heidegger says:

If Kant says they [space and time] may be intuitions, then we might reply: but in fact these were not intuited. Certainly they are not intuited in the sense of a thematic apprehension, but rather they are intuited in the manner of an original, formative giving...As preliminary forming of a pure, unthematic, and (in the Kantian sense) unobjective look, pure intuition makes it possible that the empirical intuiting of spatio-temporal things which moves within its horizon does not first need to intuit space and time in the sense of an apprehension which first ascertains these multiplicities. (KPM: 99)

So Heidegger can conclude that pure intuition originates in the pure power of the imagination.

On the other hand, for Heidegger, pure thinking is not essentially logic. It is the unity that anticipates all other unities. This original unity is the “I think” by which the “I” externalizes itself, comes out of itself, so to speak. It is because the “I” has been “thrown out” (KPM 103) in this way that it can, as it were, be placed before the object. It is because the “I” is a being that is externalized that it can become conscious of itself and other objects. But the “I think” is not an empty “I think.” It always thinks one or the other pure unities such as substance, causality etc. as “I think substance,” “I think causality” etc. This happens, as we have explained before, through the transcendental schematism. Just as we saw before with pure intuition, this pure thinking, in which the self is ejected out of itself and thrust among beings, is also not thematic. “As a result, the pure understanding is a pre-forming of the horizon of unity which represents “from out of itself” a representing forming, spontaneity whose occurrence lies in the “Transcendental Schematism.” [KPM: 103, translation modified]. But we have already seen that the

transcendental schematism is brought about by the transcendental power of the imagination. So the thinking of the pure unities of substance, causality etc., which we attribute to pure thinking, is in fact a pure spontaneous formative act of the transcendental power of the imagination. In the case of the pure understanding, we must realize, says Heidegger that although it is free-forming, it is not random. Just as pure intuition is receptive, so pure understanding is spontaneous because it forms a horizon within which beings can offer themselves to us. So the formation of the horizon is thus necessitated by the need to receive beings which offer themselves to us. As Heidegger says:

The necessity, however, revealed in the standing-against of the horizon of objectivity, is only possible as encountered “compulsion” insofar as it happens in advance upon a Being-free for it. Freedom already lies in the essence of pure understanding, i.e., of pure theoretical reason, insofar as this means placing oneself under a self-given necessity. Hence understanding and reason are not free because they have the character of spontaneity, but because this spontaneity is a receptive spontaneity, i.e., because it is the transcendental power of the imagination. (KPM: 106)

Thus Heidegger can conclude that pure thinking and pure imagination are horizon-forming and so creative and are thereby rooted in the pure power of the imagination. He writes:

Hence from the beginning, in this offering of the look, the power of the imagination is never simply dependent upon the presence [Anwesenheit] of a being. It is dependent in this way to such a small degree that precisely its pre-forming [*Vor-bilden*] of the pure schema Substance, i.e., persistence over time, for example, first brings into view in general something like constant presence [*ständige Anwesenheit*]. In turn, it is first and foremost only in the horizon of such constant presence that this or any “present presence of an object” as such can show itself. Hence in the transcendental Schematism the essence of the power of imagination – to be able to intuit without the present presence [*ohne Gegenwart*] – is grasped in a way that is fundamentally more original. Finally, the Schematism also shows quite straightforwardly and in a far more original sense the “creative” essence of the power of imagination. Indeed, it is not ontically “creative” at all, but [is creative] as a free forming of images...the Critique of Pure Reason shows both the intuitive character and spontaneity in a more original sense. (KPM: 91)

But Heidegger is not content with just arguing for the centrality of the transcendental schematism in establishing and explicating the role of the transcendental power of the imagination and its relationship to time. Heidegger goes further than Kant in bringing to light this inner temporal character of the transcendental power of the imagination. He does this by revealing to us the temporal essence of the different types of synthesis that are discussed by Kant, namely, apprehension, reproduction and recognition. If these three types exhaust the nature of synthesis and if imagination is the faculty of synthesis then by revealing the temporal essence of these three types of synthesis, we are in turn bringing out the inner temporal character of the transcendental imagination. From the very outset, however, we must note that Heidegger is concerned with pure and not empirical synthesis and consequently with pure apprehension, pure reproduction and pure recognition

In empirical apprehension, accompanied by empirical intuition we apprehend what is present in front of us now. But such an apprehension would only be possible, argues Heidegger, if we somehow had a grasp of presentness itself. So in pure apprehension, what we grasp is “the present in general.” (KPM: 123) In doing so pure apprehension schematizes the category of presentness out of the very fabric of time. Therefore in its formative character, Heidegger concludes, apprehension can only spring forth from the transcendental power of the imagination

In empirical reproduction accomplished by the empirical imagination, we are able to present to ourselves what is past. This gives us the further ability to integrate the past with the present and obtain a fuller representation of what is presented to us. But the ability to reproduce the past requires that we have a prior grasp of the very distinction

between present and past. So reproduction is only possible, argues Heidegger, if there is a prior grasp of pastness in general. “Pure synthesis in the mode of reproduction forms having-been-ness [*Gewesenheit*] as such” (KPM: 124-125) As such it must spring from the transcendental power of the imagination.

Now if one has to unify the past and the present in the identification of a being as one and the same, namely, the one that existed with the one that continues to exist now, then from what temporal standpoint can this identification take place? Since apprehension is concerned solely with the present and reproduction with the past, the identification of the object as the same cannot be accomplished, argues Heidegger, from the standpoint of the present or the past. So he asks: “What is the unity of apprehending intuition and reproducing imagination to be if what they want to present as unified and the same is, so to speak, placeless?” (KPM: 126-127) Identification is accomplished by placing the many (past being and present being) under the one. It is thus a synthesis of concepts. The disparate fragments of the past and the present can be unified only if they are guided in advance by the prior awareness of the possibility that something will remain the same. But such an awareness requires that one has already grasped something like futureness. This prior awareness of futureness is what is obtained by the pure synthesis of identification. And so it is only from this third temporal standpoint of the future that something like identification can be accomplished.

We can thus see that it is only on the basis of the transcendental power of the imagination which can cause time to erupt as the present, past and the future that anything like intuition and thinking and imagination that we are acquainted with, is possible in the first place. Heidegger is thus not satisfied with ending the discussion on

ontological synthesis and the pure power of imagination with simply an explication of Kant's conception of the transcendental schematism. Heidegger goes beyond anything that Kant does in trying to extrapolate on what Kant does by drawing out more precisely the implications of this role granted to the power of the imagination – the root from which intuition and thinking stem as well as its relationship to time. As we have hinted earlier, it is time that lies at the basis of our experience as the pure concepts of the understanding are made sensible as different formations of time. By exploring more deeply the relationship between the pure power of imagination and intuition and the pure power of imagination and time, Heidegger is able to discover that the three Kantian moments in pure knowledge are essentially related to the three times – the past, the present and the future. In this way he is able to bring out “the inner temporal character of the transcendental power of the imagination.” (KPM: 120) Heidegger argues that both pure intuition and pure thinking/understanding originate in the pure power of the imagination. In Heidegger's controversial interpretation, which he himself acknowledges, both pure intuition and pure thinking become aspects of the pure power of the imagination and not independent parts which are glued together awkwardly by the imagination.

#### 2.4. The Transcendental Power of the Imagination as Thinking prior to Thinking

The transcendental power of imagination as we have reiterated several times is what renders understanding and sensation possible. It is because pure understanding and pure intuition are originally unified in the transcendental power of the imagination that

we have a knowledge of the very being of beings on whose basis any knowledge of beings is possible at all. The transcendental power of the imagination is creative in the sense that it forges the horizon in which an encounter with beings becomes possible. The creativity of the transcendental power of the imagination is nothing but a manifestation of our knowledge of the being of beings. Our ontological knowledge manifests itself in and through the activity of the transcendental power of the imagination.

Thus prior to what epistemology has traditionally taken thinking to be, namely, as the subject's grasping of particular objects under general categories, Heidegger discovers the transcendental imagination, which is neither only thinking nor only intuition but a unity of pure thinking and pure intuition. The transcendental power of the imagination is not to be understood as a new faculty correlated to its own special kind of knowledge like the eye is correlated to visual sensation and the ear with auditory sensation. For Heidegger, such a statement would constitute a biological/psychological/anthropological discovery. The subject who exercises the transcendental power of the imagination is not yet the human being who forms the object of study of biology/psychology/anthropology. The transcendental power of the imagination is what makes it possible for us to conceive of the human being as a unity of several faculties in biological or psychological descriptions. The faculties of thinking and intuition and the kind of syntheses they perform can only be accounted for on the basis of a prior ontological synthesis of the transcendental power of the imagination. Does the transcendental power of the imagination – this pure thinking intuition – have an object? Is there some specific object or objects that is/are thinkingly intuited? This question cannot be answered by a simple yes or no. It certainly does not accomplish the thinking intuition of an object or a thing

like a universal or a concrete physical object. In that sense it has no object. But the transcendental power of the imagination does create the horizon – this space of play for the possible encounter with beings by forging pastness, presentness and futureness out of the very fabric of time. So in a sense we can say that time is its object or that it is rooted in time to such an extent that it can be equated with it. “If the transcendental power of imagination, as the pure, forming faculty, in itself forms time – i.e., allows time to spring forth – then we cannot avoid the thesis stated above: the transcendental power of imagination is original time. (KPM: 128) So Heidegger can say: “The interpretation of the transcendental power of imagination as root, i.e., the elucidation of how the pure synthesis allows both stems to grow forth from out of it and how it maintains them, leads back from itself to that in which this root is rooted: to original time.” (134) But again we must be careful and not assume time to be an object like any other. By time, Heidegger does not mean the chronological time that is measured as a sequence of nows. By time, he means a more original time out of which the sequence of nows, namely, chronological time emerges. This original time also comes to be essentially related to the self. The self, as we have explained before, is able to hold itself out in the anticipatory horizon created by it in which it can encounter beings. This horizon, which, as we have also addressed earlier, is forged out of the fabric of time, has an inner temporal character. As Heidegger says:

As pure self-affection, time is not an acting affection that strikes a self which is at hand. Instead, as pure it forms the essence of something like self-activating. However, if it belongs to the essence of the finite subject to be able to be activated as a self, then time as pure self-affection forms the essential structure of subjectivity. (KPM: 129)

So Heidegger can find that original time, the transcendental power of imagination and subjectivity are essentially related. He even finds them synonymous. It is this



characteristic of the self to be there [*Da-sein*] in the open to encounter beings that gets overlooked by anthropology and which Heidegger wants to focus in the metaphysics of Dasein. As Heidegger notes:

Anthropological-psychological knowledge is not thereby declared to be “false.” It is necessary to show, however, that with all its correctness it is not sufficient to hold in view from the start and constantly the problem of Dasein’s existence – and that means its finitude – as demanded by the guiding problematic of the Question of Being. (KPM: 160)

And only through such a metaphysics of Dasein can we explore our preliminary awareness of the very Being of beings or what Heidegger calls fundamental ontology.

Fundamental ontology is thus able to show the ontological basis of understanding.

“Because the understanding – and Fundamental Ontology shows us precisely this – is not just a type of knowing, but on the contrary is primarily a basic movement of existing in general, then the execution of the projecting, and even what is grasped in the ontological, must necessarily be construction.” (KPM: 159) What Heidegger does with fundamental ontology is to explore those basic relations that epistemology takes for granted and leaves at the hands of anthropology/psychology. Fundamental ontology by its discovery of the ontological ground of the epistemological concepts of thinking and knowledge aims to deepen its claims by investigating this relationship between the subjectivity of the subject and Being of beings. For Heidegger the traditional epistemological relationship between subject and object completely overlooks the fundamental problem of metaphysics and its relationship to human subjectivity. The discovery of the transcendental power of the imagination makes us confront the Dasein in the human being for the first time.

### 3. Inceptual Thinking as Non-Conceptual Thinking in the *Beiträge*

#### 3.1. From the Transcendental Power of the Imagination to Inceptual Thinking

In the 1920s, as we saw in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ontological knowledge revealed that the Being of beings or the horizon in which we encounter beings has a temporal character, which was borne out in the synthesis of pure intuition of time and pure understanding. This resulted in the further realization of the very temporal character of the self. In the 1930s, Heidegger seems to try to move away from fundamental ontology in order to spell out more forcefully what this relationship between the self, original time and Being entails.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> My thesis focuses on the notion of thinking in Heidegger and what I believe to be some of the serious epistemological implication of this notion. Hence my comparison of Heidegger's work in the 1920s and the 1930s focuses only on his concept of the transcendental power of the imagination in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* and the concept of inceptual thinking in *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*, both of which I see as attempts to articulate a broader more comprehensive non-conceptual thinking in opposition to a more narrow, conceptual, representational thinking which forms the basis for logic. Hence my task in this chapter does not require me to compare Heidegger's work as whole in 1920s with his work as a whole in the 1930s. For instance, I do not focus on *Sein und Zeit* because Heidegger does not discuss thinking in this work. I therefore refrain from making any judgments on whether or not there really was a general turn in Heidegger's thinking in the 1930s and whether or not his work in general in the 1920s is compatible with his work in the 1930s. However, one could, if one wished, adduce the thesis in this chapter as evidence for the bigger claim about the turn in Heidegger's thinking. The main debate on the issue of a turn in Heidegger's thinking centers around William Richardson's distinction between what he calls Heidegger I and Heidegger II and Heidegger's own pronouncements on this distinction in his introduction to William Richardson's book, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1963). This has resulted in subsequent commentators arguing vigorously against this claim and others defending it. The main articles that have set up the debate include that of Parvis Emad, "'Heidegger I,' 'Heidegger II,' and *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*," in *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy and, Desire: Essays in Honour of William J. Richardson, S.J.* ed. Babette E. Babich (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995) Richardson's reply to Emad in "From Phenomenology through Thought to a *Festschrift: A Response*," *Heidegger*

Heidegger's *Beiträge* is written in an unconventional style. Divided up into eight sections the book certainly does not fit the description of a regular philosophical treatise. Heidegger's terminology is also hard to penetrate and he engages in the very difficult philosophical task of describing the kind of event that leads to the emergence of history. Such an event is certainly not what the historians and historiographers study. In the process Heidegger has some very important things to say about the nature of the thought and its relationship to being. Firstly, my effort in the forthcoming discussion is to try to translate the terminology that Heidegger uses into plain and simple English and provide a systematic account of Heidegger's notion of inceptual thinking (*anfängliches Denken*). I avoid Heidegger's terminology as much as possible. This attempt definitely carries the risk of completely misunderstanding what Heidegger is saying. One could argue that Heidegger's terminology is indispensable and if one tries to translate it into plain English then one completely loses the essence of Heidegger's thought. I believe that such a risk is worth taking because to remain faithful to his terminology and repeat what he says does no justice to his thought as one is not really attempting to comprehend what is going on in the book but simply deifying Heidegger's pronouncements. The account that

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*Studies* 13 (1997): 17-28; Thomas Sheehan, "Kehre and Ereignis: A Prolegomenon to Introduction to Metaphysics," in *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, ed. Richard Polt and Gregory Fried (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2001), 3-16 and Frank Schalow, "The Impact of *Contributions to Philosophy: Liberating Ontology and its Critical Implications for the Reductionistic Interpretations of Heidegger's Thought*," *Heidegger Studies* 25 (2009): 25-48. We have Emad and Schalow, on the one side, arguing for an overall unity in Heidegger's thought through the 20s and 30s in the sense that Heidegger's thinking is governed by its relationship to be-ing and the apparent change in his thinking from the 1920s into the 1930s is to be attributed to be-ing and not to his thinking which merely pursues the twists and turns of be-ing itself. We have Richardson and Sheehan, on the other side, arguing that although he questioned after the same thing, namely the being of beings, Heidegger's manner of posing the question in the 1930s can be meaningfully distinguished from that in the 1920s. Sheehan, in particular, argues that a distinction must be made between the turning operating in the event (*Kehre im Ereignis*) from a change in Heidegger's own thinking (*die Wendung im Denken*).

follows risks oversimplifying and misunderstanding Heidegger completely but that is a small price to pay if one wants to engage with what Heidegger is saying, break open his thoughts and enter into some kind of dialogue with the work. In a way this attempt is closer to Heidegger's own way of doing philosophy and his attempts to break open the thoughts of the philosophers he studied. Secondly, I will attempt to bring out what is unique in Heidegger's thinking. I do that by taking his claims to overcome transcendental philosophy seriously. Heidegger makes this very clear in the *Beiträge*.<sup>15</sup> An attempt to translate Heidegger into plain English does not imply showing the similarities between his philosophical program and those of his predecessors such as Kant. I am not going to argue that Heidegger is doing transcendental philosophy despite his own pronouncements to the contrary. What follows is not just an explication or recapitulation of Heidegger's text or an analysis of a few terms in this text. What follows is an interpretation that synthesizes some of the crucial statements of Heidegger in this text into a coherent whole and seeks thereby to show what Heidegger's notion of inceptual thinking amounts to, how it is different from other accounts of thought and how that difference has significant implications for epistemology in the light of our discussion of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*.

We have seen that the being of beings in the 1920s, for instance, in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, is understood as a horizon within which we encounter beings. According to Heidegger, Kant shows us that the subject can know an object, only if it is open to the object. We can also understand this opening up as the familiarity with the very being of object. That is to say, to be open to the object is to be familiar with the being of the object. Transcendental imagination has to be clearly distinguished from the

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<sup>15</sup> See CP: 123; B: 176; CP: 179; B: 254

psychological capacity of the subject to imagine things and the two are not on the same level. The opening up of the subject to the object is a creative act at the transcendental level on the part of the transcendental imagination. Ontological knowledge reveals how the subject and the object emerge within a specific space of familiarity which is created by the transcendental power of the imagination through schematizing the temporal determinations of the categories. So ultimately speaking, the familiarity with the being of being amounts to the knowledge of these categories. The being of beings is thus explicated in terms of these categories. However the status of these categories is still not clear. Heidegger is now left with the unenviable task of explaining the existence of these categories and their mode of being. In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger does not provide us any answers to these questions. The being of beings now has to be understood in terms of a being, namely, the category. And likewise thinking still operates in terms of categories. But this is precisely what Heidegger does not want to do. He wants to understand the being of beings on its own terms. Consequently to think the being of beings is not to think in terms of categories or generalities or ideas or concepts. The thinking of the being of beings is a non-conceptual thinking. Speaking of Kant, Heidegger says:

Nevertheless for him as for the Greeks, thinking (as logos – forms of judgment – categories – reason) gets the upper hand in establishing the perspective for interpreting beings as such... Therefore thinking cannot get to a grounding of Da-sein; i.e., the question of the truth of be-ing is unaskable here. (CP: 179)

In the *Beiträge*, Heidegger makes it absolutely clear that being is no longer understood as just the beingness (*Seiendheit*) of beings but fundamentally as be-ing (*Seyn*). It is this be-ing towards which thinking must direct itself. We thus have a situation in which the

ontological difference between Being (*Sein*) and beings (*Seiende*) gives way to a three-tiered distinction between be-ing (*Seyn*), Being and beings. While in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, it was the transcendental power of imagination that was prior to conceptual thinking and forged the horizon within which knowledge of beings became possible, in the *Beiträge*, Heidegger claims that there is something even prior to the transcendental power of the imagination or the thinking intuition of the being of beings. This is the enthinking (*Erdenken*) of the truth of Be-ing (*Wahrheit des Seyns*), what he calls inceptual thinking (*anfängliches Denken*).<sup>16</sup> As we have already hinted, Heidegger, in the *Beiträge* gives up on the transcendental framework in which he was hesitantly operating in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. In the transcendental framework one still ends up explicating the being of beings in terms of a being, namely, the universal

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<sup>16</sup> There are three terms that Heidegger uses in reference to thinking in the *Beiträge*: *seynsgeschichtliches Denken*, *anfängliches Denken* and *Erdenken der Wesung des Seyns* or *Erdenken des Seyns*. It is important that we are clear about the relationship between the three. These are not three different kinds of thinking but different ways of describing the same phenomenon in broader and narrower ways. The first term is translated into English at be-ing-historical thinking or Beyng-historical thinking. The translation does not however render the sense of the original German. The adjective *seynsgeschichtlich* is based on the noun *Seynsgeschichte*, the history of be-ing. So a better way of making the history of being an adjective of thinking is to use phrases such as “thinking from the standpoint of the history of be-ing” or “thinking that focuses on the history of being” or “thinking within the history of be-ing.” The adjective be-ing historical in the translation “be-ing-historical thinking” seems to lose that association to the history of be-ing which is so strong in the original. Heidegger contrasts the thinking with the history of being (*seynsgeschichtliches Denken*) with metaphysical thinking which is what he believes has come to dominate philosophy since the early Greeks. Within this broader conception of a thinking within the history of being (*seynsgeschichtliches Denken*) we have inceptual thinking (*anfängliches Denken*) which is a thinking that makes another beginning breaking with the first beginning made in early Greece. This claim is also defended by Alejandro Vallega in his article “‘Beyng-Historical Thinking’ in Contributions to Philosophy,” in *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. Charles Scott et. al. (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001) 48-65. In this regard see also Richard Polt, *The Emergency of Being: On Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2006) 107-115. Heidegger describes such an inceptual thinking as an enthinking of the truth of be-ing. As Heidegger says: “Das anfängliche Denken ist das Er-denken der Wahrheit des Seyns und so die Ergründung des Grundes.” (GA 65: 56, CP: 40). For another account of inceptual thinking see also Ibid. 115-128. Polt translates *anfängliches Denken* as inceptive thinking.

category even though one is able to better understand the significance and role of categories in the constitution of the being of beings and ultimately the constitution of knowledge. Transcendental philosophy, although it goes very far, is still not successful in explicating being on its own terms. The only alternative we are left with is to give up on the transcendental philosophy which is precisely what Heidegger does in the *Beiträge*.<sup>17</sup> So in the *Beiträge*, we have a considerably more ontologically refined formulation of being where even the faintest traces of transcendentalism are absent.<sup>18</sup> Let us now proceed to an interpretation of the *Beiträge*.

The following interpretation of Heidegger's notion of be-ing (*Seyn*) is one possible way of understanding the relationship between the following eight terminologically dense statements that he makes in regard to be-ing and its relationship to beings. These statements, I believe, constitute the fundamental core of the *Beiträge* and the following interpretation provides a framework within which their relationship can come to fore in clear and distinct way:

1. "Wherever a *being is*, being must essence."<sup>19</sup> (CP, section 2, translation modified)

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<sup>17</sup> See CP, section 132

<sup>18</sup> See CP, section 157

<sup>19</sup> With the neologism *Wesung*, Heidegger plays with the word *Wesen* rendered as essence in English. In doing so he turns the word *Wesen* against itself. The translators of the *Beiträge*, Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly translate *Wesung* as essential swaying and the verb *wesen* and its third person conjugation *west* as essential sway. They justify their translation by the need to preserve the original meaning of the German verb *wesen* as whiling, abiding, swaying which has nothing to do with the Latin *essentia* to which the German noun conventionally refers. (CP : xxiv-xxvii). Elsewhere, in a conversation with Frank Schalow published as "A Conversation with Parvis Emad on the Question of Translation in Heidegger," *Heidegger Studies* 25 (2009): 219-30, Emad provides another non-etymological argument for the translation of terms the *Wesen* and *Wesung*. He argues that the translation does justice to the language of the thinking of be-ing which he distinguishes from the conventional uses of language. He argues that Heidegger himself had to perform an intralingual translation of the

2. It is only when truth essences as enowning that “all beings become beings.” (CP, section 7, translation modified)
3. “Being essences in *truth* and is clearing for self-concealing (das *Sichverbergen*)...The pathways and manners of concealing are *beings*.” (CP, section 9, translation modified)
4. Being essences as enowning.

The essencing is warranted and sheltered in truth.

Truth occurs as the clearing sheltered...

The sheltering of truth lets the true as beings come into the open and into dissemblage.

Thus a being first of all stands in be-ing. (CP, section 10, translation modified)

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conventional German words into the language of the thinking of being. It is this intralingual translation that the translators of the *Beiträge* have tried to render. In doing so he argues against translating *Wesung* as essence which he says ultimately stems from a blindness to the language of the thinking of be-ing. John Sallis, who translates *Wesung* as essence, argues in footnote 10 of his article “Grounders of the Abyss,” in Scott, *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, 181-197 that although the word *Wesen* and the English essence have different connotations they are still conventionally used to refer to the Latin *essentia*. Sallis further argues that Heidegger sets this common word into his own unique and very original discourse that it is well nigh impossible to duplicate the wondrous transformation of this ordinary word in a translation and any such attempt would inevitably lead to obfuscation. Sallis from this concludes that it is best to use the English essence to communicate *Wesung* given that this word was in currency in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. There is no doubt that Heidegger uses *Wesen* in a way that has no parallel in philosophy. He, in fact, uses *Wesen* as a verb. Thus contrary to the common understanding that things simply have an essence, Heidegger uses the term, as we will see, to mean either a granting of an essence or gaining of an essence. In a similar manner, we will see how a thing could have its essence repealed or it can lose its essence. It is this process of gaining and losing essences that Heidegger wishes to communicate using the terms *wesen* and *Wesung* which sense are not really communicated by the English swaying and essential sway. I therefore translate *Wesen* as “to essence” and *Wesung* as “essencing.” In this regard see also David Crownfield, “The Last God,” in Scott, *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, 213-228 especially p. 216 where Crownfield gives another argument for translating *wes* as essences.



5. Truth is never only a clearing, but also essences as concealing, equally originally and intimately along with the clearing. Both clearing and concealing, are not two but rather the essencing of the one, the truth itself. (CP, section 225, translation modified)
6. En-thinking of the truth of be-ing is essentially a projecting-open (*Ent-wurf*)... But the projecting-open comes precisely to the ground and transforms itself first into *necessity* to which it is related from the ground-up – even though prior to this enactment the ground is still hidden... *The* projecting-open of the essencing of be-ing is merely a response to a call. (CP, section 21, translation modified)
7. Be-ing as the ground in which beings first of all and as such come to their truth (sheltering, arranging, objectivity); the ground in which beings sink (abground), the ground in which their indifference and *matter-of-factness* is also presumed (unground). (CP, section 34)
8. “Be-ing” means not only the actuality of the actual, and not only the possibility of the possible – and not at all only the being of a given being... (CP, section 34)

In statements 1, 2 and 3 and 4, Heidegger speaks of beings becoming beings. I interpret a being becoming a being as a being gaining its essence by way of an en-owning (*Ereignis*). This is the event in which be-ing essences as truth or grants essences so that beings come to truth. Statement 5 mentions how truth is not simply a clearing but at the same time a concealing. Clearing and concealing are not contraries but go hand in hand. Statement 6 mentions how be-ing essences through the en-thinking of be-ing. En-thinking of the truth of be-ing is a projecting open. Be-ing would not be able to grant essence without a projecting-open on the part of en-thinking. But this activity is a

response to something. In fact, it is also described as the discovery of a hidden ground that exists prior to en-thinking. It is therefore not a willful act of creation ex-nihilo. Statement 7 tells us that be-ing is the ground in which beings gain their essence (come to their truth) and lose their essence (sink). The last statement talks about how being is not just actuality and not just possibility and simply not to be equated with the just the beingness of beings.

Firstly, be-ing is not just actuality and not just possibility. Be-ing has to be understood as both actual and possible and one way of doing this is to conceive of be-ing as a concrete possibility, a possibility that is not merely possible like a logical possibility but at same time is also not something just actual like some individual thing. The only way to do this is to claim that being is a concrete possibility. It is a possibility that does not float free of all actuality like a logical possibility but tied to something actual and concrete – a concrete possibility. Secondly, how do we interpret Heidegger's statement that beings become beings when be-ing grants essences? One interpretation suggests itself which runs as follows: Only when concrete possibilities for interpreting beings as beings become available can beings become beings and gain their essence. Thirdly, clearing always goes hand in hand with concealing. I interpret this to mean that when certain possibilities are actualized they always come at the expense of other possibilities. The availability of certain possibilities (clearing) always goes hand in hand with the closing off of certain other possibilities (concealing). One can say that the resistance that beings offer us is due to fact that only certain concrete possibilities of interpreting them are available to us which means that many other possibilities for interpretation are closed to us. It is these concrete possibilities of handling beings that makes up the essence of

that being. The availability of concrete possibilities means at the same time the closure of many other possibilities. Thirdly, en-thinking of the truth of be-ing is described as a projecting open, a discovering of a hidden ground and a response to a call. I interpret projecting-open as the actualization of concrete possibilities, discovering of a hidden ground as the acknowledgement of the existence of concrete possibilities for interpretation and response to a call as testimony of the fact that en-thinking is not an arbitrary random creation ex-nihilo but an actualization of possibilities that are concretely available.

There may be several other ways of interpreting these eight crucial statements but Heidegger's allegorical use of the example of a jug seems to support this interpretation rather nicely. In an empty jug, the emptiness is shaped in a specific way so that when the emptiness is filled, what fills the emptiness has to take a specific shape. The jug cannot be filled in any way. It has to be filled in a specific way commensurate with the way in which the walls of the jug are shaped so that the water or any other liquid has to take that specific shape. In the same way the possibilities that are opened up are not empty, abstract or eternally available possibilities. They are only available with this event of the opening up. This should explain what is meant by finite and concrete possibilities as distinguished from abstract and eternal ones. To speak with Heidegger:

But the open, which hides itself and in which beings – and indeed not only as the nearest handy things – always stand, is in fact something like a *hollow medium*, e.g., of a jug. But here we recognize that it is not a random emptiness that is merely enclosed by the walls and left unfilled by “things,” but the other way around: the hollow medium is the determining framing that sustains the walling of the walls and their edges. These are merely the efflux of that originary open which lets its openness hold sway by calling forth such a walling (the form of the container) around and unto itself. In this way the essential sway of the open radiates back into the enclosure. (CP: 237)

What we have are not abstract, eternal possibilities, which could be realized at any or all times given the right conditions. And therefore, for Heidegger, one cannot explain these possibilities by specifying the universally valid conditions for the existence of those possibilities. Hence the uniqueness of these possibilities and manner of their opening cannot be understood or expressed in terms of universal categories. “Every kind of arranging, canceling, and mixing of ‘categories’ fails here, because categories speak *from* a being *unto* a being and never name or know be-ing itself.” (CP: 197) Be-ing - the opening up of a unique space of concrete possibilities - is the inception of history. History begins when beings are posited for the very first time from within this opening. Without such an opening of concrete possibilities, no beings (actualities) can come to be. Wherever there are beings, it is so because they have been actively constituted as beings by actualizing the concrete possibilities that were made available with the opening.<sup>20</sup> What Heidegger calls the projecting-open, I interpret as the actualization of the concrete possibilities of interpretation. As we mentioned earlier transcendental philosophy has to ultimately cash the conditions for the possibility of objects in terms of categories. But here we have an attempt to understand be-ing on its own terms as the finite concrete possibilities for the interpretation of beings as beings. We can also see in this formulation of be-ing, the strongest and the most radical interpretation of a claim he made in *Being and Time*, namely, that possibility is higher than actuality. Beings, in the *Beiträge*, thus become actualizations of pre-existing concrete possibilities. We can thus see that, for Heidegger, beings can be only if they are actively constituted by thinking.

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<sup>20</sup> “Be-ing as the essencing of enowing is thus not an empty and indefinite ocean of determinables into which we, already ‘existing’ [*seind*], leap from somewhere; but rather the leap lets the t/here [*Da*] – belonging to and enowned by the call – first emerge as the site for the moment for a ‘somewhere’ and a ‘when.’” (CP: 167)

This active thinking that constitutes beings is for Heidegger inceptual thinking and is prior to everything that the history of philosophy has designated as thinking (conceptual thinking).

Secondly, in the 1920s, Dasein is the fundamental ontological determination of the human being as opposed to a biological, anthropological or psychological determination of the human being.<sup>21</sup> In fact it would not be too far-fetched to see Da-sein as a transcendental determination of the human being if we adopt the Kantian framework in the very specific way that Heidegger does in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. It is still the one who makes the clearing or, in other words, constitutes the horizon within which beings are encountered. If this horizon is just another characterization of the being of beings and if Dasein is the human being characterized ontologically, then the being of beings must ultimately be dependent upon the human subject and is uncomfortably close to a kind of subjectivism albeit of the transcendental kind.<sup>22</sup> As Heidegger himself acknowledges:

“In Being and Time Da-sein still stands in the shadow of the “anthropological,” the “subjectivistic,” and the “individualist,” etc. – and the opposite of all this is what we have in view.” (CP: 208)

So while Da-sein characterizes the human being in the 1920s as the possessor of the knowledge of the being of beings in the *Beiträge*, humanness of the human being is no longer taken to be something fixed and determinate. Da-sein is now the place-holder for the drastic transformations in the humanness of the human being:

“...Da-sein and man are essentially related, insofar as Da-sein means the ground of the future humanness.” (CP: 209)

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<sup>21</sup> See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 46; KPM: 154, 156,

<sup>22</sup> See KPM: 155

So it is only within the opening of these concrete possibilities that the human being comes to be.<sup>23</sup> Human beings are thus not prior and they thus do not constitute these concrete possibilities, they are also constituted in this opening. This is what he means when he says:

...the enactment of projecting-open the truth of be-ing in the sense of shifting into the open, [is] such that the thrower of the projecting-open experiences itself as thrown – i.e. as en-owned by be-ing. The enopening in and through projecting-open is such only when it occurs as the experience of thrownness and thus of belongingness to being. That is the essential difference from every merely *transcendental* way of knowing with regard to the conditions of possibility. (CP: 169)

The constituting or the configuring of these possibilities is characterized by Heidegger as be-ing. So in the *Beitrage* we have a reformulation of the relationship between Dasein and be-ing which will be explained in detail below.

So let us now recount what we have said albeit a bit differently. For Heidegger beings come to be because they are interpreted as beings by an act of thinking. This would not be possible without some pre-existing possibilities for interpretation. This act of thinking is not a physical process of creation in the sense of a causing to be but a hermeneutic process of interpreting something as something. Thinking does not create beings out of nothing. These possibilities, as we have stressed, are not empty, abstract, free-floating possibilities with no material basis. Quite to the contrary, we have concrete possibilities that have to be opened up and localized at a site.<sup>24</sup> Such an opening-up of

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<sup>23</sup> “Enowning is only seemingly enacted by man; in truth humanness occurs as historical in and through en-ownment that fosters Da-sein in this way or that.” (CP, section 120)

<sup>24</sup> For Heidegger, be-ing (*Seyn*) is not only, or even primarily, an opening, but rather a “hesitant” self-concealing. As Heidegger says: “Truth [as the essencing of be-ing] is clearing for the self-concealing (that is, enowning; hesitant refusal as fullness, fruit and gifting). But truth [is] not simply clearing but rather the very clearing for self-concealing.” (CP: 242; B: 346, translation modified) One can also understand this as follows: History is not to be understood as a progressive opening of greater and greater possibilities of interpretation and

concrete possibilities is what is called be-ing (*Sein*) and with this opening-up we have the inception of history. The inception of history calls for inceptual thinking. What we can see here is a fruition of Heidegger's efforts in the Kant-book to discover a kind of thinking that is prior to all conceptual thinking. This is because the transcendental power of the imagination, although is the active thinking of the being of beings, is still able to think the being of beings only in terms of categories, whereas inceptual thinking, as we will see is truly a non-conceptual thinking of be-ing in its uniqueness. This will form the substance of the rest of our discussion.

### 3.2. The Characteristics of Inceptual Thinking

It should be clear to us by now that this inceptual thinking has simply nothing in common with what we traditionally conceive as thinking. Heidegger gives us the two basic principles of inceptual thinking: "Everything pertaining to essence is essencing. All essencing is determined by what is essential in the sense of the originary and unique." (CP: 46; B: 66, translation modified) These two principles signal a radical transformation in the very manner of comprehending thought and its relationship to its objects. Let me explain what they mean. Whether it is empiricism, rationalism or transcendental idealism, the essence of an object has always been taken to be something essentially stable and constant and thinking consists in grasping the essence of objects. However in light of Heidegger's two principles, thinking is no longer just a grasping of

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thus greater and greater freedom in our dealing with beings. Whenever there is a certain opening up of some possibilities there is at the same time also a closing of some other possibilities. So opening and concealing go hand in hand and are not contraries of each other.

the stable inner structure or the inner order of the object. No, for Heidegger such a postulation of an essence independent of the one who knows or thinks those essences would be simply unfounded. If all such claims about readymade essences or inner structures that stabilize beings or objects are unwarranted, then one must be prepared to acknowledge that there is a radical instability at the very heart of beings. It is this instability that Heidegger acknowledges when he claims that there are no stable essences but only essencings, that is to say, things gaining their essences and losing their essences.<sup>25</sup> This is what inceptual thinking is able to think. It is able to think this radical instability at the core of all beings which is the essencing of Be-ing.<sup>26</sup> So there are no readymade beings, but beings can become beings only through the bestowal of essences, which happens in an originary and unique event – the beginning of history. The first beginning was made by the Greeks although they themselves were unaware of the momentous nature of this event. With Plato and Aristotle, the essence of being is fixed as presence (*Anwesenheit*). Heidegger argues that this first beginning, which has been sustained for so long by Platonism, is now coming to an end and that we are in a

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<sup>25</sup> Heidegger gives us an illustration of the loss of essence of beings in the phenomenon of the abandonment of being which will be explained in detail in the forthcoming discussion. For, Heidegger's illustrations of beings gaining an essence see CP: 175 where Heidegger talks about how what is a being can be determined as a being or to put in plainer words can gain an essence only within the essencing of the truth. See also CP: 207 where Heidegger talks of plants, animals and other such object becoming beings or again gaining an essence. See also CP: 20 where Heidegger talks of the restoring of beings through be-ing which gain can be clarified in terms of terms of beings gaining their essence as it is clear that he is not talking about any physical process of restoration like restoration of a painting or a film.

<sup>26</sup> See in this regard Pol Vandavelde, *Heidegger and the Romantics: The Literary Invention of Meaning*, (London: Routledge, 2011, forthcoming). I here wholeheartedly agree with Vandavelde's thesis of Heidegger's fluid ontology in the 30s and I am grateful to him for reading some of the major portions of the *Beiträge* with me and letting me read some of his unpublished work. My exposition on Heidegger's notion of thinking follows from and expands upon his thesis.



transition towards another beginning wherein the essences of beings will have to be fixed in another way by inceptual thinking.

Inceptual thinking is not a product of a capricious willing and it cannot occur in a vacuum. It is always attuned and can occur only within a grounding attunement as I explain in what immediately follows. Only by attuning oneself to the grounding attunement can one begin to think inceptually. For Heidegger, the foundational attunement within which the first beginning happened was wonder (*Erstaunen*) at the very existence of beings and the foundational attunement within which the second beginning will happen is terror (*Erschrecken*).<sup>27</sup> While Heidegger had already shown how understanding is always already in a mood in *Sein und Zeit*, in the *Beiträge* we are no longer talking of a mood but of a fundamental mood. As Heidegger says:

All essential thinking requires that its thoughts and sentences be mined, like ore, every time anew out of a grounding attunement. If the grounding attunement stays away then everything is a forced rattling of concepts and empty words. (CP: 15-16)

This grounding attunement cannot be designated by a single name. Heidegger characterizes it as “terror, reservedness, deep awe, intimating, deep foreboding.” (CP: 16, translation modified) For Heidegger, this only “confirms its richness and strangeness.” (Ibid) The grounding attunement “is fundamentally an unintended happening [*Zu-fall*].” (Ibid.) That is, it is not something that can be invoked at will. One can however prepare for it by recognizing that Be-ing refuses itself in beings and has abandoned them and thereby renouncing beings in order to think the unfolding of Be-ing.

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<sup>27</sup> Although the translators of the *Beiträge* translate *Erschrecken* as startled dismay, the German word *Erschrecken* conveys a stronger sense of terror or intense anxiety or even horror. I therefore follow Vandeveld, *Heidegger and the Romantics* and render *Erschrecken* as terror throughout to be faithful to this stronger sense of the word. See also Jason Powell, *Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy* (London, New York: Continuum, 2007) 69 who translates it as horror.

But what this abandonment is and how Be-ing can refuse itself, that we will see in the course of the ensuing discussion.

Inceptual thinking is not a “representation of something.” (CP: 44) Heidegger explains that representational thinking already presupposes a prior understanding of how things are, namely, that a distinction can be drawn between universals and particulars. Particulars can thus be represented only by categorizing them under universals. This creative distinction between universals and particulars was first made by Plato and Aristotle, although we have forgotten this creative, inceptual aspect of their thought.<sup>28</sup> Inceptual thinking is not systematic. It lies outside the bounds of any system although it can give rise to systematic thinking. Just because it lies outside the bounds of any system, it is not “‘chaotic’ and disordered.” (CP: 45) This inceptual thinking, Heidegger assures us, “has a rigor of another kind.” (Ibid.) As opposed to systematic thinking which is based on “the correctness of derivation and of fitting into an established and calculable

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<sup>28</sup> In this regard see Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, 90-98 who gives a very fine account of Heidegger’s critique of representational thinking. Polt argues that Hegel’s account of thinking does escape the traditional accounts of thinking as representation and sees Heidegger and Hegel as remarkably close in their accounts of thinking because both seek to overcome the duality of the thinking and being that the traditional accounts of thinking as representation leave us with. Polt suggests that the difference between the two lies in the fact that for Heidegger finitude is irreducible and in Hegel radical finitude is absent as all finitude has to be subsumed into the infinite. Another way of saying this would be that for Hegel being and thinking are subsumed in a unity which is the dialectical movement of the absolute idea. Such a move for Heidegger would still exude the strong stench of Platonism precisely because this movement is teleological and has a positive foundation in the absolute idea. But for Heidegger there is no such purely positive foundation because the ground has the nature of an abyss or the sheer absence of a ground (*Abgrund*) (CP: 264 B: 379). The first beginning and the other beginning are no longer founded on anything just positive and absolute. Be-ing (*Sein*) is not an absolute idea. That is to say, if Hegel escapes the clutches of traditional epistemology by showing the radical dynamism in the very character of knowledge, he has still not, according to Heidegger, escaped the clutches of traditional metaphysics stemming from Platonism because this dynamism is still an apparent dynamism as all the contradictions in knowledge can be reconciled in the absolute idea. As I also note above for Heidegger the inceptual thinking of be-ing cannot be systematic whereas thinking for Hegel is ultimately systematic.

order” (CP: 46), inceptual thinking has to establish an arrangement (*Fügung*) in the first place. So while systematic thinking has to passively represent what is given with certainty, inceptual thinking has to actively join together an arrangement. This joining together is not an arbitrary or willful human act. It is, on the contrary, necessitated by the call of Be-ing itself. The rigor of inceptual thinking lies in hearing this call and being sensitive to the necessity of responding to it. Rigor in thinking has always been measured by the extent to which thinking is able to recognize the constraints imposed upon it by beings. To be rigorous is to be able to account for the way things are so that our thoughts correspond to the way things really are. Scientific thinking, for example, is said to be rigorous because it strives to account for the way things are. By contrast, inceptual thinking is not sensitive to beings. Therefore, it would be a false measure of its rigor to ascertain the extent to which it is able to account for the nature of beings and the way they are. The constraints on inceptual thinking, Heidegger argues, come from be-ing, not beings. Because it is sensitive to the way be-ing unfolds, inceptual thinking is constrained by the “creative impetus” that it receives from the concrete possibilities for determining beings that suddenly become available to it and on the basis of which it may then come up with ways to grasp beings as so and so. This “creative impetus” is experienced as an urgency or a distress (*Not*). Far from being a willful *ad hoc* act that can be done as and when one pleases, the “creative impetus” of inceptual thinking is necessitated. It is this necessity that is experienced as an urgency or distress (*Not*). While beings manifest themselves as presence by being present, be-ing (*Seyn*) for Heidegger manifests itself only as an urgency or a distress (*Not*). This helps to account for the difference in the way we have to understand rigor in the case of ordinary conceptual

thinking and the non-ordinary inceptual thinking. But what does it mean to experience distress?

### 3.3. Inceptual Thinking and the History of Be-ing

Heidegger tells us that inceptual thinking is a non-representative, unsystematic but rigorous thinking. Only such a type of thinking can be foundational in the historical sense in that it founds a history. The first foundation of history was the first beginning and now, Heidegger says, we are moving towards another beginning and another founding of history. Founding history and thereby ushering into inceptual thinking means establishing another beginning. But this can only happen if we can realize that there was a first beginning and that this beginning is coming to an end. It is precisely this end of the first beginning that is experienced as a distress (*Not*) because of a drastic shrinking of the possibilities for interpreting beings. Only two possible ways of interpreting beings remain: as fully manipulable objects of use or as objects of entertainment and nothing more. We can say that beings have lost their essence or that their essence has undergone severe curtailment. This is the distress of the abandonment of beings by Be-ing (*Seinverlassenheit*). In an apparently paradoxical move Heidegger argues that this distress is experienced as a complete lack of distress. (CP, section 50, 60, 65) In order to dissolve the apparent paradox we have, first, to explain what Heidegger means by the abandonment of being.

We have seen that beings owe their existence as this or that particular being to an event of opening and what is opened up is a set of unique concrete possibilities. This

means that this set of concrete possibilities determines the essence of things, so that if another set of completely different possibilities had opened up for us instead of the ones we currently have, we would have had beings with a completely different essence. Beings are such and such because they have been granted their essences in a unique event in which Be-ing holds essential sway. Heidegger seems to clearly suggest something like this when in relation to the few who make the kind of decisions involved in inceptual thinking, he speaks of a recasting of beings:

Those many who are interrelated by their common historical (earth and world-bound) origins, through whom and for whom the recasting of beings [*Umschaffung des Seienden*] and with that the grounding of the truth of enowing achieves durability. (CP, section 45)

How else do we understand Heidegger's term "recasting of beings" than as the gaining of another essence?<sup>29</sup>

There is thus no fixity, no rigidity, nothing eternal about beings. At the heart of beings there, thus, lies the uniqueness of having been creatively wrested out of a unique configuration of concrete possibilities, namely, be-ing. But as history moves on, this uniqueness that lies at the heart of beings gives way to a familiarity and ordinariness. The link between beings and Be-ing is thus broken. This abandonment of beings by be-ing is in a way inevitable and belongs to the history of be-ing. It happens because in the course of history we are able to engage fruitfully with beings and use them and explain their nature and behavior in a convincing way without having to take notice to this

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<sup>29</sup> See also CP, section 44 where Heidegger again seems to speak of these drastic transformations in the essence of beings whereby man is no longer a "subject" but a founder of Da-sein, where the essence of being is no longer what is more general or common to them but is now determined by the uniqueness of be-ing, where the work of art is not an object of stimulation but a setting of truth to work. It is hard to defend the claim that all Heidegger is doing here is describing a shift in our attitude or feeling or emotion towards things that are essentially the same. I think what Heidegger is describing are the serious ontological implications of what we may call our emotions or attitudes or feelings towards things.

creative moment of the inception of history when they were first interpreted in that manner. The creativity that underlies any act of interpreting beings as beings no longer plays any role in understanding the being of beings. Beings are understood as if they have been there for ever and their manner of being comes to be seen as utterly natural. And the same happens to human beings who are taken to be one being among others. For example, with the arrival of Christianity all beings are understood as created, i.e., as caused, with the exception of God who is an uncaused being and the cause of all other beings. What Vandavelde calls the fluidity that lies at the heart of beings is now forgotten and along with it the creative effort that was needed to interpret beings as beings.<sup>30</sup> One comes to believe that beings as *ens creatum* have a fixed essence. They are determined as what has been caused. And even later, when God is no longer seen as their cause, beings still continue to be described within the framework of cause and effect. The link between beings and be-ing is completely broken as beings come to be understood solely in terms of beings and not in their relationship to be-ing. The beingness of beings consequently comes to be understood in terms of those characteristics which apply to all beings and thus are most common and general. Being itself as the being of beings is now understood as the most general or the most universal determination of beings. (CP: 77) According to Heidegger, this is what representation focuses on and thus, by grasping this most common characteristic, representation usurps thinking. Beings thus come to be interpreted as what is representable to the extent that only what is representable is taken to exist. Representability thus becomes the sole

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<sup>30</sup> Although Heidegger does say the abandonment of being becomes the strongest for the first time in Christianity (CP: 77) the abandonment of being can be really said to set in with the Greeks who were the first one to forget this fluidity of beings with, for example, Plato's account of be-ing as the idea (CP: 80-81)

criterion – the most dominant interpretation of what it means to be. This is precisely what Heidegger characterizes as *machination*, which amounts to a reduction of beings to what is “accessible to intention and calculation” (CP: 76) and what is “advanceable through production and execution.” (Ibid.) The reduction of beings to representation also goes hand in hand with the dominance of lived experience as the only real way of experiencing beings. “... ‘lived experience’ means making what is mysterious, i.e., what is stimulating, provocative, stunning and enchanting... public and accessible to everyone.” (CP: 77) Thus, with *machination* and lived experience we see that what is essential to being, this uniqueness of the event of its coming to be, of its being posited as a being, namely, *be-ing*, is completely covered over and no longer governs our understanding of being. This is what Heidegger means when he says:

Abandonment of *be-ing* is basically a *dis-swaying* [Ver-wesung] of *be-ing*. Beings continue to be what is present; and what actually is constantly present and *in this way* conditions everything, is the un-conditioned, the absolute, *ens entium, Deus*, etc. (CP: 81)

Abandonment of beings is thus not to be understood as if *be-ing* were some kind of spirit that having animated beings, has now decided to forsake them.

This severing off of the link between beings and *be-ing*, the abandonment of *be-ing* is thus not an occurrence falling in time of which a historian could give an account in the manner of writing the history of a war or a people. Another relation to time and history is required here. Here we are not concerned with history understood as an uninterrupted sequence of moments or events. “The abandonment of beings is strongest at that place where it is most decidedly hidden.” (CP: 77) This event is inaccessible to conventional historical inquiry simply because there is no way of bringing it into question within the framework of conventional historical inquiry. Conventional history is

concerned with the occurrences in a certain time and a certain place, so that the task is to find what caused their occurrence. For, in all this one has already taken a stance on how to interpret these occurrences. The question of how occurrences came to be interpreted in this manner does not arise. It is taken to have been answered once and for all or it simply is too unworthy of even being posed. This is how the question of be-ing is forgotten. This forgottenness spreads because with the existing frameworks for engaging with beings, it is no longer possible to recognize this forgetfulness. Forgottenness thus takes hold because it itself is concealed from us just as the familiarity of beings conceals the abandonment of beings by be-ing.

With the abandonment of being in machination and lived experience, a single interpretation of beings as objects of technological manipulation and widespread and immediate accessibility becomes dominant. The possibility of encountering beings in other very different ways is no longer available. This complete exhaustion of possibilities for interpreting beings differently is what Heidegger characterizes as the abandonment of beings by be-ing. In this situation where the interpretation of beings as objects of machination and lived experience exercise a tyrannical hold over us, be-ing can be experienced only as abandonment. That is to say we have an inkling of these other possibilities for interpreting beings only as an experience of the complete lack of such possibilities. But when we experience distress in this way, for Heidegger, we feel the need for new possibilities of interpreting beings. We are then really in a position to recognize the availability of concrete possibilities for interpretation as they become available. Distress in this case is not really distress in the negative sense in which we always use it. But when we do not experience distress we never feel the need for such



new possibilities for interpretation. It is only then that the properly negative sense of distress comes to the fore. That is why Heidegger can say that the ultimate distress is experienced precisely as the loss of our capacity to experience the distress. Distress is thus properly speaking experienced as a lack of distress. This complete lack of distress once experienced points to the abandonment of be-ing. And this is how be-ing reveals itself as abandonment: as the kind of distress that “denies itself as distress.” (CP: 83)

We can thus see why he characterizes this lack of distress as an echo of be-ing. Here we have the faintest hint of Be-ing as it manifests itself through its absence. Only inceptual thinking can be sensitive to this utter lack of possibilities, namely, to the abandonment of being, to be-ing as something that has abandoned us.

What we have seen so far is how with the experience of the abandonment of beings by be-ing, we get a glimpse of the sheer contingency that underlies the current modes in which beings appear to us as objects of machination and lived experience. What Heidegger characterizes as listening to the echo of be-ing can thus be understood as a reflection upon this contingency.<sup>31</sup> As a result, what appears to be the most natural way of understanding and relating to beings no longer seems natural and ceases to have a hold over us. This may lead us into realizing that our current ways of understanding beings are the result of a very unique act of interpretation of beings that was undertaken by the Greeks and which gave rise to the whole history of the West, culminating in the machination and the lived experience of today. Once we realize that the whole history of western philosophy originated in this first beginning, we will also realize, argues Heidegger, that this beginning has come to an end with now the necessity of another

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<sup>31</sup> For a detailed interpretation of the echo of be-ing, see Parvis Emad, “The Echo of Being in *Beiträge zur Philosophie – Der Anklang*: Directives for its Interpretation,” *Heidegger Studies* 7 (1991):15-36

beginning of history. In fact, we can think of the whole of western philosophy as the unfolding of a unique event only when we have established a certain distance from it by crossing over to the other beginning. To think the first beginning is at the same time to establish a critical distance from it and break from it. To speak with Heidegger:

Returning into the first beginning is rather and precisely distancing from it, is taking up that distant-positioning which is necessary in order to experience what began in and as that beginning. For without this distant-positioning – and only the positioning in the other beginning is a sufficient one – we always stay insidiously too close to that beginning, insofar as we are still covered over and pinned down by what issues from the beginning. (CP: 130)

To engage with the whole of western history as a culmination of what began as a unique event with the Greeks is to acquire the sense that another equally unique set of concrete possibilities may open up resulting in a radical break with the whole history of philosophy as we currently know it. Heidegger claims that the realization that history is in fact what issued from a first beginning leads to the realization that another beginning is near in the sense of being possible. This realization of the necessity of another beginning thus occurs out of a “historically mindful deliberation” (CP: 119) upon the uniqueness of the first beginning from which the whole of western history as metaphysics unfolds. It is only when we think of how this first beginning plays itself out into the whole of western history that we can break away from the first beginning towards another beginning. We sense the necessity of another beginning from out of an engagement with the originary nature of the first beginning. To engage with the originary nature of the first beginning is to see the whole of history playing forth from out of a unique original event. For Heidegger it is possible to obtain an insight into this playing forth only by entering into a dialogue with the thinkers of the first beginning. Through such a dialogue one tries to move away from the question that guides the history of the first beginning, namely, the

question of being to the question that grounds history, namely, the question of being. What exactly does Heidegger mean by this?

According to our interpretation of Heidegger so far, we have seen how, for Heidegger, beings have been the starting point of every inquiry into being. Even transcendental philosophy, as we saw, could not adequately address the question of being. So to attempt to ask how beings came to be so, how beings came to acquire their essence is always seen as an attempt to inquire into the causal origin of being, which origin is also another being. But according to what we have seen so far Heidegger provides us with another understanding of how beings become beings or acquire their essence as it were. They become beings in a concrete act of interpretation. This concrete act of interpretation is the work of inceptual thinking which actualizes the concrete possibilities for interpretation that become available at a certain time and place. These possibilities, as we have seen are unique. The current way we understand beings, encounter beings and deal with beings is rooted in an original interpretation of beings that the Greeks undertook for the very first time. It is only when we realize this unique beginning with the Greeks, which is the first beginning that we can ask whether another beginning in which a completely different interpretation resulting in a completely different way of encountering beings is at all possible. It is only in this way that a negation of the first beginning in favor of another beginning would occur. To speak with Heidegger:

Of course, such a negating is not satisfied with a leaping-off that simply leaves [the first beginning] behind. Rather, the negating unfolds by laying open the first beginning and its inceptual history and by putting what is opened up back into the possession of the beginning, where it laid back, even now and in the future still towers over everything that once took place in its course and became an object of historical [*historisch*]

reckoning. Such an erecting of the towering of the first beginning is the sense of “destruction” in the crossing to the other beginning. (CP, section 90)

“Erecting of the towering of the first beginning,” which I interpret as the discovering of the uniqueness of first beginning in comparison with everything else, is at the same time an acknowledgement of the existence of another beginning and thus a crossing over into the other beginning. Heidegger sees his own lectures on Leibniz, Kant, Schelling, Hegel and Nietzsche as doing precisely this. Each of these thinkers, as a precursor of Heidegger, was ultimately pursuing the question of being. But for Heidegger their inquiries however penetrating do not go far enough in posing the question of be-ing in all its radicality and they all remain part of the history of the first beginning. Heidegger argues that that by engaging very closely with the question posed by each thinker in his lectures he attempted to show that these thinkers in their own way and despite the originality of their questioning were still following a decision that was taken at the very beginning of western history to understand beings in terms of presence and take beings, in every case, as the unquestioned starting point for all inquiry. Their thinking was still dependent on the first beginning, which unfolds as the history of metaphysics. For Heidegger engaging with history at this ontological level is not a mere conceptual engagement at the level of doctrine, cause and effect. No, such an engagement calls for a creative, or what Heidegger specifies as inceptual thinking which only a few can accomplish. Heidegger calls them “ones to come”. (CP, section 45)

[The history of the first beginning] is the history of metaphysics. It is not the individual attempts at metaphysics as doctrines that tell us anything now at the end of metaphysics but rather “only” the history of metaphysics. However, this “only” is not a delimitation but the demand for something more originary. (Still less should we misconstrue the individual instances of “metaphysics” as mere games meant for being

transcended.) Rather, now at the end metaphysics must be taken seriously in a way that essentially surpasses any inheriting and handing over of particular doctrines and any renewal of standpoints and any mixing and adjusting of many such doctrines. (CP: 123)

If one were to grasp the other beginning from the standpoint of the history of ideas or concepts as opposed to the history of be-ing, one would have to characterize it as being in an opposition to the first beginning. In that case we would be left with only one of the following two alternatives: 1. to understand the other beginning in terms of a counter-movement to the first beginning or a rejection of the first beginning 2. to understand the other beginning as a dialectic sublation of the first beginning. None of these ways of thinking can really make sense of the necessity of the other beginning because through them we cannot come to terms with the radical break that the other beginning constitutes. A counter-movement to or a rejection of or an opposition to the first beginning would remain conceptually dependent upon the first beginning for its meaning and so could not be deemed as another beginning but only as modification of the first beginning. This is precisely what Heidegger means when he says:

Not a *counter-movement*, because all counter-movements and counter-forces are to a large degree co-determined by *what* they are “against,” even though in the form of reversing what they are against. And therefore a *counter-movement* never suffices for an *essential* transformation of history...

The other beginning is not counter-directed to the first. Rather, *as the other* it stands outside the counter [*gegen*] and outside immediate comparability.

Thus setting [the beginnings] into perspective also does not mean opposition, neither in the sense of crude rejection nor in the manner of sublating [*Aufhebung*] the first in the other. (CP: 130-31)

For Heidegger, only inceptual thinking which is sensitive to how history plays-forth from out of a first beginning as the history of metaphysics can make sense of the necessity of the other beginning. From the standpoint of the history of ideas, we can understand

history only as a dialectical movement from one idea to another. In principle such a history is continuous. Such a history has in principle only one beginning. But in the history of be-ing we see more than one beginning. The transition from the first to the other beginning is a crossing from an experience of the truth of beings to experiencing the truth of be-ing. (CP, section 91) It is not far-fetched to say that such crossing over has the nature of a radical break. But only with the realization of the uniqueness of the first beginning and its end in machination and lived experience can one really be lead to conceive of a radical break with the first beginning leading to an equally unique other beginning.

In order to make this break with the first beginning, inceptual thinking has to make a leap. Inceptual thinking is thus not a simple transition from one period of history to another or a simple culmination of some series of events. The leap is a move from the history of the first beginning to another beginning, but such that it is necessitated by the end of the first beginning. It is thus not a resolution of that beginning, but a radical break from it. Inceptual thinking is thus not dialectical. The leap is thus a recognition that a different concrete possibility or possibilities have become available, acting upon which would result in forging a completely different engagement with beings and bestow upon them a new essence. "It is not as if man enters a "period" that has not yet been, but it is rather that man enters a totally different domain of history." (CP: 161) This requires that we forgo entirely the previous ways of engaging with beings. However, for Heidegger, this can be accomplished only by a few human beings in whom the leap manifests itself in art, thinking, poeticizing and action.

### 3.4. Thinking of the Event and the Event of Thinking

The leap can thus result in a radical transformation of the essence of beings and that includes the human being. Heidegger plays with the German word for event, *Ereignis* to suggest the radical nature of this transformation. Events are generally understood as causing some change in the existing state of affairs. The event of an explosion or an earthquake, for instance, can cause a violent change in the existing state of affairs. But by stressing the *eigenen* of *Ereignis* and sometimes hyphenating *Ereignis* as *Er-eignis*, Heidegger suggests that we are transformed in such a radical way as to have a completely different essence, something which cannot be represented by the word “event.” By rendering the noun “event” as a gerund of the verb “to own,” Heidegger brings to light the radical nature of this transformation in which we are en-owned in this event in receiving what is ownmost to us, namely, our essence. This other set of concrete possibilities, that we mentioned earlier, are not a creation or some sort of fabrication on the part of human beings. The opening up of such concrete possibilities is not within the control of human beings at all. All human beings can do is to recognize them and act upon these possibilities to forge an engagement with beings by which all beings including us, human beings, gain their essence. However we must be clear that with the leap, the inceptual thinker is able to acknowledge the existence of these completely other concrete possibilities as well the necessity of submitting to them. If this opening up of concrete possibilities is characterized by Heidegger as be-ing, no wonder then that Heidegger insists on characterizing our recognizing these possibilities as an en-owning whereby we

become part of this unfolding of be-ing. This should help us understand what he says in the following passage:

[The leap] is projecting-open the essential sway of be-ing to the utmost such that we place ourselves into what is thus opened up, become inhabiting, and through enownment first become ourselves... There is always beforehand, a projecting-open. And the question is only whether or not, as thrower, the one who projects-open itself leaps into the enopening trajectory of the throw... (CP: 163)

The leap thus requires one to completely give up all the familiar ways of relating to beings and to prepare for a completely different way of relating to them by raising again the question of those concrete possibilities that are necessary for interpreting beings as beings in the first place. As Heidegger puts it:

But this very leap needs the most extended preparation, and this includes the *complete disengagement* from being as beingness and as the “most general” determination. (CP: 196)

This space of specific concrete possibilities from out of which beings can take shape as beings is designated by Heidegger as the truth of be-ing. Truth of be-ing is not the truth of a proposition. It is the space in which it becomes possible in the first place to distinguish between truth and falsity. Only if we go beyond the propositional understanding of truth as correctness and ask about the truth of be-ing does it become possible to acknowledge that beings can become beings only when there are concrete possibilities for interpreting beings as beings. The availability of this opportunity, this freedom to interpret beings as beings, encounter them, understand them and handle them in several ways is what is to be understood as the truth of be-ing. Only inceptual thinking is able to make a leap out of the question of being, which is the guiding question of the history of metaphysics, “into the originary and fundamental experience of thinking the truth of be-ing.” (CP: 165)



We have seen how inceptual thinking makes a leap by recognizing another concrete possibility or possibilities on the basis of which a completely different kind of engagement with beings is made possible.<sup>32</sup> This experience of the end of the first beginning opens up the space for a completely different set of possibilities of another beginning “so that the first beginning brings the other beginning into play, so that, according to this mutual playing forth, preparation for the leap grows.” (CP: 7) In making a leap, inceptual thinking is able to recognize that the concrete possibilities that the first beginning offered have been exhausted and to acknowledge the existence of another set of concrete possibilities when they become available that would inaugurate another beginning. However, this in itself is not enough. There is also a need to submit to these possibilities experienced in distress, as we have discussed above, and to actively actualize them into a completely different kind of engagement with beings. The leap thus necessitates what Heidegger calls the grounding of the truth of be-ing. This was what was accomplished in the first beginning with the Greeks who actualized the unique set of concrete possibilities that congealed at the first beginning by interpreting being as presence. It was this interpretation that guides all further engagement with beings throughout the history of the first beginning ending finally with Nietzsche. As Heidegger explains:

...*presence* proves to be *one* specific appropriation of the truth of be-ing, whereby the presentness [*Gegenwärtigkeit*], compared to what has been

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<sup>32</sup> See CP, section 117 where Heidegger says how “everything is transformed” in the other beginning and how “the transformation opens up the space for other necessities of deciding the nearness and remoteness to gods. See CP, section 120, where Heidegger says how enowning, which I interpret as the sudden availability of other concrete possibilities of interpretation cannot be “forced by thinking.” He says how “the open can only be held ready by means of thinking” which I interpret as meaning that we can be ready and in a position to actualize these other concrete possibilities, forging new ways of engaging with beings, when they do become available.

[*Gewesenheit*] and what will be [*Künftigkeit*], receives certain interpreted preference (consolidated in objectness, in objectivity for the subject). (CP: 210)

Heidegger explains that we can understand the grounding in two ways. In the passive sense, the very space of concrete possibilities acts as the ground because it is on only on its basis that any interpretation of beings as beings can be made. In the active sense, as we mentioned earlier, the space of concrete possibilities has to be acted upon by actualizing those concrete possibilities and this is the task of Da-sein. It is Da-sein that grounds these possibilities in the active sense by acting upon these possibilities and actualizing these possibilities into essences.<sup>33</sup> It is in the second sense that grounding can be said to be related to the leap made by inceptual thinking. Da-sein thus becomes the locus for the shift from the first beginning to the other beginning. This requires us to clarify precisely the relationship between inceptual thinking, Da-sein and the human being. For Heidegger inceptual thinking cannot be considered anthropologically as the thinking of a human being. The inceptual thinking can happen only when the human being is no longer thinking as a human being, i.e., when he is no longer engaging in a reflection about human nature and human capacities. Only then can inceptual thinking truly effect the transition towards the other beginning. Heidegger admits that inceptual thinking always starts off as self-reflection (*Besinnung*) but “is, on the other hand, so originary that it above all asks how the self is to be grounded, the self in whose domain “we,” I and you, each come to ourselves.” (CP: 47) Inceptual thinking thinks the very transformation of the essence of the human being from rational creature to Da-sein. So the inceptual thinker as Da-sein occupies the position of a “‘between’ which first grounds

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<sup>33</sup> In this regard see Sallis, *Grounders*, where he compares Da-sein who grounds with Nietzsche’s conception of the ones to come (*die Zukunftigen*).

itself and sets humans and god apart and together.” (CP: 21) What this shows is that Da-sein is not to be understood as a fundamental determination of the human being, something that deepens our understanding of human nature. Quite to the contrary, we now understand the human being as one of the possible determinations of Da-sein. In Heidegger’s novel way of considering the matter, the human being becomes a historical event that began with the history of metaphysics and will come to an end with it. As that in and through which grounding takes place, Da-sein, in turn, cannot be understood as a substance or a thing. So Da-sein cannot be described, as a substance would be, by elucidating its properties. If in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Dasein was what we always were, but failed to recognize, in the *Beiträge*, by contrast, Da-sein is what we are not, but can always become in response to the call of Be-ing. Da-sein, thus, becomes the place of the in-between (*Zwischen*) that we have the capacity to occupy but never do. By characterizing Da-sein, in this manner, Heidegger is attempting to bring to the fore what we may call the potential the human being possesses for radical transformation. This is the kind of transformation that renders him transformed in his very essence. This potentiality is not to be understood teleologically as in the Aristotelian framework. This potentiality does not contain in itself an actuality. Thus, it is not a striving towards an actuality. As we have seen, Da-sein is seen the ground of a future humanness. But what form or shape this future humanness will take is not known in advance. So this future humanness is not an actuality that is already present as a *telos* in a latent way in Dasein. Hence the need to understand Da-sein as an in-between (*Zwischen*). This is echoed by Heidegger in the following passage:

[Da-sein is] not something that could be simply found in extant man but rather the ground of the truth of be-ing made necessary by the fundamental

experience of be-ing as enowing, through which ground (and its grounding) man is transformed from the ground up. (CP: 207)

And here we can see why Da-sein cannot be considered as a determination of the human being. If that were the case, Da-sein would become a capacity or a faculty of the human being. Da-sein, for Heidegger, is an experience and not a representation of an object. It is the experience of the radical transformation. To experience this radical transformation is to think inceptually. Only as an inceptual thinker can one occupy the position of Da-sein and renounce one's nature as a rational animal. To speak with Heidegger:

With the grounding of Da-sein all relationship to a being is transformed, and the truth of be-ing is first experienced. (CP: 226)

From this rather prolonged discussion we are now in a position to see how "inceptual thinking is the originary enactment of the onefold of echo, playing-forth, leap and grounding." (CP: 44)

Because inceptual thinking accomplishes a transition by configuring beings in a completely different way in accordance with a completely different set of possibilities, inceptual thinking has an originary decisiveness to it. The decision of inceptual thinking has nothing to do with choice between two existent alternatives. The decision of inceptual thinking is rather the making of the originary incision within Be-ing by which beings becomes beings and non-beings become non-beings. What do we mean by this? This originary incision within Be-ing is the breaking away from the first beginning towards another beginning. It is possible to accomplish this only by first catching a glimpse of Be-ing in its withdrawal from beings. As we have earlier discussed in the context of the abandonment of beings by be-ing, we are left with two alternatives. In the first alternative, we could simply let things be by allowing this withdrawal to set in; we would lose ourselves among beings, which, having been abandoned by Be-ing, are

nothing but non-beings. In the second alternative, we could become sensitive to be-ing in its withdrawal so that this “withdrawal as refusal becomes the first truth and the other beginning of history.” (CP: 63) By recognizing the unfolding of Be-ing in this withdrawal or abandonment of beings, we recognize the necessity for another beginning and thus decide in favor of it. The decision is thus “one of history or the loss of history” (CP: 66) or “about belongingness to be-ing or abandonment in non-beings.” (CP: 69) Inceptual thinking by deciding in favor of grounding another history therefore makes the space for another way of configuring the distinction between beings and non-beings. This is what Heidegger means when he says:

The decision must create *that time-space*, that site for the essential moments, where the most serious mindfulness, along with the most joyful mission, grows into a will to found and build – a will which is not exempt from chaos. (CP: 68)

Inceptual thinking “is essentially a projecting open (*Entwurf*).” (CP: 39) By engaging in the highest question of the very unfolding of Be-ing, inceptual thinking is able to advance a whole other way of conceiving beings. This questioning is, as we have intimated before, not arbitrary but necessitated by the call of Be-ing – by the distress experienced in the abandonment of beings by Be-ing. Inceptual thinking thus effects a radical transformation of everything including the thinker. This whole other space of possibilities which inceptual thinking projects is what Heidegger calls the sheltering of the truth. It is only when we have such a space of possibilities that other actualities or beings can come to the fore in the fructification of those possibilities and so it is in truth that these beings are sheltered. “Everything true is decided upon and grounded, all beings become beings, and not-being slides into the appearance of be-ing.” (CP: 18)

Inceptual thinking is thus creative in the broadest sense where “creating means every sheltering of truth that is in beings.” (CP: 18)

#### 4. Conclusion

What we have been able to do in the preceding discussion is to chart a course from Heidegger’s novel reconceptualization of Kant’s notion of the transcendental power of the imagination towards his very radical notion of inceptual thinking. We have thus gained a vantage point from which to make some definite assessments on two issues that we promised at the very outset: 1. Heidegger’s own comments concerning the relationship between the Kant-book and the *Beiträge* and 2. The epistemological stakes that are involved in moving from fundamental ontology to this radical new framework that Heidegger entertains in the *Beiträge*.

Regarding the first issue, we can say, on the basis of our explorations in this chapter, that Heidegger’s attempt to reopen the question of being inevitably results in his reopening of the question of what it means to think and, consequently, the question of the relationship between thinking and being, including the way this question has been handled in the history of western philosophy. So we have his tireless efforts to articulate and rearticulate what thinking really is. Although Heidegger never mentions thinking in *Sein und Zeit* he does, as we have seen, take up this question of thinking in the Kant-book and continues doing so in the 1930s with his detranscendentalized notion of inceptual thinking in the *Beiträge*. In this context we can then clarify some of Heidegger’s remarks on how his ideas in the Kant-book relate to those in the *Beiträge*. Let us take up the notes

that Heidegger made in pencil on the title page of his own copy of the first edition of the Kant book. He references these remarks in his preface to the fourth edition of this book. In those notes, after stating how the relationship between beingness, objectness, time and schematism in that book may be susceptible to misinterpretation and bar the way towards a correct understanding of being, Heidegger makes a reference to the fourth part of the Kant book. Immediately below this he makes a reference to the *Beiträge*. What can we make of this? One way to interpret the successive mention of the Kant-book and *Beiträge* would be through the question of thinking. In the Kant-book Heidegger shows us how the transcendental power of imagination is a thinking intuition which forces us to re-examine the very relationship between thinking and being as well as the relationship between thinking and the human being and thereby the very notion of a philosophical anthropology. But even here, thinking is still understood in terms of a temporal schematism of the categories and Dasein is still a fundamental determination of the human being. Dasein could thus be understood as another transcendental determination of the human being. And thinking is still understood within a transcendental framework of categories albeit in a more radical sense of temporal determination of those categories and not as a simple application of the categories onto the things. But in spite of this Heidegger's characterization of thinking and its relationship to being and the human being still stands under the shadow of transcendentalism, which according to him, blocks the way to the correct understanding of being. By contrast, in the *Beiträge*, the concept of inceptual thinking, as I have shown, is shorn of all traces of transcendentalism by the recourse to a radical ontological framework. This leads us to see the Kant-book and the

*Beiträge* as successive efforts towards arriving at an answer to the question of thinking and its relationship to being and the human being.

This is corroborated by Heidegger's remarks on the Kant-book in the *Beiträge*. In section 134, Heidegger explains how his interpretation of Kant meant to rehabilitate Kant's notion of the transcendental imagination in order to show that the knowledge of objects already presupposes a prior awareness of the objectness of objects and this awareness can only be reached by means of the transcendental power of the imagination. Obviously, this may not have been Kant's original intention for writing the book, so that, from a strictly historical point of view, Heidegger's interpretation of Kant is nothing but a misinterpretation. However, when understood in the light of the history of be-ing that Heidegger argues for, this interpretation makes perfect sense. But even then, Heidegger admits, his effort to show the originary relationship between thinking and being does not go far enough and ends up becoming a "modern Kantianism." He says in this regard: But just as surely as Kant's work is "historically" [*historisch*] misconstrued by such interpretation, so too is that which is to be brought nearer – as the other, as the futural – now misinterpreted: It seems to be nothing other than an "existentiell" or some other modernized "Kantianism." (CP: 179) That is to say, Heidegger is not able to salvage his interpretation from the clutches of transcendentalism. This is because, the transcendental framework that Heidegger still uses compels him to understand thinking in terms of categories and this makes it impossible to pose the question of be-ing. Hence the need Heidegger feels and expresses to experiment with a completely different framework such as the one we see in the *Beiträge*.



Let us now turn to the question of the epistemological stakes behind Heidegger's attempts to understand anew, in a more original way, the relationship between thinking and being. Heidegger's attempt in the Kant-book is to show that the steps Kant takes in the *Critique* have implications for the very way we conceive of the relationship between thinking and being far more radical than Kant himself was prepared to admit and the commentators on his work were willing to give him credit for. Heidegger is thereby able to uncover some fundamental relationships between time, being and the human being signaling a significant transformation in philosophical anthropology. His reading of Kant thus raises an imposing challenge to epistemology which has always understood knowledge in terms of an interaction between subject and object whereby the subject can either have clear and distinct ideas of the object or the subject can receive sensible impressions from the object. The human subject thus needs to use his mind to arrive at the clear and distinct ideas of the objects around him or he has to use his senses to receive the impressions from his objects. In either case, he is still a subject with faculties. And in order to understand how knowledge is obtained, one has to depend upon the study of these faculties which are dealt with in such disciplines as psychology and anthropology. Epistemology thus comes to depend upon these disciplines and has to accept a series of dualities: between the subject and the object, between the senses and the understanding (or reason) and finally between thinking and being. However, at the same time epistemology continues to try to understand how the two sides in each case can be related to each other in order to explain the unity of thought and knowledge. The novelty of Heidegger's interpretation of Kant consists in showing that the dualities are all secondary with regard to a primordial unity (or a fundamental root) from which these dualities stem.

According to Heidegger, Kant makes way for conceiving of thinking as not merely logical - the understanding of objects in terms of universal categories - but as something essentially creative. So we have the transcendental power of the imagination as essentially a thinking intuition from which both thinking (understanding) and intuition (sensibility) stem. The transcendental power of the imagination creates a horizon within which we are able to encounter objects as objects and without which no encounter with objects and no logical thinking or knowledge would be at all possible. It is this prior awareness of the objectivity of objects or the being of beings which underlies and buttresses the dualities we have spoken of and which is completely overlooked, according to Heidegger, by epistemology with its reliance on psychology and anthropology. This horizon – this prior awareness of the being of beings - is forged by the temporal schematism of the categories which, as we have seen, Heidegger goes to great lengths to explicate. By doing so Heidegger is able to uncover a novel understanding of time, one that is not merely a succession of moments. It is on the basis of this novel understanding of time that one can account for the subjectivity of the subject, its relationship to being of beings and thereby its propensity to know beings. Thus a metaphysics of Dasein deepens the scope of epistemology as we know it or even replaces it and leads to a comprehensive account of thinking and its relationship to being, something that traditional epistemology is incapable of doing given that it is entangled in some incorrigible dualities.

However, for all its radicality, Heidegger's explorations in the Kant-book are still confined to a transcendental framework. The prior creative awareness of the being of beings that Heidegger wants to uncover is still understood in terms of being, namely,

universal categories. So despite his attempts to show how the categories can be temporally schematized, we are still left with the duality between, on the one hand, the universality and the eternity and thus the infinity of the categories and, on the other, the finitude of Dasein. So long as Heidegger remains within the transcendental framework his account of thought and its relationship to being have to settle for some dualities. This changes in the *Beiträge*, where we see him experimenting with a radically new ontological framework in which he no longer tries to cash out thinking in terms of universal categories, but in terms of the history of be-ing. Experiencing beings in terms of their belongingness to certain universal or general categories is just one epoch in the history of be-ing which is now coming to an end. The temporal schematism of the universal categories in the Kant-book has given place to history, which is be-ing itself as unfolding. Be-ing now can be understood as the opening up of a set of unique concrete possibilities, which inceptual thinking can actualize. It is only with the actualization of these concrete possibilities that beings come to be as such. With an actualization of these unique concrete possibilities we have the inception of history. It is thus only with the inception of history in such a manner that we can have conceptual knowledge of beings as we understand it in traditional epistemology. So prior to the conceptual knowledge of beings we have the creative fixation of concrete possibilities in inceptual thought. The sensitivity of inceptual thinking to these unique concrete possibilities is truly a new kind of knowledge that precedes conceptual knowledge but that conceptual knowledge needs to be actualized. In other words, the active fixation of these concrete possibilities is an active thinking that precedes and enables passive conceptual thinking. Were a new set of concrete possibilities to open up, we would then have a completely different

configuration of beings with another beginning of history. Knowledge thus becomes dependent upon be-ing and its history. The history of be-ing is not to be confused, however, with a succession of events in space and time that we encounter in the discipline of history. To become aware of the history of being requires a radically different relationship to time – a different temporality. Knowledge in this new framework of the *Beiträge* thus comes to be dependent upon historical and cultural factors, understood in Heidegger's novel ontological sense. This is a radical departure from traditional epistemology in which such factors generally have no role to play in the formation of knowledge. This radically recasts the way we have traditionally taken knowledge to be something universal. In this new framework, the universality of knowledge has to be understood only in the light of the history of be-ing. In addition to this, it is not the human being who thinks inceptually, it is Da-sein. The human being is one of the determinations of Da-sein that can be constituted by inceptual thinking. Da-sein is no longer the fundamental determination of the human being. Rather human being is simply one of the determinations of the Da-sein which will have different determinations depending upon the set of concrete possibilities that are opened up. The dualities of subject and object, thinking and being, sensibility and understanding on which traditional epistemology depends have now given way to the inceptual thinking of be-ing.

## Chapter II

### The Object of Thought in the History of Being: From the Object of En-thinking in the *Beiträge* to the Object of Thinking in *What is Called Thinking?*

#### 1. Introduction

As we have seen in the last chapter, one of the ways to understand Heidegger's philosophical project is as an attempt to provide a more comprehensive account of thinking, more comprehensive than the traditional accounts of thinking prevalent in all modern theories of knowledge. It can also be seen as an attempt to overcome some of the intractable dualisms that beset traditional accounts of thinking such as that between intuition and understanding, subject and object by proposing what we saw was a more comprehensive account of thinking. Heidegger's first answer to this question of what thinking really is finds an answer in his interpretation of the transcendental power of the imagination formulated by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Heidegger however tries to provide an even more radical answer to that question in the *Beiträge* with his account of inceptual thinking. We should make it very clear that inceptual thinking is not a rival to conceptual thinking and Heidegger is not seeking to replace one with the other. What Heidegger is doing is illustrating that thinking is not exhausted by conceptual thinking or logic alone. Rather conceptual thinking is founded on and is dependent upon a more primordial thinking called inceptual thinking. This we have shown and will continue to show in this chapter has profound implications for any theory of knowledge which seeks to provide a rigorous account of thought and its object.

Now the classical rationalists, the classical empiricists and their successors<sup>34</sup>, whom I regard as the proponents of the traditional account of thinking, have a fairly straightforward answer to the following two questions: what is the object of thought and who does the thinking? Their replies would be some variant of this basic response: The concept or the idea is the object of thought and the human subject is one who thinks.<sup>35</sup> Indeed concepts are the objects of representational thinking and it is the human being understood as a rational animal that does the thinking be it in its empiricist, rationalist or transcendental guises. What then is the object of Heidegger's inceptual thinking and who is the inceptual thinker?

In this chapter I will attempt to distill an answer to these questions. I will do so by starting with the account in the *Beiträge* and move on to Heidegger's most sustained grappling with this topic in his lecture entitled "What is called Thinking?"

## 2. Distinction between Two Kinds of Thinking in the *Beiträge*

### 2.1. An Interpretation of Heidegger's notion of *Sein*

In paragraph 265 of the *Beiträge*, Heidegger tries to explain how en-thinking of be-ing (*Er-denken des Seyns*) is possible. What then does Heidegger mean by be-ing?

Although Heidegger warns that be-ing does not lend itself to assertion and so cannot be

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<sup>34</sup> I include Kant and the entire German Idealist tradition here

<sup>35</sup> As an example, see David Hume, *Enquires Concerning the Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 17-22ff in which Hume making a distinction between ideas and impressions equates the object of thought with ideas. See also Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 2: 25-27ff

explained or described in a conventional manner in which we describe actualities, we can yet hazard an account that conveys the sense of what Heidegger is hinting at by the term be-ing because Heidegger himself resorts to several interesting indirect formulations of what he means by be-ing. I will argue in the first part of this essay that by be-ing Heidegger seems to understand the fluidity that lies at the heart of all actuality and the potential for something to be understood completely differently.<sup>36</sup> Heidegger explains en-thinking by attempting a new analysis of the history of western philosophy from its origins in Greece. Heidegger argues that in the history of philosophy one can observe two kinds of thinking, what he denotes as thinking (1) and thinking (2).

Thinking (1) for Heidegger is the relationship between man and the being of beings. It can be seen as the activity of every philosopher. But the being of beings has a very special meaning here for Heidegger. And he is very careful to distinguish it from what is the most general or abstract idea of a being. Heidegger clearly makes a distinction between the being of beings and beingness. Beingness is the dominant way of in which the being of beings has been understood in the history of philosophy. But for Heidegger to understand the being of beings as beingness is a derivative mode of understanding, stemming from beings, and does not tell what the being of beings really is. (CP, section 34, 83-87) Heidegger therefore attempts to understand the being of beings in a more original manner as be-ing. So in the *Beiträge*, the being of beings must be understood in a broader sense as the essencing of be-ing (*Wesung des Seyns*).<sup>37</sup> Thinking (1) is not

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<sup>36</sup> Here again, as I have mentioned in the last chapter, my position stems from Pol Vandavelde's interpretation of Heidegger's ontological project as a fluid ontology. My task here is to develop this interpretation in a direction that reveals some of its key epistemological consequences. See Pol Vandavelde, *Heidegger and the Romantics*

<sup>37</sup> In the last chapter, we clarified what Heidegger means by the essencing of being. See footnote 19 in the last chapter where I discuss my reason for translation *Wesung* as essencing.

confined to understanding being as a specific actuality under the umbrella of an abstract concept. To think something as something, Heidegger argues, involves a decision to actualize a possibility of grasping something in one specific way from a host of concrete possibilities that are opened up to the thinker. It is this availability of concrete possibilities that I interpret as be-ing (*Sein*) as we have already seen in the last chapter.

## 2.2. The Delicate Task of Separating Thinking (1) from Thinking (2)

The actualization of a concrete possibility involves a guiding interpretation. One can see how thinking (1) involves making a singular decision to boldly grasp this possibility and actualize it. Thinking (1) thus involves grounding being by deciding to actualize this possibility that has now become available. To think (1) is thus to acquire a sense of the fluidity and the multiplicity of meaning to which all things are susceptible, namely, their be-ing (*Sein*) as opposed to just the actuality of their existence, namely, what in the history of philosophy one has come to understand as their being. We can immediately see how difficult that is because things we encounter seem to come with a sense of their whatness which seems inseparable from them. How could a chair or glass or tree be any different from what it is? Let us see how this can be so.

According to Heidegger if one were to survey the history of philosophy, right from its very origins in Greece, thinking (1) has never been able to operate by itself. It has always been guided by what Heidegger calls thinking (2). Thinking (2) is a definite interpretation of being as so and so. It always guides thinking (1) even as thinking (1) directs itself towards the being of beings and thereby to their be-ing. Thinking (2)



interprets being as idea and thinking as assertion<sup>38</sup> and uses these interpretations as the guide to all its inquiries and questions into being and the relationship between being and thinking. Thinking (2) thereby involves a gain and a loss. It provides a stable field of interpretation for preserving the achievements of thinking (1) but in doing so covers over the true sense of what it is to think (1), namely, to be aware of those concrete possibilities towards which thinking (1) directs itself and the decision involved in thinking (1).

Thinking (2) makes it appear as if equating thinking with assertion and being with idea is the natural and the most rigorous account of the way things are and the only way in which being and thinking can be understood. Heidegger shows how this guiding interpretation becomes entrenched in western thinking with Plato interpreting being in terms of categories and Aristotle advancing this interpretation even further by interpreting being in terms of *nous* and *logos*. Much later with Descartes we have being and thinking understood mathematically.<sup>39</sup> But all this is possible only because thinking (2) is the guiding interpretation of every open inquiry into the being of beings. From the standpoint of thinking (2) of course this interpretation of being as presence or as idea and thinking as assertion or *logos* or ratio is something natural. It is even obvious and the most rigorous account of the way things are. However from the standpoint of thinking (1), which, according to Heidegger, even the very first thinkers could not sustain, this understanding of being as presence involves a decision and a very unique one. It is only a unique decision of this kind that has given rise to western history as we know it today.

This is precisely what Heidegger says here:

But then it becomes clear that with the priority of presence (present) wherein unity is grounded, something has been decided, namely, *that in*

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<sup>38</sup> See CP, section 265 which I am simply summarizing here.

<sup>39</sup> See *Ibid.* which I am again simply summarizing

*what is most self-evident [presence] the most estranging decision lies hidden*, that this **deciding-character belongs to the essential swaying of be-ing** and **hints at the respective singularity and most original historicity of be-ing** itself. (CP: 324, bold mine)

Such a decision was possible only because these original Greek thinkers could sense a concrete possibility for the interpretation of being, namely as presence and instead of ignoring it, they took it upon themselves to actualize it even though they were not able to recognize the monumental nature of their decision. Here the Greek thinkers were engaged in thinking (1). This aspect of thinking of the original Greek thinkers that involves a decision is quickly consigned to oblivion as thinking comes to be understood solely as thinking (2). Through Plato, Descartes and right up to our time the understanding of thinking as representation has come to dominate. Having clarified, firstly that the difference between thinking (1) and thinking (2) and having shown, secondly, how thinking (2) has accompanied thinking (1) only in the first beginning of history, Heidegger concludes on the basis of these two premises that the accompaniment of thinking (1) by thinking (2) cannot be a necessary one. He espouses the possibility of another beginning of history whereby thinking (1) is independent of thinking (2). As he says:

If now, in preparing for the other beginning, what is *ownmost* to philosophy is maintained as *inquiring into being* (in the double sense of inquiring into the being of beings and inquiring into the truth of be-ing) – as it must be maintained, precisely because the first-ever-inceptual inquiring into being indeed arrived at *its* end and thus not at its beginning – designation of philosophizing as thinking must also continue to be preserved. But this does not decide at all about how the guiding-thread of thinking (1) is also thinking (2), whether something like a guiding-thread comes into play *at all*, as it does in handling the guiding question. (CP: 322)

Formulated in terms of thinking (1) and thinking (2) to en-think being would mean sustaining thinking (1) without succumbing to the guidance of thinking (2). At the outset a seemingly difficult proposition!

### 3. The Object of Thinking in the *Beiträge*

#### 3.1. The Standard Understanding of the Being and History in Contemporary Epistemology

We now know that, according to Heidegger, the object of thinking (1), so to speak, is be-ing. We have also given a preliminary account of what Heidegger means by be-ing. Without trying to reduce Heidegger's rich indirect formulations on this subject into some neat system, I will try to deepen the preliminary account of be-ing that I started with by attempting a systematic interpretation of these formulations.

The different epistemological theories in currency today, which combine several of the positions held by the classical empiricists and the classical rationalists in interesting ways, can be seen as providing some variation of the following story on the question of what constitutes the essence or the being of a being: I am looking now at the tree outside my window. What constitutes the being or the essence of this tree? To put it more strongly what does the treeness of the tree consist in? Does the red colour of its bark, the shape of its leaves, the fact that it sheds its leaves at a specific time in the year constitute its essence? Is any thing that has a red bark, has broad leaves and sheds its leaves every year a tree? Not quite. For there are things that do not possess any of these properties but can still be called trees. How then do I arrive at the essence of the tree? I

do so by progressively chipping away at the accidental properties of the tree and retaining only its essential properties. The essence of a tree would then be expressed by a statement such as: A tree is a living organism that possesses... But then one can ask what a living organism is. And one would have to provide a definition of the kind: A living organism is a thing that... One can go still further and ask: What is a thing? As one proceeds in this manner it seems that one's definitions get more and more general until one finally arrives at the question: What makes anything that thing? Or what makes a being a being? Or what is the being of a being? Here we arrive at the distinction between being or beingness and a being or beings, what Heidegger calls the ontological difference. In the history of philosophy, being or beingness has been readily understood as the most general or abstract idea of a being. The abstract idea or the concept of the tree certainly does not exist in the same sense as the concrete tree standing outside the window. In fact one could argue like the nominalists do that there is no such thing as an abstract idea of a tree. But that the abstract idea is only a name under which several concrete particulars like the tree outside my window and the trees in the forest and other such places are grouped together. Whether we side with the nominalists or the realists is beside the point. Against this we could interpret Heidegger's objection as follows: An abstract idea is still a being among other beings or derived from them. It may be a different kind of being but it is a being all the same.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See, for example, CP, section 107 where Heidegger says precisely this: "In accordance with the Platonic interpretation of beings as such as εἶδος-ιδέα and this as κοινόν, the being of beings in general becomes κοινόν. To be the "most general" becomes *the* essential determination of being itself. The question of τί ἐστίν is always a question of κοινόν; and thus are given parameters for the whole thinking through of beings as such, parameters of highest species, highest generality, and individuality. The major domains of beings are only *specialia* of the generality of beings, i.e., of being." See also CP, section 110:

A form of this story has found itself repeated throughout the history of philosophy. As Heidegger shows us, the being of beings has also been understood as the highest being or the first being that is the cause of all other beings. We find this in Plato with his idea of the good and with Aristotle with his idea of the unmoved mover and later in the Christian idea of God. Even in this case the being of beings is still a being albeit a superior one. So Heidegger's conclusion is that the history of western philosophy has always taken its cue from actuality, from the things that actually exist. In order to explain what makes these actualities exist, it has postulated the existence of another being that explains the existence of these actualities. This other being has either been the most general or abstract idea or concept of being or it has been a superior being or the highest being or the first being. In most cases the two have been equated. All the while however the history of western philosophy never attempted to go beyond its engagement with beings.

The story of being that we have sketched above, which dominates contemporary epistemology and has been repeated throughout the history of philosophy in some form or the other also implies a specific understanding of history. History, as implied in this story, is a continuous, linear progression towards a more general understanding of everything.

We can illustrate this notion of history as follows: The ancient Greeks, for example, did not have a sufficiently general understanding of the world and so they had

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“*ἰδέα* is that *toward* which what still changes and is many is put back, the *unifying one* and therefore *ὄν*, *being* = unifying; and consequently *ἰδέα* is the *κοινόν* in relation to the many (*ἕκαστα*). And strangely, this subsequent determination of *ἰδέα* as beingness, the *κοινόν*, then becomes the first and last determination of beingness (of being); this [being] is the “most general”! But that is not remarkable but necessary, because from the very beginning being as beingness is experienced and thought *only* in terms of “beings” – from beings, so to speak, from *and* back to the manifold.”

to take recourse to specific entities like gods and goddesses to support their understanding of the world. Modern theoretical physics with its theory of relativity and quantum mechanics advances a more general understanding of the world. However even here the explanations are not general enough, for scientists argue that we have not found a general explanation that explains both electromagnetic phenomena and gravitational phenomena. So the quest is for a more general and unified theory that explains all these phenomena at once. Here again we are still only in the realm of physical phenomena. But there are supposedly mental phenomena like thoughts and beliefs that need to be accounted for. The question then is whether we can find a unified theory that can explain both mental and physical phenomena. The term “theory of everything” that one comes across in popular literature as well as in some academic circles is meant to convey this very idea of the most general explanation of everything. Thus the more general an explanation, the greater its scope and more superior it is. History is understood as the gradual progress towards such a superior understanding of everything.

### 3.2. Heidegger’s Challenge to the Standard Understanding

However the metaphysical presupposition here is that the being of all beings is bounded. Things are limited to a single stable essence and it is only a question of discovering what that is. History is consequently just a progression towards the discovery of this stable, single essence of beings. Although this presupposition may seem intuitively obvious to us, for Heidegger there is nothing obvious about this proposition. In the radically new ontological framework of the *Beiträge*, Heidegger

attempts to move away from this proposition. I interpret his new framework as proposing that the being of beings is not bounded or limited. From what we have already argued above (see especially p. 79-82) we can also interpret this unboundedness of the being of beings as be-ing.<sup>41</sup> What does it mean to say that the being of beings is not bounded? It means that beings do not have a single stable essence that we can simply read off of them. It means that they can gain and lose their essence. It means that beings can acquire a different essence over time. To put it in other words, beings lend themselves to being interpreted in radically different ways, even mutually exclusive ways over the course of time.<sup>42</sup> So there is no guarantee that they will remain the same.<sup>43</sup> It is this susceptibility to losing and gaining essence and to being interpreted in radically different ways that Heidegger seems to have in mind when he uses the term be-ing. But does not this send us down the dangerous path of relativism? Can beings be interpreted in any which way we want them? Heidegger does have answers to these questions for he espouses here a very sophisticated position which needs precise description.

“Only in be-ing,” says Heidegger, “does the possible hold sway, as be-ing’s deepest cleavage, so that it is in the shape of the possible that be-ing must first be thought

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<sup>41</sup> CP, section 254

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, CP, section 84 where Heidegger speaks of the radically different interpretations of being in Classical Greece, the Middle Ages and the modernity.

<sup>43</sup> For other ways of understanding Heidegger’s unique characterization of be-ing whereby beings can lose and gain essences see Vallega, “‘Beyng-Historical Thinking’ in Contributions to Philosophy,” who interprets it as appearance with no underlying reality behind it and Richard Polt, “The Event of Enthinking the Event,” in *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. Charles Scott et al. (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 93-94 where Polt discusses what I call the event of losing and gaining essence as a reinterpreting event distinct from historical events and Pol Vandavelde “Husserl and Searle on the Completable Nature of the Object of Perception” (Paper, *Gesellschaft für Phänomenologische Forschung*, Würzburg, October 2009), according to whom as a result of Heidegger’s thesis of be-ing, beings themselves can be understood as incomplete but at the same time completable.

in the thinking of the other beginning.” (CP: 334) But be-ing is not concerned “with an arbitrary possibility and not with “the” possibility in general but rather with what is ownmost (*Wesen*) to possibility.” (CP: 343) So be-ing does not mean the arbitrary or one could say merely logical possibilities. It also does not mean just abstract possibilities. Rather we can say, as I argue above and as I did in the last chapter, that being is concerned with specific concrete possibilities. So the answer to the question of whether Heidegger’s radically new understanding to be-ing leads to relativism is certainly no. Beings cannot be interpreted any which way we want them to. Be-ing can be understood as the domain of a unique set of concrete possibilities. There are also other ways in which Heidegger describes be-ing. He says that be-ing is at the same time simple because it cannot be understood as a substance possessing definite properties and it cannot therefore be compared with other beings on the basis of the presence or absence of individual properties. Be-ing thus does not yield itself to conceptual analysis. Because be-ing cannot be compared with anything else, it is unique. Because be-ing is unique, it is alone and solitary (*einsam*). Heidegger’s characterization of be-ing as alone further emphasizes the point that be-ing cannot be related to other beings either in terms of causal efficacy or in terms of spatio-temporal proximity. (CP, section 267)

These concrete possibilities that are hinted at by the term be-ing have to open up first in order for beings to come to be. These possibilities are specific ways to interpret the being of beings. What this implies is rather radical. A being is not just a referent which one simply indicates by using designators of varying degrees of rigidity. A being is much more complex than that. A being is a product of an interpretation. And even the simplest act of referring to a thing is an interpretation. In fact all the different ways in



which we handle beings and relate to beings can be said to be different ways of interpreting beings. To lift a cup is an act of interpretation. A being thus becomes a being, gains its essence as it were, in these concrete acts of interpretation. In order to interpret a being as being, concrete possibilities of interpretation of the being need to be made available and they need to be recognized by us. The more the possibilities of interpretation, the richer the being is and the greater is the essence that it acquires. When these possibilities shrink, there is a deficit in the essence of that being. In fact, within the interpretive framework that I have established, it is precisely this radical shrinking of concrete possibilities of interpretation that Heidegger characterizes as the abandonment of being in which the only possibilities available to us for interpreting the being of these beings are as object of use and objects of sensory stimulation. This certainly does not mean that we create beings out of nothing in the process of interpretation and the beings that are abandoned by being are no more. We can indeed assert that there are beings such as trees and mountains and rocks and birds, which remain the same throughout time and can be designated by some biological or chemical formula. But at the same time we have to recognize that, according to Heidegger this tagging of a rock with a scientific formula does not exhaust the essence of that rock. The essence of the rock is a rich nexus of interpretations that correlates to the many ways human beings can engage with and relate to the rock. But we must also say that these specific ways of dealing with beings stem from a preliminary interpretation of the being of beings. And this is what is very important. Heidegger's argument is that it is only on the basis of such a preliminary interpretation of the being of beings that it would be possible to relate to beings like mountains and trees at all.<sup>44</sup> For Heidegger it is only when such a relationship is possible

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<sup>44</sup> I use the term interpretation in the context of the *Beiträge* in an exclusively ontological

that it makes sense to talk of the existence of those beings at all. Hence we can say that it is only when such a concrete possibility of interpretation of the being of beings is actualized that beings can be related to as beings. When it becomes possible to relate to a being as a being on the basis of the preliminary interpretation of the being of beings, it can be said that the being has acquired essence.<sup>45</sup> When a being has thus acquired an essence, we can say that it has come into being. Corresponding to every such possibility

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sense. That is to say to interpret is always to interpret the being of beings. This is the deepest sense of interpretation and it concerns the very being of objects. For Heidegger, even the most basic, the rawest, most primitive relationship to an object in perception involves an interpretation of the being of that object. In this sense, the relationship to objects is a de-facto metaphysical relationship, for Heidegger, because it involves a concern with the being of beings. It is only when such an interpretation is made that it makes any sense for Heidegger to say that concrete entities like trees, mountains, boxes and cars “exist.” This of course has a very interesting implication that the relationship between subject and object cannot be cast in psychological or naturalistic terms without paying a metaphysical price. For Heidegger’s challenge is that such psychological and naturalistic explanations take recourse to a very unsatisfactory metaphysics which Heidegger is proposing to correct by giving us a new metaphysical framework in the *Beiträge*. Of course at this point he refuses to call his own project metaphysics because it has no equivalents within classical metaphysics given that classical metaphysics which stems from Plato understands the being of beings in terms of being. However Heidegger is still concerned with a metaphysical understanding of being, namely, the being of being, which he of course understands as be-ing (*Seyn*) and not beingness (*Seiendheit*).

We can view this as a reflection on the ontological implications of the phenomenological thesis of intentionality. Heidegger’s basic thesis, if we may say so, in the *Beiträge* seems to be this: The existence of objects can be meaningfully talked about only from the standpoint of the relationship between Da-sein and be-ing. The entire *Beiträge* can then be interpreted as a detailed discussion of the terms Da-sein and be-ing and the relationship which Heidegger characterizes as en-owing. This is a radical reformulation of the basic phenomenological thesis: The existence of objects can be meaningfully talked about only from the standpoint of the intentional correlation between consciousness and objects. But Heidegger is neither satisfied with the formulation “consciousness” nor the formulation “object” because he believes that no matter how hard one tries one is bound to be left with the intractable dualisms between thought and being and subject and object. In their stead we have Da-sein and be-ing.

<sup>45</sup> Here we can get a sense once again of Heidegger’s revolutionary remaking of the term essence. Essence now is no longer an articulation of the stable and calm interior that lies below the turbulent exterior and lends its heft to this seemingly ephemeral exterior. Essence understood in Heidegger’s new dynamics of the history of be-ing is the actualization of a concrete possibility. It is therefore a metaphysical configuration in the history of be-ing which is prone to radical dissolution.

of interpretation there is a decision to actualize that possibility. Such a decision is not an arbitrary act of the will.<sup>46</sup> En-thinking of be-ing involves such a decision. Heidegger uses the term en-owing (*Er-eignis*) to characterize the nature of this en-thinking. To be en-owned (*er-eignet*) by be-ing is to become aware of this possibility and decide to actualize this possibility. It is such a decision that inaugurates history.<sup>47</sup>

The first beginning of the history of be-ing resulted in the being of beings being understood as presence. But according to Heidegger the first beginning is coming to an end and another beginning of history is due. With this other beginning of history, another

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<sup>46</sup> Heidegger thereby attempts to move away from both realism and idealism, for he denies that be-ing is a thing in-itself and at the same time he also denies that it is something for a subject. Moreover for Heidegger, it seems, neither realism nor idealism can do justice to the things themselves. For in both realism and idealism, the shadow of subjectivism and humanism looms large. This is because in neither realism nor idealism is the object able to escape the clutches of the subject. Heidegger of course believes that idealism is more honest and forthcoming on the role of the subject and its integral role in the constitution of objects while realism in its zest to preserve the integrity of the object from subjectivistic intervention and stresses that the object's relationship to the subject is merely accidental. Conversely, though it means that the object in realism is cast even more crudely in subjectivistic terms as sense data and the like. If we distill all the variants of realism and idealism to the most fundamental premises that they all have in common, we find that neither idealism nor realism is able to clarify the role of the subject and how it can relate to the object and in both realism and idealism the object very conveniently slips into a comforting subservience to the subject's overarching dreams of a smooth, continuous and relatively uninhibited progress towards its ultimate destiny. As we have already explained, Be-ing understood as concrete possibility is something that cannot be arbitrarily brought into being by the subject. The configuration of such concrete possibilities is not in the hands of a subject. These concrete configurations of possibility can form and they can as easily dissolve so that other such configurations can form in their stead. At the same be-ing is not a readymade object simply waiting to be perceived and understood in an accidental manner. Rather as concrete possibility it is in need of actualization. As we will explain later, Heidegger believes his framework can do more justice to reality of the real in be-ing as well as to its relation to the subject, in his characterization of it as Da-sein.

<sup>47</sup> So western history begins, according to Heidegger, when be-ing is interpreted as φύσις and φύσις comes into being as ἀλήθεια. This is a decision that is made at the first beginning of history. However, the Greeks soon forget that it was a decision that leads to be-ing being interpreted as the highest being or what is the most general. As Heidegger states: "This is already true for the first-ever-inceptual essencing of be-ing as φύσις, which emerges as ἀλήθεια but is immediately forgotten and misinterpreted as a most-being being [*zum seiendsten Seienden*]..."(CP: 328; translation modified)

set of concrete possibilities of interpretation would open up. But the beginning of history and the end of history that Heidegger talks about here is not to be interpreted in terms of conventional historiography. Heidegger is not talking here about events of the kind that the historiographer discusses in the histories she writes. The history of be-ing is very different from the history of the historiographer. While the history which is studied in the discipline of history is a linear history which proceeds in a continuous manner, the history of be-ing is susceptible to beginnings and ends and thus to ruptures as beings can acquire a completely different essence from what they had before. Here is where the distinction between abstract and concrete possibilities becomes crucial. A concrete possibility becomes available only at a certain time and place. Unlike an abstract or logical possibility it is not available at all places and all times. Hence the existence of a concrete possibility implies the non-existence of other concrete possibilities. The possibility of interpreting being as presence is the one concrete possibility that became available in Greece at a certain point in time. It was acknowledged and actualized by the Greek thinkers who in doing so inaugurated the first beginning of western history. Indeed at the end of the first beginning, Heidegger argues that we become aware of the non-availability of concrete possibilities of interpretation associated with the other beginning or the exhaustion of the concrete possibilities associated with the first beginning.<sup>48</sup> It is this acute awareness of the non-availability of concrete possibilities, which Heidegger seems to call the refusal of be-ing. Heidegger says:

Be-ing is possibility, what is never extant and yet through en-ownment is always what grants and refuses in not-granting. (CP: 335)

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<sup>48</sup> See CP, section 60

#### 4. En-thinking of Be-ing and the One who does the En-thinking

##### 4.1. The Relationship between En-thinking and Be-ing

In Heidegger's ontological framework, the object of en-thinking, namely, be-ing, is not to be understood along the lines usually taken in traditional epistemology. Having dealt with the object of thinking let us now turn our attention to two questions: 1. What is en-thinking of being and 2. Who is the one who does the en-thinking? In this regard Heidegger says:

Be-ing is *en-owning* (*Er-eignis*). This word names be-ing in thinking (*denkerisch*) and grounds be-ing's essencing (*Wesung*) in its own jointure... (GA 65: 470, CP: 328, translation modified)

En-owning (*Er-eignis*) thus characterizes be-ing in its relationship to thinking. To en-think be-ing is to be en-owned by be-ing.<sup>49</sup> From this we can infer that en-thinking is not simply an invention or a one-sided activity on the part of the thinker. Rather the thinker must in a way respond to be-ing which he cannot simply manipulate or control. En-ownment thus clearly suggests the non-arbitrary nature of en-thinking. Heidegger further characterizes en-ownment as the "between" (*Zwischen*), the between of gods and man.

God, for Heidegger, is not a religious concept. It is not associated with theism in its many variations such as monotheism, polytheism and atheism. To reflect here on the

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<sup>49</sup> See Parvis Emad, "On 'Be-ing': The Last Part of *Contributions to Philosophy*" in Scott, *Companion to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy*, 229-245, p. 231 where he discusses the relationship between be-ing and the thinker as not one of complete autonomy and at the same time not one of complete heteronomy. See also Emad's detailed discussion of Heidegger's term en-owing throw (*ereignender Zuwurf*) which refers to the relationship between thinking and be-ing.

theological connotations of Heidegger's reappraisal of the term god would take us too far afield. For the purposes of this discussion, we can understand god as one term in the correlation between man and god.<sup>50</sup> For Heidegger it is this correlation that marks the beginning of any history and makes human beings historical as it were. All the different theisms can be considered as modifications of an utterly inadequate grasp of this original correlation between gods and man. En-ownment is the manner in which the two terms "gods" and "man" relate to each other. En-ownment, Heidegger warns us, is not to be reified into a relationship but en-ownment is the relating. En-owning – the en-thinking of be-ing – is the relating of gods and man. But this relating is for Heidegger prior to both gods and man. For it is only through this relating that gods and man gain their essence

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<sup>50</sup> In CP, section 251, Heidegger says:

"A people is *only* a people when it receives its history that has been set aside for it in the finding of its God, this God, who forces it over itself and thus puts it back into a being. Only then does a people escape the danger of moving in circles around itself and of idolizing what are only the conditions of its existence into its unconditioned. But how should one find God when there are not the ones who for the people silently search and as these searchers even appear to stand against what is not yet a "people" capable of being considered a people. These searchers however must first themselves come into existence; they must be prepared as beings. Da-sein, what is it other than the *grounding* of the being of these beings, the futural ones (*Zukünftigen*) of the last God." (translation modified)

What we see in this passage is that for Heidegger a people receives its history when the relationship between God and man is established. When a people receives its history it seems to emerge from an existence that is built upon securing the merest biological necessities to a purposeful existence that gives them the sense of their identity as a people. But this can happen only when there are a few among these people, whom Heidegger calls the futural ones, who can go against the crowd, as it were, and seek out this God to give their people a sense of their purpose, a destiny, a history. There is thus a correlation between God and man in that man as Da-sein seeks out God and God in turn gives the people a sense of their destiny, makes them historical as opposed to purely biological. God here is deprived of that independence that is essential to all theological conceptions of God and chained down as one term in the correlation between man and God.

For a detailed account of Heidegger's conception of God in the *Beiträge* see Polt, *The Emergence of Being*, 203-213. See also footnote 103 where Polt lists all the major articles on this subject. In addition see Ben Vedder, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Religion: From God to the gods* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2007) and Benjamin Crowe, "Heidegger's Gods," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 15, no. 2 (2007): 225-245

and become what they are. Thus in Heidegger's ontological framework, it is not beings like gods and man that come first but it is be-ing and the en-thinking of be-ing or en-owning of be-ing that comes first.<sup>51</sup> To put it even more strongly, be-ing and en-thinking of being have an ontological priority. It is by en-thinking of be-ing than man and other beings get their essences. It is out of such a relating that man and gods emerge as separated from each other. The en-thinking of be-ing is the ontological ground for the appearance of beings such as men and gods. En-thinking is thus an originary thinking by means of which beings acquire their essence for the first time. En-thinking involves a decision and, as we have already seen, it is the decision to ground be-ing. Such a grounding involves seizing one of the possibilities for interpreting the being of beings and forgoing other possibilities.

#### 4.2. Da-sein as En-thinker of Be-ing

Here is where we arrive at the role of Da-sein as the grounder of be-ing.<sup>52</sup> Da-sein is no longer to be simply equated with the human being in the ontological framework of the *Beiträge*. Da-sein in this new ontological framework occupies a pre-anthropological position. Da-sein is neither subject nor object, but occupies an ontological middle position between subject and object. To occupy such a middle

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<sup>51</sup> Thus it is the flux or the movement of relations and alignments or jointures that comes first. Essentially in Heidegger's ontological framework, we have the movement of "relating to." Heidegger's ontology, is simply put, an ontology of relations. Every such relation is an event. So what we have first and foremost is the event of "relating to." Be-ing (*Seyn*) is the opening up of concrete or concrete possibilities for relations. And it is from the event of "relating to" which Heidegger calls essencing of be-ing (*Wesung des Seyns*) that the terms or entities that "relate to" one another first find their being and emerge into the open.

<sup>52</sup> See Sallis 2001 with regard to this idea of a grounder.

position is to be en-owned by the be-ing.<sup>53</sup> It is to stand in what Heidegger calls the ab-ground (*ab-grund*). “This is of course the mark of Da-sein, to stand unsupported and unprotected downward into the ab-ground and therein to surpass the gods.” (CP: 343)

Da-sein is thus not an entity or a being in the ordinary sense of the word. It can be called an ontological place-holder that man has to occupy in order that the division between beings and the human being can be established in the first place. This division is a result of en-thinking of be-ing which is the fulfillment of a distinct possibility of interpreting the be-ing of beings. To en-think be-ing is to occupy such a middle position. The human being is thus a very unique creature in this framework and is to be distinguished from other beings. This is because it is only the human being who can overcome his nature and occupy the middle position that is indicated by Da-sein. This requires the human being to become aware of concrete possibilities for interpreting the be-ing of beings. As Da-sein, the human being becomes the site for be-ing to ground itself. This is what Heidegger means when he says here:

Man is like a steady bridge in the “between” [*im Zwischen*], as which en-owning throws the need of the gods to the guardianship of man, in that en-owning surrenders man to Da-sein. Such throwing-surrendering, from which thrownness emerges, brings to Dasein the removal-unto be-ing, which removal appears to us in the foreground as projecting-open the truth of be-ing and, in the foreground that is foremost and most readily still turned to metaphysics, appears as the understanding of being. However, there is nowhere here a place for the interpretation of man as “subject,” neither in the sense of a subject with the character of an I nor in the sense of subject that belongs to a community. But the removal-unto is also not man’s being outside-of-himself in the form a getting-rid-of-oneself. Rather, it grounds the essence of selfhood, which is to say that man has his essence (guardianship of be-ing) as his ownhood, insofar as he grounds himself in Da-sein... Selfhood can be grasped neither from the “subject” nor at all from the “I” or the “personality” but rather only from inhabiting [*Inständigkeit*] in the guardianship of belongingness to be-ing, i. e., however,

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<sup>53</sup> See Polt, “The Event of En-thinking the Event” who discusses how Heidegger wants to surmount the distinction between knower and known.



according to the forth throw [*Zuwurf*] of the needfulness of gods. (B: 489, CP: 344, translation modified)

In Heidegger's framework we have to accept that the current interpretations of being as presence and the subsequent effects of that interpretation in the way we understand and handle individual beings are not absolute. The essence of man and that of things can undergo radical transformation. As Heidegger puts it here:

That man has what is his essence as his own possession means that his essence stands in the constant danger of being lost. And this is the resonance of en-ownment, the surrender to be-ing. (Ibid, translation modified)

Man, in this framework, becomes something pre-anthropological. Man is no longer a subject understood as the 'I' of modern philosophy since Descartes. Anthropology and humanism can no longer be the fundamental perspectives from which man is comprehended because both anthropology and humanism take it for granted that man has a fixed essence that can never undergo transformation and which only needs to be discovered. As Heidegger says:

With Da-sein as measure, man is grasped as that being which, while being, can lose its essence and thus is always most uncertainly and most daringly certain of himself – but this on the basis of being surrendered to the guardianship of be-ing. The priority of Da-sein is not only the opposite of any manner of humanizing of man; this priority grounds a totally other essential history of man, one that is never graspable in terms of metaphysics and thus also not in terms of "anthropology." (GA 65: 490, CP: 345, translation modified)

It is only when Da-sein is understood in this non-anthropological, non-subjective manner that one truly realizes how the subject and object can relate to each other. When it has to explain thinking or knowing by which subject relates to objects traditional epistemology is stuck with two poles and is at a loss to explain how two separate and radically different entities like the subject and the object relate to each other. In attempting to solve this

problem, one has usually spiritualized the object (idealism) or materialized the subject (realism). But for Heidegger both solutions are compromises that can really never account for the unique nature of this relationship. The reason for a compromise, from Heidegger's perspective, is that neither realism nor idealism is able to account for the truly complex nature of thinking in which subject and object – two radically different poles – come to meet in this middle ground which is neither subject nor object.

Heidegger believes his attempt to formulate a true ontological middle-ground between subject and object in Da-sein and the dynamics of essencing of be-ing in en-owning can be the only one that does justice to thinking and knowing. To think and to know thus involves assuming this middle position between subject and object which cannot be explained by the variants that traditional ontology has put up so far.

##### 5. Appraisal of the Epistemological Implications of Heidegger's Ontological Framework in the Beiträge

Thinking in Heidegger's ontological framework thus cannot be understood essentially as an act on the part of a subject. It is also not to be understood as logical representation. Heidegger does not seem to deny the legitimacy of logical thinking or representative thinking. What he is interested in is to show the existence of a more fundamental kind of thinking, what he calls the en-thinking of be-ing which is completely overlooked when logical thinking becomes the sole focus of Western philosophy. In answer to the claim that logical thinking is thinking at its most rigorous and thus the epitome of thinking, Heidegger argues that from the standpoint of en-thinking which directs itself towards be-ing, logical thinking is the least rigorous. Heidegger's argument

here is that when one becomes aware that western thinking began with a specific interpretation of thought as assertion or logical representation and that a new beginning is possible where thinking can take a completely different form and that the dominance of thinking as logical representation is itself the product of a more fundamental, more original form of thinking which one has simply forgotten; one is immediately confronted with the non-absolute nature of logical thinking and its rigor must therefore accordingly be assessed in terms of the essential history in which it has become dominant. The possibility of another essential history centered on another definition of thinking shows that the rigor of logical thinking is something relative and not absolute. Heidegger even compares our belief in the rigor of logical thinking as a necessary illusion that is even deeper than the dialectic illusion discovered by Kant. To put it in plainer words, what Heidegger is arguing here is that rigor is not an absolute measure. Rather rigor is a relative measure, always measured within the confines of an ontological framework whose validity we accept as absolute. What Heidegger has done is to develop an alternative ontological framework within which he proposes a new form of thinking – *en-thinking of be-ing*. Heidegger's challenge is that it is this ontological framework that does justice to the things themselves by getting rid of some very unsatisfactory dualisms that the former falls prey to. One cannot then simply claim logical thinking to be the most rigorous when the very concept of rigor is defined on the basis of an ontological framework in which the dominance and centrality of logical thinking is unthinkingly taken for granted. Such a claim would be a mere restatement of one's position without truly proving why it is true. In the light of Heidegger's challenge, any such claim can be upheld only by comparing the ontological framework from which the claim stems with

other ontological frameworks. It is only by so doing that one can come to a non-biased and rigorous understanding of the term rigor. We may of course settle for the traditional ontological framework and reject Heidegger's framework by deciding that the former has greater advantages and less disadvantages than that of Heidegger, or some other such reasoning, but the very fact that we have to perform this exercise in comparison would suggest that the monopoly of logical thinking is broken.

By first laying bare the metaphysical presuppositions that lie behind the way epistemology explains the basic relationship between thought and thinker and the nature and the object of thinking, Heidegger goes on to propose an alternative metaphysical framework in which epistemology would not require taking recourse to unexplained and unsatisfactory dualisms. And if one takes epistemology to essentially involve such dualisms, then Heidegger has effected a move away from epistemology itself by finding another ground on the basis of which one can discuss thought, its object and the relationship between the thinker and what is thought.

Heidegger pursues these reflections on thinking, the nature of the object of thought and the nature of the thinker once again in a series of lectures under the title *What is Called Thinking?*<sup>54</sup> It is to these lectures that we now turn to for the remainder of this chapter.

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<sup>54</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004). Originally published as *Was Heisst Denken?* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1954). From now on this work will be referred to as WT.

## 6. The Distinction between Thinking and Science in *What is Called Thinking?*

### 6.1. The Complex Relationship between Science and Thinking

In his own words, Heidegger's lectures are meant to be like a workshop where one learns how to think just like one learns how to work with wood in a carpenter's workshop. He begins these lectures with the claim that that one can begin to think only if there is something that provokes one to think. According to Heidegger, what should provoke us to think is that we are still not thinking. With this provocative claim, Heidegger sets up the main thesis of the lecture: To argue that thinking is a special kind of activity and that western philosophy has really never attempted to come to grips with the uniqueness of thinking. The activity of thinking is directed towards a very unique object and there is an urgent need to acquire a sense of the uniqueness of this object.

In this regard, Heidegger makes a distinction between thinking and scientific activity. This is, I argue, analogous to the distinction he made in the *Beiträge* between thinking (1) and thinking (2). Thinking is what takes the place of thinking (1) and science takes the place of thinking (2). In this regard he makes his second major provocative claim that science does not think. However, Heidegger is adamant that the point here is not just to disparage the sciences by pointing to some fundamental incapacity in them but to actually arrive at a proper understanding of what thinking entails by distinguishing it from scientific activity. While scientific activity is generally taken to be the pinnacle of thinking in our modern age, Heidegger is keen to show that

thinking as an activity is very different from what the sciences do. In doing so one becomes clear about the true nature of scientific activity. To speak with Heidegger:

...science does not think and cannot think – which is its good fortune, here meaning the assurance of its own appointed course. Science does not think. This is a shocking statement. Let the statement be shocking, even though we immediately add the supplementary statement that nonetheless science always and in its own fashion has to do with thinking. That fashion, however, is genuine and consequently fruitful only after the gulf has become visible that lies between thinking and the sciences, lies there unbridgeably. (WT: 8)

This quotation illustrates that rather complex relationship between thinking and science envisaged by Heidegger. Science does not think but it still has to do with thinking and it has to do with thinking because there is an unbridgeable gap between thinking and science. What does Heidegger mean when he says that science is related to thinking by way of an unbridgeable gap between the two? It is only when we are clear about the meaning and the implications of this statement that we can really come to an understanding of his novel conception of thinking and the legitimacy of that conception. At the outset, I do not think that he just means to imply that the difference between thinking and scientific activity is merely quantitative as if thinking were only a more intense version of scientific activity. Although one of the implications of this statement is that it creates space for non-scientific forms of thinking, he does not want to just imply that scientific activity is a different kind of thinking and that subsequently there are many different kinds of thinking, some of which are non-scientific as he would like to show us.<sup>55</sup> His claim is stronger.

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<sup>55</sup> In this regard I disagree with Thomas Fay who in his essay “Thinking as *Noein*,” concludes that Heidegger’s only argument is that there are non-scientific forms of thinking and the scientific thinking is not the only form of thinking. My point is that this is really peripheral to Heidegger’s main argument in *What is Called Thinking?* and only when we realize this can we really get to the core of what Heidegger is trying to tell us in these

Heidegger claims that while the sciences can of course perform their respective tasks very efficiently and are great reservoirs of knowledge, they are in principle not in a position to inquire into their own essence. No experiment in physics and no thesis in mathematics can demonstrate the essence or the being of either physics or mathematics. To inquire into the essence or the being of the sciences is the task of thinking. When thinking is understood in this specific manner it explains why science does not think: it does not reflect on its own essence and cannot do so in principle.<sup>56</sup> As he says here:

The essence of their sphere – history, art, poetry, language, nature, man, God – remains inaccessible to the sciences. At the same time, however, the sciences would constantly fall into the void if they did not operate within these spheres. The essence of the above named spheres is the subject (*Sache*) of thinking. As the sciences *qua* sciences have no access to this concern, it must be said they are not thinking. (WT: 33)

Heidegger now makes great efforts to distinguish ontologically the objects of the sciences from the object of thinking. In this regard his ontological characterization of essences does not belong to traditional philosophy. According the Heidegger, philosophy has since Plato always understood essences as a class of special beings whose standing is higher than particular, individual beings and it has confined itself to the investigation of these special beings. In this sense philosophy has been the first science or the science that grounds all the other sciences. But with the tremendous progress in the sciences, it

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lectures. The reason I say this is that as I reveal in this chapter Heidegger is not simply saying that science does not think; he is also saying that science has in its own way to do with thinking. So science is not something bereft of what Heidegger wants to define as thinking. This is something that I believe needs explanation and leads us to a much richer account of both science and thinking.

<sup>56</sup> See Theodore Kisiel, “Science, Phenomenology and the Thinking of Being,” in *Phenomenology and the Natural Sciences*, ed. Joseph Kockelmans and Theodore Kisiel (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970) 167. See especially pp. 173-74 where Kisiel makes the same point.

has also come to be accepted that it is the sciences that will ultimately reveal to us the essence of things. Both alternatives for Heidegger are a mistake. As he says here:

And yet there is another side in every science which that science as such can never reach; the essential nature and origin of its sphere, the essence and essential origin (*Wesensherkunft*) of the manner of knowing which it cultivates, and other things besides. The sciences remain of necessity on the one side. In this sense they are one-sided, but in such a way that the other side nonetheless always appears as well. The sciences' one-sidedness retains its own many-sidedness. But that many-sidedness may expand to such proportions that the one-sidedness on which it is based no longer catches our eye. And when man no longer sees the one side as one side, he has lost sight of the other side as well. What sets the two sides apart, what lies between them, is covered up, so to speak. Everything is leveled to one level. Our mind hold views on all and everything, and views all things in the identical way. (Ibid.)

In this passage we have cited, Heidegger tells us that on the one side lie beings and on the other side lie essences. And when we focus only on the beings and their properties as science does and lose sight of the essences of things, essences comes to be conflated with things or actualities and one subsequently loses sight of the true nature of scientific activity. That is precisely what happens when one characterizes the essences ontologically in terms of beings. That is the mistake that, according to Heidegger, philosophy right since Plato has committed. It has always conflated essences and beings by trying to understand essences in terms of beings. With his ontological distinction between beings and the Being of beings, Heidegger intends to bring us back to focusing of the ontological peculiarity of essences.<sup>57</sup> The ontological distinctiveness of essences or the being of beings – the proper objects of thought lies in the fact that these objects turn away from thought and withdraw.

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<sup>57</sup> We do not find the three-level distinction between be-ing, beingness and beings in this work. It is replaced in this essay with the original two-level distinction between being and beings. However Heidegger does retain the description he reserved for be-ing in the *Beiträge* for object of thought in *What is Called Thinking?*.



Actualities give themselves to the senses and the understanding for the purposes of description and explanation, but essence or the being of the beings remains forever ontologically elusive. Science deals with actualities which are always present before us and so only need to be discovered, but thinking directs itself towards that which essentially turns away from us and withdraws. According to Heidegger, we usually understand the existence of a being as consisting in its ability to strike our senses and create an impression. But what withdraws in its withdrawal affects us more than the things that strike our senses. But we never pay heed to what withdraws, which is precisely for him the task of thinking. As he says here:

In fact, what withdraws may even concern and claim man more essentially than anything present that encounters and strikes him. **Being struck by actuality is what we like to regard as constitutive of the actuality of the actual.** However, in being struck by what is actual, man may be debarred precisely from what concerns and touches him – touches him in the surely mysterious way of escaping him by its withdrawal. The event (*Ereignis*) of withdrawal could be what is most present in all our present, and so infinitely exceed the actuality of everything actual. (WT: 9, bold mine)

What does Heidegger mean when he says the essence of a thing withdraws from us? One of the ways to understand this claim would be by resorting to the same interpretative framework we made use of in our discussion of the *Beiträge*. For Heidegger reality is always connected to a definite interpretation of that reality. When we say for example: “There is here a table,” what we really do is to interpret what we find before ourselves as a table. This reality that we call ‘table’ is thus the realization of a definite possibility of interpretation. These possibilities are concrete possibilities and not just abstract logical possibilities. With the realization of such a concrete possibility the table as it were receives its essence. But when one such concrete possibility is realized there are at the same time several other concrete possibilities that remain unrealized simply because they

were unavailable at that particular time. That is to say, there is always the possibility that any real thing such as our table here could have been something completely different if a different concrete possibility of interpretation were available. That means that to the very essence of anything belongs the possibility that it could have been something completely different. Thus, possibilities always belong to the very essence of an actuality like a table. But it is extremely difficult to conceive how something as fixed and stable as a tree, a house or the moon could be something completely different. However, when we focus only on actualities and the actuality of a thing we forget the possibilities out of which the thing stems. When this happens, the essence of a thing escapes us. It withdraws from us. There is an inevitability to this phenomenon. The task of thinking, according to Heidegger, is to realize this inevitability and precisely have a sense of this withdrawal.

But this distinction between science and thinking does not for Heidegger reveal the superiority of thinking over the sciences.<sup>58</sup> Any such claim would be unjustified because while the sciences can make claims to knowledge, thinking cannot do so and therein lies the impotence of thinking vis-à-vis the sciences. To speak with Heidegger:

...it tends to sound at first as though thinking fancied itself superior to the sciences. Such arrogance, if and where it exists, would be unjustified; thinking always knows essentially less than the sciences precisely because it operates where it could think the essence of history, art, nature, language – and yet is still not capable of it. The sciences are fully entitled to their name, which means fields of knowledge, because they have infinitely more knowledge than thinking does. (WT: 33)

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<sup>58</sup> See Joseph Kockelmans, “Heidegger on the Essential Difference and Necessary Relationship Between Philosophy and Science,” in Kockelmans and Kiesel, *Phenomenology and the Natural Sciences*, 147-166. See especially pp. 148-149 where Kockelmans also addresses the issue of the superiority of thinking to science as well as the one-sidedness of science that I discuss below.

Science has to in a way presuppose the immutability of the essence of its objects in order to do what it has to do and thereby be science. While science can inquire into the causal origin of things, it cannot in principle inquire into the ontological origin of things. That is to say, while sciences inquire into the cause of a thing, thinking inquires into how we came to understand a thing as a thing in the first place. What went into the interpretation of a thing as a spatio-temporal entity? These questions are the sole concern of thinking. What thinking does is to reflect on the ontological origins of the thing or the being of things which elude thinking in a manner that it is not given to the objects of the sciences. As we have already seen in the *Beiträge*, just as the thing can ontologically begin, it can also come to an end and another ontological beginning can happen. This is the reason why for Heidegger, essences are not static, unchanging entities that simply need to be discovered. Rather essences require fixing and this fixing inaugurates history. That was what thinking accomplished with the beginning of history in Greece but this is immediately forgotten. Essences can thus be understood as the ontological interpretation of the being of beings, which makes possible any relationship to concrete entities in the first place and thereby makes it possible for us to speak of concrete entities in the first place. It is only on the basis of such an interpretation that entities can be said to come to be. The sciences have no way of experimentally verifying whether the ontological interpretation of the being of beings is “correct” or “incorrect.” It is only on the basis of such an ontological interpretation of the being of beings that “correctness” and “incorrectness” can be understood in the first place. Thus all the sciences are possible only on the basis of such an interpretation. Such an interpretation cannot be a part of the scientific method itself. Hence Heidegger’s claim that the sciences are one-sided.

Heidegger explains what he means by the one-sidedness of the sciences by taking up the rather fundamental question of the relationship between the subject and the object. Heidegger explains that the predominant understanding of thinking is that it is a representation of external objects in the mind through ideas. Thinking thus could also be called ideating. When understood as a mental process thinking lends itself very naturally to psychological explanations and all investigation of the nature of thinking becomes the domain of psychology and the sciences associated with it. But when thinking is further explored as a process in a physical organ such as the brain, biology and later physics join in to offer explanations of what it means to think and to have ideas of objects external to the brain. These explanations concern the most fundamental relationship between subject and object. According to Heidegger, the account provided by the sciences can be summarized as follows:

Objects are nothing but a stream of electrical charges dispersed in a void. Objects cause certain processes in the brain of the observer. The occurrence of these processes in the brain is thinking or ideating and the processes themselves are the representations of objects external to the brain.

But Heidegger counters this explanation by offering another account that he argues appears equally convincing and quite hard to refute. It is summarized as follows: The object is something that confronts us not as a stream of electrical charges but first and foremost as a whole like a tree or a house or horse and before which we can stand. The relationship between subject and object is one of confrontation of being face-to-face. The object is able to face us and the subject is something that is conversely able to face up to objects.

How do we decide which of these accounts of the relationship is true and on what basis?<sup>59</sup> The justification that is usually given in favor of the scientific account is that it is the true account and the other account that appears so intuitively obvious is actually a pre-scientific naïve account which one is able to overcome on basis of the evidence provided by scientific experimentation and theory. But Heidegger argues that the grounds on the basis of which such a decision is made is itself not just scientific. The decision is not based only on scientific proof. It may seem to us that it is only scientific experiments conducted rigorously that prove to us that objects are really just electrical charges and that human beings are essentially brains capable of undergoing complex neuronal changes in response to stimuli received from the outside. But for Heidegger it is the exact opposite. It is rather a decision made prior to all these experiments that allows us to see the scientific experiment as a proof of the nature of the human being and the being of beings.

Such a decision is metaphysical and has far reaching implications concerning the very being of beings as well as the nature of the human being. It involves an initial

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<sup>59</sup> It may seem that Heidegger is clearly favoring the second explanation for the first. And his aim is to oppose scientific thinking with a new kind of thinking that directly gets at the thing itself. See Refer to Richard E. Palmer, “Hints for/of Hermeneutics in *Was Heisst Denken?*” in *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Lectures and Essays*, ed. Joseph J. Kockelmans (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1988) 157-210 who argues in this manner. However my interpretation shies away from making such a move on the basis of other things that Heidegger says in these lectures which I quote in the next page. My point is that rather than just opposing scientific thinking to a new kind of thinking, Heidegger is interested in asking the more difficult questions of whether science is itself dependent on something more than experimental verification and calculation in order to function as a science. In order for a science to come into being and in order for a scientist to do science by following the scientific method, is there a kind of thinking required that is overlooked by the scientific method itself? Are the sciences aware of their own essential origins? Is there a certain metaphysical framework within which every science has to operate and, if so, what is that metaphysical framework? These questions force us to see the relationship between thinking and the sciences as something more sophisticated than just plain opposition.

ontological interpretation of the being of beings which is at the same also an ontological interpretation of the nature of the human being. The grounds for this decision are still hidden and western philosophy has not yet taken the trouble to clarify this hidden ground.

This is for the Heidegger the task of thinking. As Heidegger says:

It could be supposed that the forming of thoughts and the forming of ideas may well be one and the same thing. The prospect opens up the possibility, that the traditional nature of thinking has received its shape from representation, that thoughts are a kind of representational idea. That is true. But at the same time it remains obscure how this shaping of the nature of traditional thinking takes place. The source of the event remains obscure... We understand, of course, when someone says, "I think the matter is such and such," and with it has in mind, "I have such and such an idea of the matter." It clearly follows that to think is to form ideas. Yet, all the relations called up by this statement remain in the shadow. Basically they are still inaccessible to us (WT: 44-45)

The initial ontological interpretation of the being of beings is what Heidegger calls thinking. With this ontological interpretation we simultaneously acquire for the first time a sense of the unity of human being which we ourselves are. It is only on the basis of this sense that all other activities and in particular scientific activity can proceed. Thinking thus concerns itself with the being of beings and is thus not the same as scientific activity. Scientific activity can be meaningful and it can be successfully conducted only on the basis of a prior ontological interpretation of the being of beings. And Heidegger's lectures can be seen as an attempt to lay out the dynamics of this ontological interpretation.

We can also now sum up the complex relationship between the sciences and thinking. On the one hand, thinking is not an activity completely unconnected from what the sciences do and is not simply an alternative to the sciences that people need to indulge in alongside the sciences in order to balance the scales out a little bit. Thinking is rather that fundamental relationship to the being of beings that makes activities like the sciences

which deal successfully with concrete entities possible in the first place. Hence Heidegger's claim that science ultimately has something to do with thinking. But on the other hand, thinking is not to be also simply understood as the foundation of the sciences. That is to say the sciences do not have to start out with an express awareness of the being of the beings or of their own essence in order to pursue its activities. That is to say, the sciences do not start with propositions concerning the being of beings and then build up their edifice of knowledge step by step on the basis of this initial proposition. To the contrary, sciences, according to Heidegger, are able to do what they are able to do only because they are completely unaware of this ontological interpretation of the being of beings.<sup>60</sup> Hence Heidegger claims that science can arrive at thinking only by means of a leap with an abyss separating the two. This rather complex relationship between thinking and science is what is nicely summed up when he says:

The essential relatedness [between thinking and science] is determined by a basic trait of the modern era...It might be described briefly as follows: that which is, appears today predominantly in *that* objectivity [*Gegenstandlichkeit*] which is established and maintained in power by the scientific objectification of all fields and areas. This objectivity does not stem from a separate and peculiar power-bid on the part of the sciences, but from a fact in the nature of things which we moderns still do not want to see. (WD: 155; WT: 135, translation modified)<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> One of the other consequences of overlooking this distinction between thinking and the sciences and correspondingly the distinction between actualities and essences is that one fails to do justice to the complex nature of the relationship between subject and object.

<sup>61</sup> Thus the fact that sciences are able to function as they do and the fact they are able to provide explanations for the behavior of all objects does not stem from the sciences themselves but from another source which concerns the very nature of things themselves which remains obscure to us. These facts about the things themselves is what thought concerns itself with. And only when this activity of thought is accomplished can scientific activity be undertaken.

## 6.2. The Dual Object of Thinking: The Being of Beings and the Nature of the Human Being

What is clear to us so far is that thinking concerns itself with the being of beings. But the question concerning the being of beings is, for Heidegger, correlated to the question concerning the very nature of the human being. This stems from the very definition of the human being who is understood to be a rational animal. The definition suggests that the human being is an animal who at the same time overcomes his animality in rationality. In overcoming his animality, the human being overcomes what is physical in him or her. He or she goes beyond the physical and is thus a metaphysical creature. Since metaphysics concerns itself with the very being of beings, there is, concludes Heidegger, an inextricable link between the being of beings and nature of the human being. Thus thinking when it concerns itself with the being of beings in the same gesture concerns itself with the human being. This relationship between the being of beings and the nature of the human being is not a dialectical relationship. One cannot derive the nature of the human being from the being of beings with the help of some dialectical maneuvers or vice versa. Rather one can only begin with the correlation. To think is in a way to think the correlation between human nature and the being of beings. Commenting on precisely this correlation Heidegger says:

If we are to think of man not as an organism but a human being, we must first give attention to the fact that man is that being who essences (*wesst*) by pointing to what is, and that particular beings manifest themselves as such by such pointing. Yet that which is, does not complete and exhaust itself in what is actual and factual at the given moment. To all that is – which is to say, to all that continues to be determined by Being – there belongs just as much, and perhaps even more, what can be, what must be, and what *is* in the past. Man is the being who is in that he points toward



“Being,” and who can be himself only as he always and everywhere refers himself to what is. (WD: 95; WT: 149; translation modified)

Heidegger attempts to show how thinking concerns itself with the being of beings which is at the same time a concern with the nature of the human being by a detailed interpretation of Nietzsche’s thought. I will not be following Heidegger’s discussion in this regard. We must however be clear as to what is at stake in this discussion. Heidegger’s attempt here is to give us a first person account of thought itself. By confining himself not just to a coherent description of the major doctrines of Nietzsche and how they fit together, but by actually thinking with Nietzsche, Heidegger shows how the thinking of the being of being (which Heidegger shows in Nietzsche’s case is the doctrine of the eternal return of the same) is inextricably linked to the thinking of the nature of the human being (which Heidegger shows in Nietzsche’s case is the thinking of the overman). We are thus given here a model of how thought functions. Stressing his major thesis that the object of thought is the being of beings, Heidegger concludes his first person exposition of thought as follows:

One thing remains, however, to which every thinker must give thought. Nietzsche’s attempt to think the Being of beings makes it almost obtrusively clear to us moderns *that all thinking, that is related to Being,* is still difficult. (WT: 109-110, italics mine)

## 7. Elucidating the Object of Thought in *What is Called Thinking?*

### 7.1. The Call-Response Relationship between Thought and its Object

Having distinguished between thinking and science, laid out the problems associated simply with the representational account of thinking and by engaging with

Nietzsche to show that thinking can direct itself towards the question of the being of beings and in the same gesture towards the question of human nature, Heidegger goes on to reinforce his account of a non-representational, non-dialectical thinking by delving more deeply into the question of how this thought directs itself towards its object. Heidegger does not start with the claim here that thought necessarily directs itself towards the being of beings. Rather he leaves the question of the object of thought open. He starts his investigations by asking once again what thinking really is. Heidegger attempts to answer this question by clarifying how thought relates to its object and the nature of the object of the thought. The phenomenological framework within which Heidegger conducts his investigations now comes to the fore. For Heidegger, the question: What is called thinking? is essentially equivalent, as we will see, to the question: How does thinking relate to its object? which presupposes that to think is essentially to think of something, namely, the intentionality of thinking. Heidegger here also seems to employ a strategy similar to one he used in the *Beiträge*. Having distinguished thinking (which corresponds to thinking (1) of the *Beiträge*) and science (which corresponds to thinking (2) of the *Beiträge*), Heidegger goes on to lay out what thinking precisely is.

He starts by bringing out the manifoldness that lies at the heart of the question: What is called thinking? The question, according to Heidegger, can be understood in four ways:

1. What does the word 'thought' or 'thinking' actually refer to? (WT: 113)
2. How has thinking traditionally been understood? Here we grapple with logic, since traditionally thinking has been synonymous with logic. (ibid)

3. What does one need to do in order to think properly? (WT: 114) And finally,
4. What calls for thinking? (ibid.)

Heidegger straightaway claims that it is the last version of the question that is most decisive. And the three other questions can be understood as modifications of the fourth question. It is the last version of the question that reveals to us the unity that underlies these four seemingly different ways of understanding this question. Heidegger says:

These four questions [the ones listed above], whose differences we cannot rehearse, are nonetheless *one* question. Their unity stems from the question listed in the fourth place. The fourth is the decisive one – it sets the standard. For this fourth question itself asks for the standard by which our nature, as a thinking nature, is to be measured. (WT: 157)

The last question zeroes in immediately on the relationship between thought and object.

The relationship is understood in terms of a call. The object of thinking calls for thinking. Now this call should not be understood merely as a stimulation of our cognitive faculty. The call for thinking is not a simple stirring of an already existing psychological faculty. At this level we do not yet have the subject of psychology and anthropology.

Thinking here is still pre-subjective and the sense of the subject as the subject of anthropological and psychological investigation is yet to emerge in the process of interpretation. Thinking at this pre-subjective level cannot be said to have a definite subject, namely, a thinker. In fact we could say, just as we did in our discussion of the *Beiträge*, that thinking is undertaken from a kind of middle position between subject and object. A position where we do not yet have the objects dealt with by the natural sciences and the subject who is the object of investigation of the human sciences. Since we do not yet have the subject of thought, thinking cannot be understood as that which is exercised by a subjective faculty but as a process whereby the very sense of subjectivity itself is configured. Hence Heidegger can say:

Accordingly, does the question ask what it is that gives us the impetus to think on each occasion and with regard to a particular matter? No. The directions that come from what directs us into thought are much more than merely the given impetus to do some thinking.

That which directs us to think, gives us directions in such a way that we first become capable of thinking, and thus *are* thinkers, only by virtue of its directive. (WT: 115)

The relationship between thinking and its object, which Heidegger expresses here as a calling and responding, is a pre-conceptual, pre-representational relationship.

Heidegger's wager is that his dynamic of calling and response hints at a more original unity between thought and object than that of concept/representation and object. This dynamic explains how anything can be taken as a representation of anything else. For Heidegger, the causal model cannot really explain this dynamic. In fact it is for him only a way to avoid an explanation.<sup>62</sup> At this level we do not have ready-made objects just

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<sup>62</sup> By framing the question from the perspective of the fourth question, we see that Heidegger's investigations are directed towards the configuration/concretion of sense that inaugurates logical thinking and makes it possible. Such a concretion of sense is not to be understood as a historical event such as the crossing of the Rubicon or the independence of the British colonies in the sense in which it would be understood by a historian. In this prevailing sense of term "historical event," history is understood as a causal chain of events succeeding one another. In fact, we can say that Heidegger in contradistinction to this is inquiring into the event that allows us to make sense of anything like an event in the first place. Heidegger is inquiring into what one could call a sense-bestowing event. Such an event cannot be inquired into if we engage in historical inquiries of the traditional kind. Such events have no place in the traditional histories that we are familiar with. Heidegger distinguishes history in the sense of the history of events in a never ending causal chain (*Historie*) from history of sense-bestowing events (*Geschichte*). For Heidegger what is far more significant and worth thinking is not the chain of causes and effects that history is so apt at reporting but how we acquire the sense of anything like a cause and effect in the first place. These sense-bestowing events are those configuring events, which are, according to Heidegger, impervious to history in the conventional sense. In reply to the objection that the categorical framework of cause-effect is decisive and self-evident for any explanation of anything, Heidegger is asking about this very self-evidence. The self-evidence of causal explanation is not itself self-evident. Hence for Heidegger it makes perfect sense to ask: how does this categorical framework of cause, effect, space, time become self-evident in the first place? What makes it possible for us to apply the categories of cause, effect, space and time to explain the world around us? In Heidegger's words, what destines us to use these categories in the way we do? These are for him not fundamentally meaningless questions but ones that demand urgent answers.

waiting for representation by means of concepts or ideas. All we can be said to have is a pre-understanding characterized as call. It is out of this pre-understanding that the distinction between subject and object emerges.<sup>63</sup> For Heidegger, calling is not a simple act of clipping a name tag onto an already existing object. Calling has to be understood for Heidegger in its original sense of configuring something or making sense of something. (WT: 120) For Heidegger calling configures something as something. To name something is thus to call it into being, to make place for it among beings as another being. Calling thus invites a thing to occupy its rightful place among beings. With this peculiar sense of the word “calling” which is not used in everyday speech, Heidegger gives us a sense of the kind of interpretation involved at the level of naming. To name something as something is an act of ontological interpretation whereby something acquires its sense as a being for the very first time.<sup>64</sup>

Starting with the first formulation, Heidegger thus goes onto to show how each of the remaining formulations concerns the same call-response dynamic between thought and its object. Each formulation, in addition, accentuates various aspects of this complex dynamic. So turning to the first formulation which asks what the word “thinking” actually means, Heidegger goes back to the old German provenance of the word thinking (*denken, Gedanc*) and discovers a very close relationship between thinking and memory (*Gedächtnis*) and thanking (*Dank*). Thinking, Heidegger argues, is not originally understood as an ideating or representation but as a gathering of thought. Thinking is thus intimately connected to memory. Memory here is to be understood as a fond

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<sup>63</sup> In fact it is not strictly a pre-understanding but a synthesis of understanding and intuition.

<sup>64</sup> Heidegger’s descriptions aim at revealing to us a level that is antecedent to psychological explanation. The effort here is to open up a new space of description that goes beyond the horizon of psychology and anthropology but which at the same time renders these disciplines possible.

reminiscence. (WT: 144-5) But memory is not only related to the past. Heidegger claims here that memory is a gathering of the past, present and the future. Memory is thus an original configuration of sense because it is able to bring together disparate elements into a sensible unity. This bringing together is not at all a detached retention of scattered data lumped together in a purely quantitative sense. So the prevalent meaning of memory as storage of data is for Heidegger a modification of its original meaning. There is a sense of gratitude already contained in this original understanding of the term memory as a fond remembrance. One can thus see how the terms memory, thanks and thinking form a closed circle of meaning which is in need of exploration. Now this thanking is not to be understood as a transaction wherein one gives something back for what he owes. Rather the thanks here are a thankfulness for one's very existence. One is thankful that one has been granted one's essence. Here one is thankful for the most fundamental gift one can receive: the gift of one's own nature and the thankfulness can manifest itself only as thinking. It is thinking as the answer to the original call that bestows upon us our nature.<sup>65</sup> So here we come back to what was hinted in the fourth formulation with which Heidegger began, namely, that thinking cannot be attributed to a subject and thus cannot be understood originally as a subjective faculty. Rather it is in thinking that something like subjectivity first gains sense and is acquired. As Heidegger says here:

The *thanc* means man's inmost mind, the heart, of heart's core, that innermost essence of man which reaches outward most fully and to the outermost limits, and so decisively that, rightly considered, the idea of an inner and an outer world do not arise. (WT: 144)

The configuration of sense, which memory is, is not to be understood under the rubric of a preservation and corruption. To say that something is gathered together in

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<sup>65</sup> For another account of this relationship between thinking and thanking see Rudolf Gerber, "Heidegger, Thinking and Thanking Being," *Modern Schoolman* 44 (1967): 205-222.

original memory, which is thinking in its fundamental determination, should not automatically lead us to conclude that in thinking or in memory something is preserved forever and what is forgotten or no longer preserved is a major failing of memory and signifies correspondingly an absence of thought. For Heidegger, forgetting or oblivion just like memory has a specific synthetic character and can be understood as a configuration of sense. Even oblivion can be seen as a response to a call just as much as memory. Forgetting and memory can both be construed as original configurations of sense. In fact the whole of western philosophy, according to Heidegger, begins with an original forgetting of the question of being of beings by the Greeks.

## 7.2. Thinking as a Pre-Logical Activity in Parmenides

This effort to go back to the earlier uses of the word “thinking” is an effort at understanding the original relationship between thinking and its object. And so it is not a matter of detailing blandly the transformations that have occurred within language. Heidegger argues that, because the first question questions the way the word “thinking” has been used in language, it naturally leads to the second formulation which questions after the way thinking has been understood since ancient times. This is because our understanding of thinking has not taken its lead from language and the linguistic meaning of the word thinking. Rather our understanding of the word has taken its lead from logic. In fact we could say that if there is a dominant way in which thinking has been comprehended in the history of western philosophy, it is logic. For logic has since the ancients given us the rules of thinking and thereby governed our understanding of what

thinking really is. Logic stems from the ancient Greek understanding of thought as proposition. According to the Greeks, to think is essentially to say something about something. In doing so, we connect the subject, about which something is said, with the predicate, which is said of the subject, by means of a copula. Such a connection between the subject and the object by means of a copula is a proposition. Under this understanding, one cannot say two incompatible things of the same subject. “Only because thinking is defined as λόγος, as an utterance, can the statement about contradiction perform its role as a law of thought.” (WT: 155) Here according to Heidegger, we arrive immediately at the question of logic which at the same time brings us to the second question: How has thinking been understood since ancient times until today in logic? But for Heidegger the question is to be understood by taking one’s lead from the fourth formulation which contains the crucial sense of this question, which is: How did we come to understand thinking in terms of logic? What is it that has called us into understanding and characterizing it so? Thus we can once again see the unifying form of the fourth question over the remaining three questions.

Heidegger sets himself the task of answering how it is that we are called into understanding and characterizing thinking as logic. It is a unique sense-bestowing event in which thinking acquires its sense for the first time as logic. He argues that the early Greek thinkers were attuned to the possibility of such a sense-bestowing event and their writings are a response to this concretion of sense. In their writings, wagers Heidegger, one can get a glimpse of this sense in the making. One can see them engage in ontological interpretation although they themselves were not explicitly aware of it. So it



is that in these thinkers it is possible to see thinking at work and not just science. This is what Heidegger means when he says:

What is that calling which commends our Western thinking to its proper beginnings, and from there still directs even today's thinking on its way? The thinkers of the fateful beginnings of Western thought did not, of course raise the question of the calling, as we are trying to do now. What distinguishes the beginning is rather that those thinkers experienced the claim of the calling by responding to it in thought. But with such a destiny, must they not have come to comprehend explicitly the calling that starts their thinking on its way? We may assume so, simply because any thinking is sent out on its way only when it is addressed by that which gives food for thought as that which is to-be-thought. In this address, however, the source of the call itself appears, though not in its full radiance nor under the same name. But before inquiring about the calling that encompasses all Western and modern European thinking, we must try to listen to an early saying which gives us evidence how much early thought generally responds to a call, yet without naming it, or giving it thought, as such. Perhaps we need no more than to recall this one testimony in order to give the fitting, that is, a restrained answer to the initial calling.

The doctrine of thinking is called logic because thinking develops in the *λέγειν* of the *λόγος*. We are barely capable of comprehending that at one time this was not so, that a calling became "needful" in order to set thinking on the way of the *λόγος* into the *λέγειν*. (WT: 167-68)

For the purpose of his investigation, Heidegger thus selects the saying of Parmenides:

"One should both say and think that being is." In the translation of this saying from

Parmenides, Heidegger addresses now the question of the object of thought. For

Heidegger this saying of Parmenides is precisely a depiction of pre-logical, pre-

conceptual thinking whereby we have the ontological interpretation of the very being of

beings. We can also describe this ontological interpretation of the being of beings as a

"sense in the making."<sup>66</sup> Thus, in contrast to the conventional translation, Heidegger's

final translation is: "Useful to let-be-before-us so (the) taking-to-heart also: beings in

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<sup>66</sup> I owe the use of this expression "sense in the making" to Pol Vandavelde. See Pol Vandavelde, "An Unpleasant but Felicitous Ambiguity: Sinn and Bedeutung in Husserl's Revisions of the Logical Investigations," in *Meaning and Language: Phenomenological Perspectives*. Ed. Filip Mattens (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 43.

being.” Heidegger’s translation is an attempt, as we will see in the forthcoming discussion, to salvage the sense-making, dynamic core of this saying.

We start with the very first part of the saying which is conventionally translated as “One must” and which Heidegger translates as “It is useful.” The term “use” here denotes the manner in which using something brings the thing out of its anonymity and gives it a place in the scheme of things already clear to us, so that it remains in that place and does not step back into anonymity. In being so drawn out of its anonymity, the thing receives its essence. But this does not mean that the essence of a thing is so permanently fixed that it never changes. For Heidegger, it is not up to the human being to decide on its essence. Essence is not a mere outcome, effect or result of human action. Rather human action is possible only when things are in a way usable. To use a thing one has to be responsive to the constraints that already shape our relationship to things. These constraints are what we call concrete possibilities which concretize into the things that we know and use. This is what Heidegger describes as the hearing of a call. What we read in the saying of Parmenides is the implicit recognition of these concrete possibilities, the call of being, although he himself is simply not aware of it. Parmenides’ saying is the very genesis of thinking. This is precisely what he says here:

In the *χρη* of Parmenides’ saying, a call is identified, although it is not thought out, much less explicated. Every primal and proper identification states something unspoken, and states it so that it remains unspoken. (WT: 196)

The saying of Parmenides is thinking receiving its essence for the first time in Western history – a sense bestowing event. This is what the innocuous looking first part of the saying, “It is useful,” establishes according to Heidegger. Hence Heidegger concludes that one should eschew using the term ‘thinking’ in the translation of this saying because

in this very saying, the very sense of thinking is being churned out for the first time. So to use a word like ‘thinking,’ which already has a fixed and settled meaning, is to completely overlook the formative nature of Parmenides’ saying. As Heidegger says here:

We simply do not notice how violently and crudely we turn everything upside down and throw it into confusion through the usual translation, precisely because it is lexically correct. It does not even occur to us at the end, or here better in the beginning of Western thinking that the saying of Parmenides speaks to us for the first time of what is called thinking. We miss the point, therefore, if we may use the word thinking in the translation. For in that way we assume that the Greek text is already speaking of thinking as if it were a fully settled matter, whereas in fact the text only leads up to the nature of thinking. We may not give “thinking” as the translation of either *λέγειν* taken by itself, or *νοεῖν* taken by itself. (WD: 119; WT: 197, translation modified)

Not satisfied with the conventional terms ‘saying’ and ‘thinking’ used to translated *λέγειν* and *νοεῖν* respectively, Heidegger attempts to translate them anew to give us a glimpse of this very sense in the making.

Heidegger argues in regard to the translation of the word ‘*λέγειν*’ that although it is correct to translate *λέγειν* as reporting or telling or saying and hence something related to speaking, these terms still hide a sense that is in dire need of being brought to the fore. The connection between saying and speaking is not self-evident although we deem it to be so. Heidegger seeks to clarify the hidden sense of these connections by focusing on the similarity between the Greek *λέγειν* and the Latin *legere*. Heidegger concludes on the basis of this similarity that the former like the latter is intimately connected to the simple act of laying. To report something, to speak about something, to state something, Heidegger argues, are all different ways of laying something out. The Greek understanding of *λέγειν* as stating owes its inception to this more original meaning, i.e. laying. But something could lie before us even without our actively laying it out. It is

this original sense of laying that one finds concealed in the Greek term *hypokeimenon*, which means what lies before everything and can thus contains everything else.<sup>67</sup> Even further, according to Heidegger, this sense of laying pervades even the Greek word *thesis* which means setting up or installing something. *Thesis* and thus Plato's term 'hypothesis' in the *Republic* are not to be understood originally as presuppositions or mental constructions of an ideating subject but as that situation in which something lies before us, what is given to us a foundation on which we can build something. Hence Heidegger translates the term *λέγειν* as letting-lie-before in order to be faithful to the original sense in the making.

Heidegger uses the word perceive (*vernehmen*) to translate *νοεῖν*. Here perceiving is to be understood as a receiving but not simply as a passive reception. *Νοεῖν* for Heidegger conceals a sense of activity in the sense of "undertaking something." (WT: 203) What is undertaken in *νοεῖν* is a treasuring. When we actively treasure something, we are very watchful and keen not to intervene and modify it. As we receive it we let it as it is and keep it as it is. This receptivity is not a mere mechanical receptivity but is coupled with an attitude of thankfulness and devotion. It is thus a taking to heart. Heidegger thus translates *νοεῖν* as taking-something-to-heart.

It is only when something is allowed to lay before us that it can be preserved in the heart. This explains why *λέγειν* precedes *νοεῖν* in the saying of Parmenides. Now, *λέγειν* not only precedes *νοεῖν*, but it has the bigger role to play in thinking because whatever is taken to heart is retained as gathering and can be preserved only as such a gathering. The relationship between *λέγειν* and *νοεῖν* is not a linear relationship of two

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<sup>67</sup> Lying before also does not have to be contrasted with something standing before us. In the extended sense of lying that Heidegger is invoking here, standing is also a form of lying.

unconnected activities whereby when *λέγειν* ends, *νοεῖν* takes over. There is a reciprocal relationship between the two where each in a way leads to the other. *Λέγειν* in a way calls for *νοεῖν* and *νοεῖν* is possible only as a *λέγειν*. “We have already taken to heart what lies before us. *Λέγειν* is tacitly disposed to *νοεῖν*...The relation between *λέγειν* and *νοεῖν* is not a patchwork of things and attitudes otherwise alien to each other. The relation is a conjunction, and what is joined here is, each of itself, related to, that is, connatural with the other.” (WT: 209)<sup>68</sup>

It is from this complex relation between *λέγειν* and *νοεῖν*, that logical thinking, which we know and understand as the only form of thinking, takes its shape as *λέγειν* and becomes understood as *logos* as the proposition. *Νοεῖν* in turn comes to be understood as reason. These two facets of proposition and reason become the hallmarks of what is understood as thinking in Western European history. As he says:

Thinking becomes the *λέγειν* of the *logos* in the sense of proposition. At the same time, thinking becomes the *νοεῖν* in the sense of apprehension by reason. The two definitions are coupled together, and so determine what is henceforth called thinking in the Western-European tradition. (WT: 210)

But this complicated understanding of the relationship between *λέγειν* and *νοεῖν* is only part of the story concerning thinking. The other important and, for our purposes, central issue is the object of the thought. This is exactly what the second half of the saying addresses as Heidegger makes clear:

But *λέγειν* and *νοεῖν* is useful not just in general and by and large, as though we were dealing merely with an invitation to be attentive whenever we form ideas, as though the saying, expressed in terms of the usual translation, intended to say: it is necessary that we think. On the contrary, the saying is leading towards the first flash of dawn of the nature of thinking.

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<sup>68</sup> See Fay, “Thinking as *Noein*” for a detailed account of this relationship between *λέγειν* and *νοεῖν*.

But what, in turn, determines that nature? What else but that to which *λέγειν* and *νοεῖν* refer? And that is identified in the word immediately following. The word is *εἶόν*. *Ἐόν* is translated as “being.”...The lack of the article further increases the strangeness. *Ἐόν* specifies That by which the letting-lie-before-us and the taking-to-heart are engaged. (WT: 214)

### 7.3. Being as the Object of Thought

As we can read from this passage, thinking is ultimately defined by what it is directed towards, its object so to speak. This object of thinking is conventionally translated as being. What is important for Heidegger is that we understand what we mean by being. And here he hazards a very unconventional definition of the term. He points to Parmenides’ use in this saying of two different locutions for the term being, to be and being, these being *εἶόν* and *ἔμμεναι*. But he argues that the two terms: being (*εἶόν*) and to be (*ἔμμεναι*) refer to the same thing and belong together. Heidegger comes to this conclusion by taking recourse to other texts by Parmenides where he uses the two terms interchangeably. The term being (*εἶόν*) as a participle can be used in two senses: It can refer to a particular object but it can also be used to refer to an act of doing something. In the first sense being is understood as a substantive, e.g., the flower as it is blooming. Here we focus on the rose which is the site of the blooming and the term being in this sense refers to the substance, the rose, where blooming is instantiated. At the same time, we can so take being as an act, as in the act of walking as opposed to the act of the sitting. Here we focus not on the locus of the act but on the act itself, be it walking, sitting or being. For Heidegger the object of thought is not being in the sense of the substantive nor being in the sense of the verbal but this very twofoldness (*Zwiespalt*). And the

question for Heidegger is the concretion of this twofold sense of being (*έόν*) and to be (*έμμεναι*). In fact the very sense of the existence of anything at all and thereby the very nature of description relies on this twofoldness which is seldom if ever reflected upon. It is this twofold nature of being that allows for all other participles. Far from being an abstract form of the participle, being, for Heidegger, is the most concrete of all participle and makes all other participles possible. As he says here:

The participle *έόν*, being, is not just one *more* participle among countless others; *έόν*, *ens*, being is the participle which gathers all other possible participles into itself. The dual meaning of participles stems from the duality of what they tacitly designate. But this dualism in its turn stems from a *distinctive* duality that is concealed in the word *έόν*, being. One might suppose that participles like blossoming, sounding, flowing, aching are concrete, while the participle *έόν*, being, is always abstract. The opposite is true...In keeping with that dual nature, a being has its being in Being, and Being persists as the Being of a being. There does not exist another kind of twofoldness that can compare with this. (WT: 221)

There have been many attempts, the earliest made by Plato, to explain the relationship between the two senses of the term being. Plato's concept of *methexis* or participation explains that beings participate in Being. To explain this even further, the nominal sense of the term being is generally used as a referent for concrete particulars and the verbal sense of the term being is used to indicate the mode of existence of a concrete particular, its beingness or its Being, and is understood generally as a universal. Several concrete particulars can be subsumed for instance under a single mode of being. For instance, several concrete horses can be subsumed under a general grouping "horse" which indicates their specific mode of existence as horses. So when we talk of beings we understand beings in their Being or as existing or in mode of existence specific to them and when we talk of Being in the sense of existing we understand this mode of existence of a concrete particular and hence as the Being of beings. But the concept of

participation already presupposes a distinction in being. It operates within this twofoldness of being, a twofoldness which for Heidegger is in no way obvious but actually the most unique. As he says here:

When we say “Being,” it means the “Being of beings.” When we say “beings,” it means “beings in respect of Being.” We are always speaking *within* the duality. The duality is always a prior datum, for Parmenides as much as for Plato, Kant as much as Nietzsche. The duality has developed beforehand the sphere within which the relation of beings of Being becomes capable of being mentally represented. That relation can be represented and explained in various ways (WT: 227)

Although Heidegger does not use the term *Sein* in these lectures, *Sein*, translated as being, as we have already seen in the previous section of this chapter, refers precisely to this uniqueness of being.<sup>69</sup> What Heidegger is hinting at in these lectures with the twofoldness of being can be seen as the counterpart of *Sein* in his *Beiträge*. This unique twofoldness of being within which the whole of western philosophy can be said to operate is the original concretion of sense towards which Heidegger wants to draw our attention. Although Heidegger does not ask the question of whether being could be interpreted in a manner different from that of two-foldedness here, he does pursue this question very energetically in the *Beiträge*. The investigations in these lectures do nothing to endanger the validity of that question which in the context of these lectures can be formulated as follows: If history began in Greece only with the concretion of the sense of being as twofold, is it possible for a second beginning of history whereby another sense of being would emerge, something very different from twofoldness. However if we operate only at the level of conceptual substitution of terms, as for example, *εἶναι* for being and *εἶμεναι* for ‘to be,’ we completely overlook the dynamic sense in the making of the being of beings that is still at work in this original Greek

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<sup>69</sup> See CP, section 267



saying. As a result we are unable to come to grips with what thinking really demands.

This is exactly what Heidegger means when he says:

But so long as that which the words *εἶναι* and *εἶμεναι* state dissolves in the vague terms “beings” and “to be,” we cannot hear what the saying says. For these terms offer no guarantee that they carry *across* to us what the Greek *εἶναι εἶμεναι* tells. The translation is still no translation if we merely replace the words *εἶναι* and *εἶμεναι* with our own terms “being” and “to be,” or the Latin *ens* and *esse*. (WT: 226)

The Greeks, according to Heidegger, although not expressly aware of the unique twofoldness of beings do exhibit a secondary awareness in that they constantly make efforts starting with Parmenides and then later with Plato and Aristotle to explain how the two senses of being that arise out of this twofoldness of being can relate to each other. And these attempts, according to Heidegger, have always been made under a more concrete interpretation of the unique twofoldness of being, which is the interpretation of being as the presence of what is present. This understanding of being as the presence of what is present has remained undisputed right up to our age of modern technology and all of our engagements with the world have been rendered possible and fruitful as a result:

If the Being of beings, in the sense of the being here of what is present, did not already prevail, beings could not have appeared as objects, as what is objective in objects – and only by such objectivity do they become available to the ideas and propositions in the positing and disposing of nature by which we constantly take inventory of the energies we can wrest from nature. (WT: 234)

To think, for Heidegger in these lectures, is to attempt to think the presence of the present which is different from thinking about ideas or particular objects. To make the presence of what is present the object of our thought is, however, very different from making the properties of a quark the object of our thought. For here, as we have mentioned before, we are concerned with the very sense in the making and not with already established unities of sense like the object of theoretical physics.

## 8. Conclusion

Heidegger's account of the object of thought emerges through a concerted effort to make space for a new determination of thinking itself, a new determination not dominated by the traditional accounts of thinking found in logic. Heidegger attempts to move away from the dominant understanding of thinking as logical or conceptual or propositional thinking and correspondingly his account of the object of thought moves away from the conventional candidates such as concepts and particulars. We thus find two different attempts in the *Beiträge* and *What is Called Thinking?* Although, as we have illustrated, the two attempts do have a similar thrust and have several important common features.

Heidegger's account seems to go some way towards addressing one of the most intractable problems which plague the conventional accounts of object of thinking, be they concepts, ideas or concrete things. This is the problem of accounting for the meaning or the sense that our ideas, concepts and concrete objects. Our concepts, our ideas and concrete things are, in addition to everything that they are, unities of sense. But the conventional representational theories of ideation and concept formation which rely on some kind of causal explanation fail to account for how objects can make sense, how something can make sense in general, and how objects can gain and lose sense. How can things or states of affairs which made sense at one time in history suddenly become nonsensical in another time in history? There is a dynamism that objects possess as unities of sense that is overlooked by the conventional accounts of the object of thought. The conventional accounts of thinking as the generation of ideas, concepts and judgments

seems to leave out this seeming crucial sense-making aspect involved in all thinking and are too static to account for the dynamic hinterground of the object.

Heidegger's reflections are a sustained attempt to explore in as deep a manner as possible the inevitable ontological and epistemological implications of the level of sense-making, to account precisely for this dynamism that objects seem to possess as unities of sense. In his framework the sense or the meaning of an object is not something accidental to it. Because the object is always encountered as something sensible as a unity of sense, to distinguish between the objectivity of the object and the sense or the meaning of the object is bound to be an artificial distinction. The objectivity of the object and the sense of the object go hand in hand. Objectivity has traditionally hinged on the distinction between two senses of the terms being – the nominal and the verbal sense. These two senses can be cashed out as particularity and universality respectively. Universals and particulars have been the two candidates that have always found support in philosophy as the rightful and primary objects of thought at the expense of each other. But the advocates of both candidates fail to do justice to the sense of the objects we encounter. So in the *Beiträge* we see Heidegger adopt a third way wherein neither the universal nor the particular is the object of thought. We can really say that something exists only if it makes sense. Rather than starting out with the theoretical distinction between universal and particulars as something self-evident Heidegger starts out with concrete possibilities for making sense and tries to show us the genesis of this theoretical distinction. Only when there are concrete possibilities of making sense of something can something like the distinction between universals and particulars emerge in the first place. The universal-particular distinction is essentially one concrete possibility of

making sense of things and it has a very concrete provenance in the Greek world. It is only when there are such concrete possibilities of sense can causal explanations be given. It is these concrete possibilities of making sense of things that answer to the name *Seyn* (be-ing) as opposed to being or beings. It is these concrete possibilities that are the objects of thinking for Heidegger. But object here is only a manner of speaking. For Heidegger this awareness ontologically precedes the distinction between subject and object and makes it possible. At this level of sense-making the thinker is not yet a subject and there is strictly speaking no object. What we have here is a position in between subject and object out of which the subject and object emerge. Rather than starting out with the distinction between subject and object and then explaining how the two would relate, something which has been attempted time and again unsuccessfully in the history of philosophy, Heidegger starts out with the in-between. In doing so he attempts a bold new answer to the question of the relationship between subject and object which has never been quite satisfactorily answered in the history of philosophy.

Although Heidegger does not use the term *Seyn* in *What is Called Thinking?*, he does stress that the object of thinking is neither the nominal nor the verbal sense of being but the very unique twofoldness of being itself. This duality that lies at the heart of being is not something obvious and cannot be taken for granted. It is a very specific and unique configuration of sense. It is this unique twofoldness that allows us to make sense of everything around us for it is what permits the subsumption of particulars under universals. This twofoldness of being is further cashed out by the Greeks in terms of presence. Presence becomes one of the overriding determinations of being. Again for Heidegger the determination of being as presence is a concretion of sense which makes

possible our access to individual things and our understanding them in terms of universal concepts. However there is nothing self-evident about the relationship between being and presence. In fact for Heidegger this relationship is very unique. It is the task of thinking to direct itself to the presence of what is present and ask whether being can be understood otherwise. With the awareness of the twofoldness that lies at the heart of being and with the forging of the relationship between being and presence, what we have is, what Vandeveld calls, a “sense in the making.” Such an awareness of concrete possibilities and their actualization, such an active sense-making is not *per se* conceptual. However only when there is such awareness, only when a concrete possibility to make sense is actualized can conceptual thinking become possible. The object of thought is thus being. But being understood as a horizon of sense to which the history of western philosophy has paid little attention in a sustained manner, but in which our understanding of concrete entities, be they universals or particulars, is grounded.

### Chapter III

#### What is it to Know Things?: A Comparison of Husserl's Transcendental Framework to Heidegger's Ontological Framework of the History of Being

##### 1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have seen Heidegger attempt to re-understand what thought is and in the process overcome the dualisms in which he believed the traditional epistemological notions of thought were bogged down. Within the framework of his Kant interpretation, Heidegger tries to rehabilitate Kant's notion of the transcendental power of imagination which he argues overcomes the dualism between intuition and logical thinking. In the transcendental power of the imagination Heidegger thus discovers a new and more original form of thinking that is even more basic than logical thinking. As we argued in the previous chapter, we can say that he carries forward the rather nascent arguments in the Kant-book regarding the transcendental power of the imagination into his later work the *Beiträge* where he tries to pursue a radical alternative to all the traditional notions of thought by developing the notion of inceptual thinking. But now the question that confronts us is namely this: If thinking is radically reformulated in this manner, what are the implications of this reformulation for the question of knowledge? That is to say, how would we define what it is to know something? Within the phenomenological framework that Heidegger's pursues his questions, to ask: How can we know something? is to ask: How does something give itself to us as something knowable? Or how can we constitute something as knowable?

In this chapter I would like to develop Heidegger's response to this question.<sup>70</sup> But in order to bring out Heidegger's position on this issue with utmost clarity, I will lay out his account as a response to Husserl's position on the same issue.<sup>71</sup> I will thereby be accomplishing three tasks through my investigations. Firstly, I will show that both Husserl and Heidegger agree that there is a synthesis involved in the constitution of the object of the knowledge. Secondly, that they also agree that the causal accounts we see in traditional epistemology are completely inadequate to explain how the object of knowledge is constituted. Thirdly, that they differ in their accounts of this constitution. And that while Husserl resorts to a transcendental account of the constitution of the object of knowledge; Heidegger resorts to a historical account of this constitution of the object of knowledge. This will, I believe, help unveil the radical nature of Heidegger's position in the most transparent manner.

Accordingly, the first section of this paper will then be devoted to Husserl's position on the question of knowing of a thing followed by Heidegger's position. We will then conclude by showing that both Husserl and Heidegger give us two different ways of challenging the dichotomy that plagued epistemology in various guises since its inception between the thing-in-itself and the thing as it appears to us.

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<sup>70</sup> In order to lay out Heidegger's position I choose a close reading of Martin Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (Tübingen: Max Niemayer Verlag, 1962). Translated by W. B. Barton, Jr. and Vera Deutsch as *What is a Thing?* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1967). I see this text as Heidegger's most sustained attempt to understand scientific knowledge. Will be cited in text as WTH

<sup>71</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Transzendentaler Idealismus: Texte aus dem Nachlass (1908-1921)*, ed. Robin D. Rollinger, Rochus Sowa (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003)

## 2. Husserl's transcendental idealist account of our knowledge of things

### 2.1. The Formula of Husserl's Revised Transcendental Idealism

Husserl's reformulation of the object of knowledge happens under a new framework that he devises under the name of transcendental idealism. Husserl, in his version of transcendental idealism, aims to depart from Kant's program of the same name thereby alleviating most if not all the weaknesses of the Kantian project. For Husserl, the fundamental premise of transcendental idealism is that there is always a correlation between consciousness and objects. And so it is not possible to understand the being of objects or consciousness outside of this correlation. It is only within such a correlation that both consciousness and objects come to be. So questions concerning our knowledge of things can be meaningfully answered only within this correlation. And so within this framework, Husserl addresses the extremely problematic nature of perception of the transcendent object or what he calls the problem of the transcendence and the puzzle of the cognition of the in-itself. This is why a reformulation of the idea of the object as it has been traditionally postulated in metaphysics and epistemology is necessary. This reformulation will thereby involve a reformulation of our idea of nature, of natural scientific object and a new understanding of the very idea of a natural science. For the remainder of my discussion of Husserl, I will be confining myself mainly to *Husserliana* volume XXXVI titled, *Transzendentaler Idealismus: Texte aus dem Nachlass (1908-1921)*.<sup>72</sup> The volume comprehensively brings to the fore Husserl's

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<sup>72</sup> For studies devoted to this volume see Rudolf Bernet, "Husserl's Transcendental Idealism Revisted," trans. Basil Vassilicos *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and*



program of transcendental idealism by assembling together all the research manuscripts and lecture notes that Husserl composed on this topic.

Some of the most dominant theories in the arena of epistemology are the causal inferential theories. Husserl therefore devotes quite a few manuscripts towards the criticism of the causal-inferential theories.<sup>73</sup> As Husserl points out, the stance commonly adopted by these theories is as follows: that there is a state of affairs in consciousness which stands for the transcendent object outside consciousness and the relationship between the state of affairs within conscious and the transcendent object lying outside consciousness is either one of causality or one of inference. So the transcendent object lying outside consciousness causes the relevant state of affairs within consciousness or I infer from the state of affairs present within consciousness to the existence of the transcendent object outside consciousness. Only by zeroing in on the core philosophical deficiencies of these theories can one begin to understand the need for new theories such

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*Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4 (2004): 1-20, László Tengelyi, *Der methodologische Transzendentalismus der Phänomenologie* (lecture, Leuven, Belgium, April 2, 2009), Vittorio de Palma, "Ist Husserls Phänomenologie ein transzendentaler Idealismus?" *Husserl Studies* 21 (2005): 183-286; Thane Martin Naberhaus, "Husserl's Transcendental Idealism," *Husserl Studies* 23, no. 3 (2007): 247-260. Also see my own "Consciousness, Humans and the World: A Critical Review of Husserl's Transzendentaler Idealismus: Texte aus dem Nachlass (1908-1921)," *Recherches Husserliennes* 24 (2006): 101. For more general accounts of Husserl's transcendental idealism see Dan Zahavi, "Internalism, Externalism and Transcendental Idealism," *Synthese: An International Journal for Epistemology, Methodology and Philosophy of Science* 160, no. 3 (2008): 355-374; Sebastian Luft, "From Being to Givenness and Back: Some Remarks on the Meaning of Transcendental Idealism in Kant and Husserl," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 15, no. 3 (2007): 367-394; Herman Philipse, "Transcendental Idealism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, ed. Barry Smith (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Ingrid M. Wallner, "In Defense of Husserl's Transcendental Idealism: Roman Ingarden's Critique Re-examined," *Husserl Studies* 4 (1987): 3-43; Wesley Morriston, "Intentionality and the Phenomenological Method: A Critique Of Husserl's Transcendental Idealism," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 7 (1976): 33-43.

<sup>73</sup> See *Beilage I* and *II* as well as Text No. 10 in *Hua XXXVI* devoted to the criticism of the causal-inferential theories.

as transcendental idealism in order to clarify the basic relationship between our perception of objects and the objects as they stand in themselves.<sup>74</sup> To this end, Husserl wonders how one could rightly say that what is in the sphere of consciousness stands for something outside of it to which there would be no access. On what basis do I make this inference and what guarantees its correctness? Husserl's critique can figuratively be explained as follows. Supposing there is an infinitely tall wall which is also infinitely long so that I have no way to scale it and know what lies beyond it; supposing there is a white mark on this side of the wall, on what basis would I infer that there is something corresponding to the white mark on the other side of the wall? Husserl wonders about the notion of immediate perception in the same manner. How can I know a priori that what is perceived stands for some object on the outside? If my knowledge is a posteriori then there yet has to be some immediate perception that is presupposed in my mediate perception.

So all inferential-causal theories have to content themselves with saying that their inferences only concern immanent contents and that they simply cannot transcend consciousness. A definitive argument that Husserl makes here is that I can infer something on the basis of some regularity only within the content of consciousness (immanent). All my inferences will have to start from something in the content of consciousness and also end up in the content of consciousness. No inference can be made from content to something which is just not a content (transcendent object). In the same way, the outer world, according to Husserl is not something inferred. I determine this world, says Husserl from my experiences and perceptions. He denies that

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<sup>74</sup> We must be clear however that transcendental idealism is not just an epistemological theory. The thesis of transcendental idealism seeks to understand anew the very nature of reality and not merely our knowledge of it.

the existence of the world for consciousness can be a result of a causal relationship between consciousness and the objects of the world. Because my seeing the world is not an inference from cause to effect but rather an immediate seeing of the world and it is on this immediate perception of the world that all the outer sciences are based on.

The fundamental thesis of transcendental idealism can be stated as follows: It is not possible to conceive of the existence of the object except in relation to consciousness. By consciousness, Husserl means both individual and absolute consciousness and he advances many interesting formulations of consciousness in order to explain this link between individual and absolute consciousness. According to the thesis of transcendental idealism, the fact that objects give themselves to consciousness in perception, imagination, judgment and other such conscious activities is not something accidental to the object. Indeed it belongs to their very being that objects give themselves to consciousness; make themselves known as it were. If we accept that the relationship of the object to consciousness is not something accidental that happens to objects then we have a new formulation of the very being of the object because from now on we can make sense of the existence of an object only within the correlation between consciousness and objects. To put it differently, objects come to be objects, find their being as it were, only within the correlation between consciousness and objects. We can thereby make sense of knowledge and objects of knowledge only within this correlation between consciousness and objects. To speak with Husserl in this regard:

Let us now think of a reality that is absolute in the sense that it is what it is whether consciousness in general is or is not a reality, that either does not stand in any relationship to consciousness because there is absolutely no consciousness or stands in relationship to a consciousness, but in such a way that standing in this relationship to consciousness is accidental to it. Or must we also advance the case (of a reality) that is so ordered that in

principle no consciousness can stand in any relationship to it? With regard to the latter, we must exclude the last case. It is nonsensical. If something is so must it in principle be assertable in truth that it is, the truth of the assertion must be groundable (*begründbar*). That it is not must on these grounds be refutable. (Hua XXXVI, 54)<sup>75</sup>

If our cognition of the object in some sense constitutes the object without actually producing it, what does that do to the concept of knowledge in general and the objects of knowledge? The aim of transcendental idealism is not to understand the properties of object and what it is. Rather it seeks to understand what the objectivity of the object consists in from within this correlation between consciousness and the object. It tries to arrive at the sense of the object that is taken for granted by the pure and the applied sciences.<sup>76</sup> In this regard, Husserl acknowledges:

What objectivity is according to all its modes, that is what naturalistic (*natürliche*) thinking tells us and indeed in its highest manifestation as natural science (In that regard logic and mathematics as formal ontology).

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<sup>75</sup> “Denken wir uns nun eine Wirklichkeit, die absolut ist in dem Sinn, dass sie ist, was sie ist, ob Bewusstsein überhaupt ist oder nicht, die entweder zu gar keinem Bewusstsein in Beziehung steht, sofern Bewusstsein überhaupt nicht ist, oder die zu solchem in Beziehung steht, aber so, dass ihr zufällig ist, zu ihm in Beziehung zu stehen. Oder müssen wir etwa auch den Fall <einer Wirklichkeit> anführen, die so geartet ist, dass prinzipiell kein Bewusstsein zu ihr überhaupt in Beziehung stehen kann? Was das Letztere anlangt, so müssen wir diesen Fall ausscheiden. Er ist ein Nonsens. Ist etwas, so muss, dass es ist, prinzipiell in Wahrheit aussagbar, die Wahrheit <dieser Aussage> begründbar sein. Dass es nicht ist, muss aus Gründen widerlegbar sein.”

<sup>76</sup> In this regard I want to distinguish my position from that of Vittorio de Palma (see Vittorio de Palma, “Ist Husserls Phänomenologie ein transzendentaler Idealismus?,” 183-206) that Husserl’s transcendental idealism is doomed by a fatal conflict between a critical motive that seeks to find an alternative to the realism of Brentano and Riehl, which grounds our knowledge of objects in something that is in principle unknowable and unrelatable to consciousness thereby creating an irresolvable duality between consciousness and the thing in itself, and a dogmatic motive that seeks to reduce reality to the immanent contents of consciousness. As I will be arguing in the rest of this section, the articles and lectures collected under Hua XXXVI show how transcendental idealism is a remarkable effort on Husserl’s part to build a non-reductive theoretical framework of a correlation between consciousness and objects that tries its best to account for the relationship between consciousness and objects in all its complexity and in doing so he gives us an alternative account of knowledge and its object which cannot be ignored.

But what the “sense” of objectivity is as a unity of knowledge lies in a completely different rank. In the one case, we are objectively directed; we simply make judgments about the objects, be they objects in their most universal universality or about things in general, about numbers in general etc. In the other case we make judgments about the objectivity in relation to “knowledge.” We question what it is to understand, how knowledge in itself can accomplish a relationship to objectivity and how the correctness, validity of the existential positing (*Seinssetzung*) of knowledge can be understood, how one can understand that connections of consciousness ordered in such and such a way include, in accordance with their essence, the validity of the objective relationship. (Hua XXXVI, 26)<sup>77</sup>

## 2.2. The Correlation between Consciousness and Object in Transcendental Idealism

### 2.2.1. The Being of the Object

To reiterate and expand upon what we have said so far. To say an object exists is to say nothing else than that there is a real possibility to know that it exists. This in turn requires that it be really possible for it to be given to a knowing consciousness.<sup>78</sup> “The

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<sup>77</sup> “Was die Gegenständlichkeit ist, nach allen ihren Artungen, das sagt uns das natürliche Denken, und zwar in seiner höchsten Ausgestaltung als natürliche Wissenschaft. (Dazu Logik und Mathematik als formale Ontologie.) Was aber der „Sinn“ von Gegenständlichkeit ist als Einheit der Erkenntnis, das liegt in einer anderen Linie. Im einen Fall sind wir objektiv gerichtet; wir urteilen einfach über die Gegenstände, sei es über in allgemeinste Allgemeinheit oder über Dinge überhaupt, über Zahlen überhaupt etc. Im anderen Fall urteilen wir über Gegenständlichkeit im Verhältnis zur „Erkenntnis“. Wir fragen, wie es zu verstehen ist, wie Erkenntnis in sich selbst auf Gegenständlichkeit Beziehung gewinnen kann und wie sich Rechtmässigkeit, Gültigkeit der Seinssetzung der Erkenntnis verstehen lässt, wie sich verstehen lässt, dass so und so geartete Bewusstseinszusammenhänge ihrem Wesen nach Gültigkeit der gegenständlichen Beziehung einschliessen.”

<sup>78</sup> We here have to stress real possibilities because Husserl takes great care to distinguish it from what he calls logical possibilities or empty possibilities. He talks of a variation of the possibilities of factual consciousness. We can imagine other consciousnesses that are completely different from ours but since consciousness is always a consciousness of, every such imaginative variation also implies a variation of the world which is true for that consciousness. So every imagined world must have a possible relation to consciousness.

statement ‘A exists’ and the statement ‘There is to be constructed a way of the possible proof of the existence of A,’ ‘There exists the ideal and observable possibility of such proof’ are equivalent. So are the ideas ‘truth’ and ‘ideal possibility of judicious proof’ generally speaking equivalent ideas.” (Hua XXXVI, 73)<sup>79</sup> The existence of an object is equivalent to the real possibility of a knowing consciousness to relate to it in a series of conscious acts of knowledge which must proceed according to certain laws or rules. As Husserl says here:

“It is” means consciousness is and rule-bound possibilities <exist>, in which it is constituted, in which it is perceivable, determinable, knowable. The being of the house is, so to speak, nothing other than another “expression” for consciousness and so and so really proceeding and possible connections of consciousness.” (Hua XXXVI, 29)<sup>80</sup>

Different from the natural sciences which ignore the peculiarities of the relationship between consciousness and objects and try to explicate it in terms of the relationship

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This possibility is a “real” possibility, not a mere logical possibility. I may imagine many things that could possibly be experienced. Say I imagine a mountain of gold (Husserl’s example is a diamond as big as the sun). This according to Husserl is a mere logical possibility. On the other hand, let us say that this mountain of gold really exists, that it really is. Then there are a number of possibilities of experiencing it and of grounding its existence. These possibilities are not mere logical possibilities, but real possibilities and they inform the very being of the gold mountain in this instance. The gold mountain would cease to be a “gold mountain,” it would simply cease to exist if these possibilities were not real. Here we come to see what a real possibility is. It is the possibility of being an object of consciousness, which possibility must exist and in this sense it is a real possibility as opposed to a mere logical possibility which need not really exist which is to say that they need not be grounded in any existing reality. With this distinction, Husserl, thus in a very interesting manner allows possibilities to constitute as it were, the very being of the object.

<sup>79</sup> “Der Satz „A existiert“ und der Satz „Es ist ein Weg möglicher Ausweisung der Existenz des A zu konstruieren“, „Es besteht die ideale und einsehbare Möglichkeit solcher Ausweisung“ sind Äquivalenzen. So sind generell die Ideen „Wahrheit“ und „ideale Möglichkeit einsichtiger Ausweisung“ äquivalente Ideen. ”

<sup>80</sup> “„Es ist“ besagt, dass Bewusstsein ist und gesetzmässige Möglichkeiten des Bewusstseins <bestehen>, in denen es sich konstituiert, in denen es wahrnehmbar, bestimmbar, erkennbar ist. Das Sein des Hauses ist sozusagen nichts anderes als ein anderer „Ausdruck“ für Bewusstsein und so und so wirklich verlaufende und mögliche Bewusstseinzusammenhänge.”

between any two physical objects, the object in transcendental idealism becomes a unity of conscious acts. Commenting on the being of the natural sciences, Husserl remarks:

“Science” itself means: possibilities of perception, of representation, memory, anticipation, of logical conclusions etc., possibilities and actualities. Now the sum-total of these possibilities (which belongs to science although it does not call for the dismantling of science) consist of possibilities of consciousness and these are possibilities of thinking the thing, of finding it, determining and validly knowing it. The thing is what is unified in these conscious acts, but this unity is the unity of thought. The thing is not something else besides this i.e., as though this something else could exist and the thing (as a unity of thought, mine) were not to (exist) or as though the thing were (to exist, mine) and such possibilities would have not had to exist. The “harmony” between the two is not something accidental, as though we had two orders of absolute being which accidentally fit together. On the contrary, the “thing” is nothing other than the sign for these “realities” or possibilities, or the thing is the unity itself; is given precisely as a “unity” is given. And unity is unthinkable without consciousness to which the unity is given and can be given. (Hua XXXVI, 29-30)<sup>81</sup>

To characterize the object as a unity of conscious acts does not amount to de-realizing the object or making it mental rather than physical. Rather transcendental idealism, as we have noted before, seeks to arrive at the “sense” of the object; to explain what it means for an object to be an object; or to give an account of the objectivity of the

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<sup>81</sup> „Wissenschaft“ selbst besagt: Möglichkeiten der Wahrnehmung, der Vorstellung, Erinnerung, Erwartung, des logischen Schließens etc., Möglichkeiten und Wirklichkeiten. Nun, die Gesamtheit dieser Möglichkeiten (die zur Wissenschaft gehören, obschon nicht Auseinanderlegung der Wissenschaft selbst sie fordert) besteht aus Bewusstseinsmöglichkeiten, und diese sind Möglichkeiten, das Ding zu denken, es zu finden, es zu bestimmen und gültig zu erkennen. Das Ding ist das Einheitliche in diesen möglichen Akten, aber diese Einheit ist Denkeinheit. Das Ding ist nicht ein Zweites daneben, d.h. so, als ob sie bestehen könnten und das Ding doch nicht wäre oder als ob das Ding wäre und solche Möglichkeiten nicht bestehen müssten. Die „Übereinstimmung“ zwischen beiden ist keine zufällig, als ob wir zwei Reihen absoluten Seins hätten, die zufällig zueinander passten. Vielmehr ist „Ding“ nichts anderes als Anzeige für diese „Wirklichkeiten“ und Möglichkeiten, oder Ding ist das Einheitliche derselben; es ist gegeben, wie eben eine „Einheit“ gegeben ist. Und Einheit ist undenkbar ohne das Bewusstsein, dem sie als Einheit gegeben ist und gegeben sein kann.”

object. For an object to be an object it must be possible to corroborate its existence as an object. The sense of the object, its very objectivity lies in its possibility to be cashed out through conscious acts. Husserl's position is clearly far from any idealism of the conventional sort. For, Husserl is not telling us that the object is an object only when it is "taken up" by consciousness and ceases to exist when it is not. Quite the contrary, he is telling us that the object "is" only when it is possible for it to be "taken up" by consciousness and this possibility is what he calls a real possibility. Thus to say that consciousness and objects are correlates of each other is to say that the object must of necessity give itself to consciousness through conscious acts which must proceed in a rule-bound or harmonious manner. To put it more clearly, if consciousness and the object are correlates of each other then the existence of the object consists in nothing other than the actual or really possible series of conscious acts that that have to unfold in accordance to an a priori rule. What the rule is and how Husserl characterizes such a priori rules is something we will come back in the later part of this section.

### 2.2.2. Empathy and Embodied Consciousness in Transcendental Idealism

So to continue the argument we have been making so far, Husserl argues that when we simulate an object like a centaur we cannot but simulate it as the object of a quasi-experience of a simulated ego which experiences it. We thus imagine the centaur as an object whose existence it would be possible to confirm through a series of harmonious experiences on the part of a simulated experiencing ego. So every object, even when imagined, has to be imagined as a correlate of the experiences of a simulated ego. Not



only is it possible to imagine an object directly in this manner, it is also possible (and this is significant) to imagine an object as given to me only indirectly as the correlate of the experiences of another ego. This of course implies that every object that is simulated indirectly must lie within the range of possible objects that I could simulate directly. And here we arrive at the two tasks that Husserl sets himself in this essay: To uncover the conditions for the possibility of a subject knowing of the existence of another subject and the conditions for the possibility of two subjects being a part of the same world.

Within the framework established by the thesis of transcendental idealism, starting with the idea of nature Husserl claims that the very idea of nature necessitates a subject whose experiences, perceptions and outer apperceptions proceed in a stream in accordance with a prescribed order through which that nature is given to the subject. So every possible type of nature has a corresponding specific type of subject which can know it and which is incompatible with other types of natures and other types of subjects.

On the other hand, if one starts with the idea of an ego in general, then we have within this one idea an infinite number of possible ego types each with its own stream of lived experiences and capacities, all of which are incompatible with each other. Each ego-type is a correlate of a specific type of nature such that for any possible type of nature no ego correlated to it can testify through experience to the existence of a nature that is incompatible with that nature. To put it more clearly, if a nature N1 is correlated to an ego type E1 and a nature N2 is correlated to an ego type E2, then N1 is incompatible with N2 and E1 is incompatible with E2. But what we have said so far does not discount the possibility of a number of egos of the same type relating to the same

corresponding nature of which they are the correlate. Husserl, as we mentioned before, is interested in uncovering the conditions for the possibility of such compossible egos.

Empathy (*Einfühlung*) is the faculty through which compossible subjects of the same type know of the existence of each other. Empathy is based on the possibility of the subject being able to accomplish an analogizing apperception of the foreign subject. Analogizing apperception in turn is dependent upon the ability of the subject to conceive of (simulate) (*fingieren*) a subject not identical but yet analogous to itself. The foreign self can be conceived and represented only as a possible modification of my own body but a possibility which is nevertheless not freely available to me. It is therefore possible not only to simulate a fantasized lived body which physically and psychically coincides with me but it is also possible to conceive of a lived body which is simply not identical but merely analogous to me. Analogizing apperception is based on this possibility of distinguishing between three selves: my original actual self, my simulated fantasized lived body and a simulated foreign lived body. There is thus, according to Husserl, a distinction between the two products of my simulation, one of which is a modification of my present lived body and yet identical to it and another which is also a simple variation of my lived body but is not identical but analogous to it. Whereas my modified lived body is related to me by the relation of identity, the simulated foreign lived body is related to my modified self by a relation of quasi-empathy. This is because the simulated foreign lived body is an analog of my fantasized lived body.

To make this clear, let us take the example of J. M. Coetzee's *The Diary of a Bad Year*. The novel has three main characters, one of whom is an elderly gentleman named C who resides in Australia and has written the same books as the author himself, a young

lady named Anya and her lover Alan. If we apply Husserl's views, it seems that the elderly author in the novel is simply a variation of Coetzee's own lived body, identical to him physically and psychically, whereas Anya and Alan are variations that are only analogous to his lived body. But is there really a distinction between the character C and the characters Anya and Alan simulated by Coetzee? Or must we say that Anya and Alan are also variations of Coetzee's own self which are identical to him as C is? Can we really say, following Husserl, that Anya and Alan are only indirectly related to Coetzee through the character C who knows them through a relationship of quasi-empathy? Even if we could make a distinction between Anya and C, what makes it equivalent to the relationship between the real author Coetzee and another real human being?

Ultimately both the foreign self and my fantasy self are modifications of my own self. While my fantasy self is a possibility that is freely available to me, the simulated foreign self is a manifestation of a possibility that is not so easily available but whose existence I can nevertheless acknowledge. But is that sufficient for making a real distinction between the two simulated selves and is it equivalent to the distinction between me and the other?

We can grant that it is possible to simulate two selves which are physically distinct bodies coexisting in a single shared space. It also seems possible for me to identify with one of these simulated selves without identifying with the other. Husserl argues on the basis of this that analogizing apperception requires the existence of bodies which are spatiotemporally related to each other by being a part of the same transcendent nature. The empathizing subjects and the surrounding nature of which they are a part must share an all-encompassing spatiotemporal form. The subjects become lived bodies

sharing the same space where the other is always seen as an analog of my own lived body. So it is not my own self that does the empathy but the modified imagined self which acts as a mediator between my self and the other who is of course analogous to me. Empathy thus does not involve just two subjects but three. So empathy which is based on our capacity to undertake free imaginative variation of our own bodily situation is not just a simple transference of myself to another position. By being able to imagine myself as something other which in turn empathizes with the other being, empathy underscores our ability to somehow transcend our very selves.<sup>82</sup> According to Husserl, this relation of analogy is not something confined to just a single species. It extends far beyond the bounds of one's own species. The reach of our empathetic transcendence extends to beings that experience the world in ways markedly different from ours. It can extend towards other bodily beings irrespective of their stage of intellectual development. Husserl actually claims that human beings can empathize with jellyfish (Hua XXXVI, 163). The analogical distance between the two empathizing subjects has no effect on the possibility of empathy. To speak with Husserl:

Empathy does not exclude the fact that the empathized subject is a distant analog (of the empathizing subject) despite the necessary common essence on which the extent of the analogy is based as we know it in the case of the quite deficient understanding of animals (Hua XXXVI, 163).<sup>83</sup>

Husserl further argues that a bodiless subject cannot empathize with other subjects and is therefore inherently solipsistic. Let me recount the chief strands of this argument.

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<sup>82</sup> Husserl discusses empathy in detail in the text number 9 of the volume under consideration. For a detailed assessment of the novelty of his account of empathy in this text, refer to Pol Vandeveld, "Reality and Relativity at the Heart of Perception: Husserl's Reformulation of the Causal Model," in *Proceedings of the Husserl Circle Meeting* (Paris, 2009).

<sup>83</sup> "Die Einfühlung schließt nicht aus, dass das eingefühlte Subjekt eine entfernte Analogie hat trotz des notwendig gemeinsamen Wesens, auf der die Weite der Analogie ruht, wie wir das ja in dem freilich mangelhaften Verstehen der Tiere kennen."

According to him, it seems quite easy to perform an imaginative variation on my present empirical self and conceive of a possibility in which I am an experiencing subject that lacks a lived body. It also seems quite easy to conceive of foreign selves whose lived bodies are analogous to mine and which would lack those bodies exactly as I do and mutually coexist with me. But eidetically speaking, this possibility contains in itself a contradiction because with the disappearance of bodies the differences between the selves also disappear. As a result we no longer have distinct selves that mutually coexist but mere variations of a single self—my own—coinciding with my own self and mutually incompatible with each other. In the absence of bodies there is no basis for holding on to a distinction between these selves. With the disappearance of a distinction between selves, the possibility of accomplishing an analogizing apperception also vanishes and with that the possibility of recognizing the existence of other subjects. Husserl therefore comes to the conclusion that a bodiless self is necessarily solipsistic. He further asks whether such a bodiless subject could have an experience of nature in the manner of a bodily subject and he seems skeptical in this regard. Even though it seems logically possible to conceive of a bodiless subject experiencing the same kind of things as a bodily subject, Husserl observes that the experiences of nature proceed in a kinesthetic succession which is bound to physical organs such the eye and the ear. If the structure of nature seems to impose a structure on the experiencing subject then it is hard to see how a nature that is composed of physical things could be correlated to a non-physical subject.

### 2.2.3. The Ambivalent Nature of Correlation between Consciousness and Object

If one has to have mutually coexistent subjects who can recognize each other and relate to the same transcendent nature then they have to have bodies and their experiences must harmonize to make evident the existence of the same nature. And so we have the following two versions of his modified thesis of transcendental idealism:

Transcendental idealism states: A nature is not conceivable without coexisting subjects who can have a possible experience of it; it is not enough to have possible subjects of experience. (Hua XXXVI, 156)

A nature is only conceivable as a unity of possible harmonious experiences of an experiencing subject; and we see that by way of evidence if one and the same subject is posited as experiencing a nature and consequently that its presumptive experiential claims have been confirmed to be harmonious, etc., then it cannot also have a second nature given to it. (Hua XXXVI, 160)

In two addenda to this essay composed in the same year, Husserl draws out some of the interesting implications of this modified thesis of transcendental idealism. In the addendum titled “Correlation of the Existence of Nature and the Existence of the Subjects experiencing Nature” Husserl claims that if a certain experience is to be really possible instead of being merely logically possible, there are certain rules according to which the experience must unfold. In order for other subjects to exist in addition to me, it is necessary that I have a body and that I am able to encounter these other subjects as my alter ego. The subjects form a community with the existence of each of them prescribing a rule for the manner in which the experience of the others might unfold.

In the addendum titled “Existence of Nature. The Idea of the Ontological In-Itself and the I,” Husserl takes up the question of the object in itself or what he also calls nature.

Husserl’s attempt to overcome Kantian dualism finds a decisive formulation in this

addendum. Taking forward his basic thesis of transcendental idealism that the existence of the object consists in its possibility to be given to consciousness, Husserl characterizes the object-in-itself in principle as an index of an infinite and ambiguous rule for consciousness. (Hua XXXVI, 171) In his own words:

“Existence of nature” (any nature) is principally the index for any knowing infinitely ambiguous rule of consciousness which in itself ought to be unambiguous. Still better: existence of objects of experience is the index of only a presumptive rule to be thought and thought in infinity with indeterminacies as an open determinability. In “believing” in the object, in the positing of its being and eventually in the predicative generalizing of its existence “lies” the belief, that the object determined with a certain core content, but an object more precisely determinable in infinity by virtue of its pre-indicated horizons of determinability but also (equally inscribed as an open possibility) an object determinable as something different, the object to be re-determined in accordance with its core content has before itself an idea lying in infinity: (Hua XXXVI, 171)<sup>84</sup>

Husserl thus can provocatively call the object-in-itself an idea. But it is not an idea in the psychological sense of being a fabrication of the mind but it also not a regulative idea in the Kantian sense. Husserl is adamant about the latter at least in this addendum. He says:

The object supposed at any moment as intentional, as noematic has before of itself an object in itself that as it has been said, is an idea. It is not to be thought as the possible practical *telos*, “ultimate goal” of “system of series” of determinations which in all further (always open) determinations could and should never be changed, never be overturned but rather it is what is specific to what is to be described [as] a manner of more precise determination proceeding infinitely, which is the approximation to ideal *limits*.

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<sup>84</sup> „Existenz dieser Natur“ (irgendeiner) ist der Index einer prinzipiell für jeden Erkennenden unendlich vieldeutigen Bewusstseinsregel, die aber an sich eindeutig soll. Besser: Existenz eines Erfahrungsobjekts ist Index einer nur präsumtiven, ins Unendliche mit Unbestimmtheiten als offene Bestimmbarkeiten gedachten und zu denkenden Regel. Im „Glauben“ an das Objekt, in der Seinssetzung und evtl. in der prädikativen Behauptung der Existenz „liegt“ der Glaube, dass das mit einem gewissen Kerngehalt bestimmte, aber ins Unendliche vermöge seiner vorgezeichneten Horizonte der Bestimmbarkeit näher bestimmbare Objekt, aber auch (ebenfalls als offene Möglichkeit eingezeichnet ist) das anders bestimmbare, das selbst dem Kerngehalt nach umzubestimmende Objekt vor sich hat eine im Unendlichen liegende Idee: ”

That is the idea of the ontological in-itself of any object of nature in its necessary epistemological interpretation as ideal system of determination in an ideal sphere of approximations. The state of affairs is but yet incompletely described, because just any thing has an infinite spatiotemporal-causal horizon of possible other things and its determination is dependent upon these things, so that the idea of a finite *telos* is still untenable. (Hua XXXVI, 171)<sup>85</sup>

The in-itself is thus not an external constraint upon the way the correlation between the object and consciousness would have to proceed in order to finally arrive at absolute knowledge of the object-in-itself. No, very different from this, the object-in-itself is something internal to the correlation. It is for Husserl an open determinability which includes within itself indeterminacies to the extent that the object may turn out to be something completely different from what it was anticipated to be thereby nullifying everything that has proceeded prior to this within the correlation. The object in itself is a descriptive idea. The in-itself would thus not regulate how the correlation would proceed but only guarantee that the correlation would continue in some manner. Since the object-in-itself does not determine how the correlation will proceed, it is possible it seems that the correlation could undergo abrupt, drastic and radical changes in its pattern. What would it mean for such drastic and radical changes to occur? That nature as we know it all of sudden simply ceases to exist? This is precisely what Husserl asks in this

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<sup>85</sup> “Das jeweilig vermeinte Objekt als intentionales, als noematisches <hat> vor sich ein Objekt an sich, das, wie gesagt, eine Idee ist. Dies ist nicht zu denken als das moeglich praktische Telos, „Endziel“ eines „Reihensystems“ von Bestimmtheiten, die allem weiteren (immer offenem) Bestimmen nie geändert, nie umgestürzt werden müssen und werden können, sondern – was ein eigens zu Beschreibendes ist - <als> eine Weise in Unendliche fortgehender Näherbestimmung, die der Approximation an ideale *limites*.

Das ist die Idee des ontologischen An-sich jedes Naturegegenstands in ihrer notwendigen erkenntnistheoretischen Fassung als ideales Bestimmungssystem in einer ideales Sphäre von Approximationen. Die Sachlage ist aber noch unvollkommen beschreiben, da eben jedes Ding einen unendlichen raumzeitlich-kausalen Horizont hat möglicher anderer Dinge und seine Bestimmung also von ihnen abhängig ist, so dass die Idee eines endlichen Telos doch unhaltbar ist. ”



addendum and he asks what kind of conscious experience could correlate to and thereby confirm such an event. One of Husserl's attempts to answer this question is the following: Nature is thus intersubjective in-itself. No single experience can ever confirm the non-existence of nature. Nature is an intersubjective unity and a single subjective experience cannot confirm its non-existence. Because nature is an intersubjective unity and is a correlate of the experiences of an open community of subjects, every subject can have knowledge of nature as well as knowledge of other subjects. It is this twofold ability that will help the subjects know which subjects are irrational, distinguish rational from irrational experiences and arrive at an objective understanding of nature. But in spite of this answer, Husserl seems to tacitly acknowledge the weakness of this response for the question is precisely how one can say whether an experience that goes against the grain of previous experiences is irrational or something that nullifies everything that has been experienced before forcing us to experience the thing in a new way. We only have to recall the quarrel between Galileo and the Church to see how difficult it can be to settle this issue. There is the underlying realization here that these questions cannot be easily answered and may even be impossible to answer. (Hua XXXVI, 173) Husserl is never settled on this issue of ontological status of thing in itself. In an earlier text composed in 1913 and part of this same volume, Husserl seems content to explicate the existence of a thing in terms of a regulative idea in the Kantian sense with some very crucial modifications:

Certainly, the existence of things is every time an idea for actual consciousness but not an idea in the sense of pure ideal being as a number, a species but an idea (a multidimensional one) in the Kantian sense, we

could even use the word regulative idea (but in a way) that certainly would have its sense modified. (Hua XXXVI, 77)<sup>86</sup>

This brings us to the status of these rules of consciousness which govern the correlation between consciousness and object. What is the status of these rules? Corresponding to the two different ways of characterizing object-in-itself as a regulative idea or descriptive idea, we have, what Pol Vandavelde describes, as two different ways of characterizing the rules as constitutive and descriptive respectively. My argument borrows heavily from Vandavelde's detailed account of this distinction between constitutive and descriptive rules and Husserl's use of descriptive rather than constitutive rules.<sup>87</sup> Thus, the ambivalence that we witness in his characterization of the object-in-itself when he vacillates between the object as a regulative and the object as a descriptive idea affects the characterization of the rules which govern the way the correlation proceeds and the manner in which the object unfolds. If the rules are constitutive so that it prescribes once and for all how the correlation is to proceed then Husserl's transcendental idealism reduces to a modified version of Kant – Kantian transcendental idealism with an intersubjective component. If however the rules are not constitutive but descriptive the rule itself is indeterminate and can be articulated only from within the correlation. We find this ambivalence nicely illustrated in the following passage from a

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<sup>86</sup> “Freilich, die Existenz des Dinges ist für das aktuelle Bewusstsein immerfort eine Idee, aber eine Idee nicht im Sinn eines rein idealen Seins, wie einer Zahl, einer Spezies, sondern eine Idee (eine mehrdimensionale) im Kant'schen Sinn, wir könnten sogar das Wort von der regulativen Idee verwenden, das freilich seinen Sinn modifiziert hätte.” Please see Laszlo Tengelyi, *Der methodologische Transzendentalismus der Phänomenologie*, for an exegesis of this same passage and an illuminating account of the object as a modified version of the Kantian regulative idea in Husserl's transcendental idealism.

<sup>87</sup> See Pol Vandavelde, “Husserl and Searle on the Completable Nature of the Object of Perception.”

text written in 1921. Here Husserl seems to go with the constitutive account of the rule when he says:

But the *eidos* of a thing is of such a form that it is a thing of nature and the *eidos* "Nature" is of such a sort that it is determinable in an open infinity but is in itself a tightly closed connection of things. It is a space, a natural time, an absolutely self-contained unity of substantial-causal community. (Hua XXXVI, 193)<sup>88</sup>

But in a footnote appended to the end of this sentence, Husserl asks:

What the "absolutely closed" means as a demand is but still a problem. Could not nature change? (Ibid.)<sup>89</sup>

### 2.3. The Question of Knowledge in Husserl's Transcendental Idealism

Within this framework, then, knowledge can be understood only from within the correlation between consciousness and objects. Husserl thus puts paid to any claims to absolute knowledge if by absolute knowledge we mean the knowledge of an object independent of its relationship to consciousness and independent of its amenability to be given only in perspectives. In this way, he brings knowledge down to earth as it were. Knowledge cannot be divorced from the acts of consciousness and this consciousness has to be a bodily consciousness. Knowledge is constituted in conscious endeavours and we can talk about acquiring knowledge only within the correlation between consciousness and objects. Since this bodily consciousness include human beings, history can now enter into the constitution of knowledge. Knowledge thus becomes something essentially

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<sup>88</sup> "Aber so geartet ist das Eidos eines Dinges, dass es Ding einer Natur, und so geartet das Eidos „Natur“, dass es ein zwar in offener Unendlichkeit bestimmbarer, aber in sich fest geschlossener Dingzusammenhang ist. Es ist ein Raum, eine Naturzeit, eine absolut abgeschlossene Einheit der substantial-kausalen Gemeinschaft."

<sup>89</sup> "Was das „absolute geschlossen“ als Forderung besagt, ist aber noch ein Problem. Könnte sich nicht die Natur „ändern“?"

finite but at the same time it is not relative to the caprices of individual conscious subjects. It is just not a psychological event in the mental confines of a knower. Knowledge is an activity of absolute consciousness consisting of compossible empathizing corporeal subjects.

Empathy is thus able to add a stratum to knowledge that traditional epistemology completely overlooks. My knowledge of things is no longer simply confined to my own perspective. Knowledge cannot be reduced to just my own sensory information of the object that I received from the appropriate modifications of my sensory organs that the object is able to cause in some way. Rather I am constantly borrowing the perspective of others and have it inform my own knowledge of the world. One of the more remarkable developments of Husserl's account of empathy is that it renders knowledge as irreducibly intersubjective and broadens considerably our notion of the epistemological subject. My ability to communicate with others through empathy constitutes in the deepest way my knowledge of things. The subject of knowledge is thus no longer a solipsistic subject confined to an individual psycho-physical complex. Rather the subject is broadened infinitely as it encompasses the perspectives of all actual psycho-physical beings and becomes an absolute ego which is an empathetic community of compossible egos. The object of knowledge is, in Husserl's framework, constituted in the very acts of knowledge. Therefore, knowledge cannot be considered as something accidental to the object. Rather, the objects of knowledge are constituted by that very knowledge. Knowledge ceases to simply be a content that floats above the warp and woof of conscious activity but rather becomes a conscious activity.

However, Husserl's framework of rule-bound correlation between consciousness and objects, whether it overcomes Kant entirely or not, because of its adherence to the idea of rule, is still in principle not willing to give up on the idea of continuity or a basic harmony in the way our experiences of the object unfolds. Husserl's epistemological program is thus, at bottom, what I call, an epistemology of continuity in which knowledge is still understood in terms of rules or concepts as it is embedded in a rule-bound correlation. Although Husserl, I argue, unveils a new kind of thinking that is not confined to the static logical, conceptual stratum of stable, fixed objects and essences, but also operates at a deeper more dynamic stratum that involves the raw becoming of experience which throws up the stable and fixed objects. It is this dynamic stratum of the raw becoming of experience that Husserl characterizes as a rule-bound correlation between consciousness and objects. We can even see Husserl's ambivalence in his account of the object-in-itself and the rule, his constant vacillating between a more traditional Kantian and more radical non-Kantian account of the object-in-itself as a manifestation of his hesitancy to give up continuity and thereby the precedence of a rule-bound or logical/conceptual thinking.

This leads us to Heidegger who, on the other hand, tries to move away from such an account of knowledge by doing away with the very idea of a rule-bound correlation. Heidegger wants to cut through all conceptual articulation and go the very heart of the thing itself which for him is the history of being and that is prior to and founds all conceptual articulation. Heidegger, as a consequence, takes the first serious-steps towards forging what I call an epistemology of ruptures. I will argue that instead of knowledge being embedded within a prior correlation between consciousness and object,

it is embedded in what I will explain as a metaphysical space which can undergo radical rupturing. Instead of being a conscious activity I will explain how knowledge becomes a projection of the Dasein of a people.

### 3. Heidegger's Historical Account of the Knowledge of Things

#### 3.1. The Historical Character of the Fundamental Determination of the Thingness of Things

Heidegger responds to the question concerning the thing within a historical and not a transcendental framework.<sup>90</sup> For the purposes of our discussion, I would like to show that Heidegger's response has profound implications for epistemology. However this is not to say that Heidegger is an epistemologist and his account is a full fledged theory of knowledge. Heidegger vehemently denies this. However he does have a very original answer to the question of how it is that things become known to human beings as things and his answer signals a radical reformulation of what it is to know something. For Heidegger our knowledge of things is not something straightforward and obvious.

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<sup>90</sup> I will be laying out the essential elements of Heidegger's historical framework by referring exclusively to his lecture-course "What is a Thing?" In that lecture course, Heidegger sets out to answer the "harmless question" expressed by the title. To know what a thing is, is to know what it is that makes the thing a thing. It is to know how the thing comes to be a thing. So the question cannot be answered by merely enumerating the properties of particular things. As he remarks:

"For the condition of being a thing, which conditions the thing as a thing, cannot itself again be a thing, i.e., something conditioned. The thingness must be something un-conditioned (*un-bedingtes*). With the question "What is a thing?" we are asking for something unconditioned. We ask about what is all around us and can be grasped by the hand, yet we alienate (*entfernen*) ourselves from those immediate things very much more than did Thales, who could see only as far as the stars. But we want to pass beyond even these things to the unconditioned, where there are no more things that provide a basis and ground." (WTH: 9)

For if we place the Greeks, Medievals and the Moderns next to each other, it is very hard to say what they actually know about things in general. In fact it is difficult to apply the verb “to know” in the same way to these three ages. Even if there are broad similarities in the manner in which the Greeks, the Medievals and the Moderns answer this question there are still philosophically significant differences that simply cannot be overlooked and also cannot be explained by the simple idea of progress. That is to say, it is very difficult, argues Heidegger, to say the Moderns who are successors of the Greeks and the medievals have a superior answer to this question because no straightforward criterion for the superiority of the modern account can be furnished. Does this mean that knowledge is simply culturally relative and we accept as knowledge whatever a culture believes to be so? Does that not irreparably damage the notion of objectivity that knowledge is supposed to intrinsically possess? It is these questions that Heidegger attempts to answer in the process of reformulating our very understanding of what it is to know a thing. Heidegger starts out by taking up the two most familiar answers available to the question concerning the thing within the philosophical tradition and which have been adopted as being fairly commonsensical.

1. That the thing is anything extended in space and existing within time
2. That the thing is a carrier of properties

The first definition takes our focus away from the thing itself towards the definition of space and time. Moreover it could be argued that space and time merely indicate the framework within which things can be referred to but say very little about the thingness of the thing, so to speak. By contrast, the second definition is more direct and gets down to the business of talking about thingness of the thing. Now the validity of this definition,

Heidegger argues, depends upon the validity of a certain notion of truth – truth as correspondence to things as well as the notion of a proposition. Heidegger argues that these three notions go together in some sense necessarily. The structure of the thing as a carrier of properties comes to light in the proposition. The proposition with its subject, predicate, copula structure links the subject (the thing) to its predicate (property), thereby reflecting the structure of the thing. However the proposition can be said to mirror the structure of the thing only on the basis of a specific understanding of truth as correspondence between what we assert and how things really are. And so Heidegger concludes that there is a necessary connection between the definition of the thing as a carrier of properties, the correspondence theory of truth, and the notion of the proposition. He points to history too to suggest that when Plato and Aristotle came up with this definition of the thing, they also came up with the theory of the proposition as well as the theory of truth as correspondence. But Heidegger further argues that neither this connection nor this definition of the thing is in any way natural. They are historical. But by historical Heidegger does not mean that the definition of the thing, although broadly the same, underwent minor modifications throughout history. Heidegger makes it abundantly clear that he would not be interested in providing a historical report of these modifications.

### 3.2. The Founding of Knowledge in the Fundamental Determination of the Thingness of Things: Rewriting the Relationship between Knowledge, Metaphysics and History

For Heidegger, history is not just the past as what is no more, but rather the past as what is still at work in the present. What Heidegger is interested in is uncovering how



this past is still at work in the present. According to this understanding, the past does not simply fade away, giving way to the present. It unfolds through the present into the future. It is this sense of history as an unfolding that Heidegger presents in this lecture.<sup>91</sup> This requires a revision in the manner in which we have understood the mode of being of the past. Conventionally speaking, the past is understood as something no longer actual. However, Heidegger proposes a new way for understanding the mode of being of the past characterizing it as a calmness or a stillness (*Ruh*). The past is thus not what is no longer but that which endures in the present as a stillness (*Ruh*).

But is Heidegger really proposing something novel? Do we not consider past events, actions as the cause of what is happening in the present? In that sense we do grant them an efficacy and a being even in the present. How is Heidegger's account any different? Heidegger wants to avoid a causal mechanistic model of history as a chain of causes and effects. Such a model of history cannot account for decisions. For Heidegger our understanding of things, for example, is not just a natural event. So we cannot take it for granted as something natural even though we do. It is founded on the basic stance taken by Dasein towards things. Such a basic stance is what Heidegger calls a decision. This decision should not be understood psychologically as a subjective activity of an individual human being or a collection of human beings but ontologically as something that belongs to the Dasein of a people.<sup>92</sup> As Heidegger says:

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<sup>91</sup> In his *Beiträge*, Heidegger gives a detailed treatment of this notion of *Wesung* which I have translated as essencing. Refer to chapter 1, footnote 12, where I discuss the notion of essencing as gaining and losing essences in greater detail in the context of the *Beiträge*. The term 'unfolding' I use in this chapter is closer in sense to essencing.

<sup>92</sup> The notion of 'Dasein of a people' (*Dasein des Volkes*) that Heidegger uses here is a technical notion that one finds in several of his writings in the 1930. It stems from the realization in Heidegger that history (*Geschichte*) must be irreducibly intersubjective. This is to say the individuals as such cannot be historical in the proper sense of the term. It is in

These decisions are different at differing periods and among different peoples. They cannot be forced. With the freely chosen level of the actual freedom of knowledge, i.e., with the inexorableness of *questioning*, a people always posits for itself the degree of its being (*Dasein*). (WTH: 42)

The decision has to be understood as a transformation, *de-cisere*, a breaking away and forging of something new for the very first time.

For Heidegger one can get the past out of its state of calmness and set it in motion once again. To consider the question of being historical is to do precisely such a thing. To ask historically is to show the urgency the question holds for us right now. Heidegger does this by showing that the definition of the thing as a carrier of properties, first postulated by the Greeks, is not something settled and self evident. On the contrary, it is still questionable and gives rise to a number of questions. Is the essence of proposition and truth determined out of the essence of the thing or vice versa? How does the structure of the thing mirror the structure of the proposition? Is there a deeper underlying unity on the basis of which the structure of the thing and that of the proposition are determined and from which they spring?<sup>93</sup> By showing the questionable nature of this definition of the thing, it “again comes into motion from the beginning.” (WTH: 48) The

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attempting to understand the idea of historicity that Heidegger resorts to this notion of *Dasein* of a people. The question he wants to answer here is: How does one become historical? How should one understand a creature that is by its very essence historical? History, for Heidegger, cannot be understood as another property of a human being as being biped and being warm blooded. Historicity is not just the property of having a rich past. So he wants to distinguish having a history or having a past from becoming historical. To have a history does mean that one is historical. To be historical is much more than having just a history or a past (GA 15: 200) Heidegger, in this regard, finds inadequate the traditional notion of history, that we gain through historiography, as a series of events connected by the categories of cause and effect and seek to understand history in way that does not reduce it to a chain of causes and effects. See GA 15: 111, 151, 188, 190-91, 200-01, 332 where Heidegger uses the term

<sup>93</sup> This is a strategy similar to what he pursues in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*.

answer to each of these is far from something along the lines of a natural scientific answer. As Heidegger explains:

The answer to the question “What is a thing?” is different in character. It is not a proposition but a transformed basic position or, better still and more cautiously, the initial transformation of the hitherto existing position towards things, a change of questioning and evaluation, of seeing and deciding; in short, of being-there (*Da-sein*) in the midst of what is (*inmitten des Seienden*)... But this requires that we perceive more exactly with clearer eyes what most holds us captive and makes us unfree in the experience and determination of the things. This is modern natural science, insofar as it has become a universal of thinking along certain basic lines... The question concerning our basic relations to nature as such, our rule over nature, is not a question of natural science, but this question is itself in question in the question of whether and how we are still addressed by what is as such within the whole. (WTH: 51)

By opening up the question of the relation between our manner of asserting things and things in themselves, Heidegger has shown that a fundamentally metaphysical question concerning the thing is irreducibly intertwined with epistemological concerns. By transforming the question concerning the thing into a historical question, he heralds a new historical framework for the basic epistemological question concerning our knowledge of things. So here we have Heidegger’s most crucial insight. Metaphysics for Heidegger is not something to be taken for granted. We cannot simply bracket it out and compare the epistemic worth of the Greek, medieval and modern approaches to science and conclude that the moderns are out in front and far superior. Rather when we factor in metaphysics, any comparison of the three approaches becomes much more difficult. Now metaphysics for Heidegger is not simply a theory or a science of being, even the highest being. Rather metaphysics in Heidegger’s thinking stands for those basic decisions that the Dasein of a people makes in the midst of beings regarding how they are going to approach beings and what they are going to take as the being of beings, which is

to say the thingness of things. Metaphysics is not merely theoretical discipline. We can discern what these decisions are only in the work of a people and this includes their art, their knowledge, their architecture and such other things. The modern age for instance is defined by its scientific achievements which have been built upon the foundation of scientific knowledge. A simple study of the different theories of metaphysics that are popular at a given time cannot tell us anything about metaphysics in the sense in which Heidegger understands it. “Decisions are not made by proverbs, but only by work.”

(WTH: 42)

### 3.3. Knowledge as a Metaphysical Event in History: Transformations in the Basic Character of Knowledge from the Greek to the Medieval and from the Medieval to the Modern Age

Thus knowledge for Heidegger cannot be separated from metaphysics and cannot be made sense of in isolation. Knowledge is governed by a metaphysics understood in the specific Heideggerian sense. We can even say that knowledge is embedded in a metaphysical space. To somehow think that we can circumvent metaphysics by equating it to an outdated science which no longer has credibility is a serious misunderstanding. If we were to do so we would only be overlooking the most crucial factors that govern the knowledge of things. It is this basic decision we discussed in the last section, which constitutes a metaphysics that Heidegger seeks to articulate in the case of the modern era and its approach to the sciences by undertaking a very close reading of Kant’s transcendental logic in the light of the works of Newton and Galileo. In the following discussion, I will be summarizing Heidegger’s arguments in this regard.

The rise of modern natural science marks a great event in the history of the west.

As Heidegger explains:

The transformation of *Dasein*, that was basic to this event, changed the character of modern thought and thus of metaphysics and prepared the necessity for a critique of pure reason...It is very clear that the transformation of science basically took place through centuries of discussion about the fundamental concepts and principles of thought, i.e., the basic attitude toward things and toward what is at all. (WTH: 65)

Heidegger explains that scientific knowledge does not arise out of nothing. He names two factors that are crucial to the development of the sciences and which underlies all the sciences. The first, he calls, work experience. This is the specific manner in which *Dasein* manipulates the things in the midst of which it finds itself. In finding itself among things, *Dasein* has to always find a way around in and around them by working with and working on them and thereby subjugating them to its own purposes. The second is a metaphysics which is “the projection of the fundamental knowledge of being out of which what is knowledgeably develops.” (WTH: 66) We have already given a preliminary account of metaphysics by explicating Heidegger’s notion of decision. Here we find Heidegger further developing his earlier notion by employing the term projection.<sup>94</sup> Heidegger spends the remainder of his essay trying to explain precisely what he means by projection by uncovering “the innermost driving connections of this

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<sup>94</sup> As we will see, it is this second factor that is particularly crucial for us and has had far-reaching epistemological implications because it compels to think of knowledge in a manner very different to what we are accustomed to. Knowledge has always been understood in terms of a passive reception of external things by our senses with the understanding processing this data from the senses to furnish us with knowledge. And understanding has generally been equated with thought. To be able to think something is to be able to understand something given to us through our senses and thereby to grasp how something is. Heidegger’s thesis puts paid to any such kind of straightforward dualism between sensation and thought. Heidegger’s concept of projection signals a radical reformulation of the very notion of thought. Knowledge is now dependent not just on a simple reception of sense data but also on a prior projection of thought.

happening” (WTH: 65) that is modern science and distinguishing it from ancient and medieval science. In the process Heidegger challenges a number of common conceptions held about the nature of the differences between the ancient and modern sciences and presents us with a novel way of understanding the difference between the ancient and the modern sciences.

There have been three ways in which modern science has been distinguished from its ancient and medieval counterparts.<sup>95</sup> Firstly, it has been said that while modern science uses facts as its starting point, ancient and medieval sciences have speculative propositions and concepts as their starting point. Heidegger claims that this is only partially true as it can hardly be denied that even the ancient and the medieval sciences did use facts just as it cannot be denied that modern sciences use concepts. Both the ancient and the modern sciences resort to concept and facts. The difference lies in the “way facts are conceived and how the concepts are established.” (WTH: 66) It is only positivism that asserts that the sciences ought to concern themselves solely with facts and nothing else. On the contrary, claims Heidegger, the great modern scientists were all philosophers and understood the value of concepts and how facts could be illuminated only on the basis of concepts. Indeed, for Heidegger this is the case even with the great contemporary physicists such as Bohr and Heisenberg.

Secondly, the difference between ancient and modern science has been seen in terms of experimentation. Modern science is said to be experimental in that it confirms

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<sup>95</sup> See Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger and Science* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, 1985) for an exegesis of the passages where Heidegger discusses the distinction between modern, ancient and medieval science. Kockelmans on pp. 140-142 discusses Heidegger’s argument for seeing the change from ancient to modern science as other than just progress. See also Trish Glazebrook, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Science* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2000) for an exegesis of these same passages.

its claims by means of experiments; the ancient and medieval sciences, on the other hand, are said to be completely devoid of any kind of experimentation. But Heidegger argues that experiments were already recognized in the ancient and the middle ages because they were able to arrive at conclusions regarding the behaviour of things by arranging things and events in very specific ways. In fact, this is what lies at the heart of handicrafts and tool-making which were alive and well even in the ancient and middle ages. The difference between the ancient and modern sciences lies not in the presence of experimentation in one and the absence of it in the other but in the manner in which experiments were conducted in the ancient and modern times. This depends upon the way in which experiments were seen and the intent with which they were conducted. This depends upon the manner in which the ancient and the modern sciences applied concepts to facts and the kind of hypotheses they entertained as regards things.

Thirdly, modern science has been said to be based on measurement and calculation in opposition to the ancient and the medieval sciences. Heidegger again challenges this assumption by arguing that it is not the presence or the absence of measurement and calculation that distinguishes ancient and modern science for both ancient and modern science contain calculation and measurement. Rather “it is a question of how and in what sense calculating and measuring were applied and carried out, and what importance they have for the determination of the objects themselves.”

(WTH: 68)

None of the three above ways really get to the bottom of what actually distinguishes ancient, medieval and modern science. It is really the “manner of working

with things and the metaphysical projection of the thingness of the things” (Ibid.) where the real difference between ancient, medieval and modern science lies.

The major significance of Heidegger’s challenge to the common ways of casting the difference between the three kinds of sciences is the fact that it makes it very difficult if not impossible to see a gradual progress from the ancient to the modern science. Were it possible for us to say that modern science is factual as opposed to the ancient and medieval sciences which are simply speculative, were it possible to say that the conclusions of modern science are on far firmer ground because of its ability to perform experiments to confirm these conclusions as opposed to the ancient and medieval sciences which do not conduct any experiments, were it possible to say that modern science is able to perform precise measurements and calculations to arrive at its results as opposed to the ancient and the medieval sciences which do not engage in any such calculations, it would be easy to conclude that modern science is far superior to its ancient and medieval predecessors and see a firm line of progress from one to the other. But Heidegger’s challenge does not allow us to draw such a conclusion. Instead all we can say is that with ancient, medieval and the modern science we see a break or rupture or a radical transformation in the manner of working with things and the very manner of thinking of the thingness of the thing. Let us continue our discussion to see how Heidegger defends this rather provocative and extremely original thesis.



### 3.4. The Transformed Character of Knowledge in the Modern Age: The Emergence of the Mathematical as the Defining Metaphysical Characteristic of Modern Knowledge

#### 3.4.1. Uncovering the Metaphysical Sense of the Mathematical

The truly distinctive feature of modern science is that it is mathematical.<sup>96</sup> Now for Heidegger this does not simply mean that the modern sciences employ mathematics extensively. Rather, it is because the modern sciences are mathematical that they can employ mathematics. So it is now a question of understanding precisely what the mathematical really means before we can explain in what specific sense modern science is called mathematical.

Heidegger says we can do this only by delving into the origins of the word mathematical which stems from the Greek *τὰ μαθήματα*. Heidegger finds that the Greeks distinguish *τὰ μαθήματα* from *τὰ φυσικά*, *τὰ ποιούμενα*, *τὰ χρήματα* and *τὰ πράγματα* in that *τὰ μαθήματα* concern things in their capacity to be learned. Heidegger argues that in learning we grasp things in a specific way. While learning to play a musical instrument, for example, what we grasp is the specific way of handling the instrument so that it produces a range of sounds. This is what it means to master a certain instrument. However for Heidegger this is only one sense of learning and he is concerned about a more fundamental sense of learning. What is this more fundamental sense of learning? This is to learn what a musical instrument is. Whereas in learning we usually grasp what we did not know before, in learning in this more fundamental sense we do not learn

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<sup>96</sup> See again Kockelmans, *Heidegger and Science*, 142-43 and Glazebrook, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Science* for another exegesis of these passages in Heidegger concerning the mathematical character of modern science.

anything new but become aware in a more determinate and specific way what we already were aware in a vague and indeterminate way. So when I learn to play the musical instrument I am learning something new. But even before I learn to play the musical instrument, I am already familiar with the musical instrument in the sense that I can make my way around it. This is not a theoretical, well-articulated knowledge of the instrument but a vague awareness which makes it possible for me to comfortable around the musical instrument and accept it as part of my surroundings without being alarmed. Were it not for this basic awareness, Heidegger argues, the musical instrument would not even be perceptible. We thus already are aware of the instrumentality of the instrument, so to speak and thereby the thingness of the things around us. The learning that is involved in becoming explicitly aware of our awareness of things is what constitutes the mathematical. Here we learn what we already know. The mathematical thus consists in becoming explicitly aware of what we already know about things. So Heidegger concludes that this awareness is not of something in the thing but what we bring to the thing. However this does not imply that this awareness is merely subjective because it is not to be confused with the one's own individual impression of the thing. To the contrary, it is an awareness of the thingness of the thing. Hence Heidegger remarks:

This genuine learning is therefore an extremely peculiar taking, a taking where he who takes only takes what he actually already has... Such learning, with which we are here mostly concerned, demands sticking rather closely to what appears to be nearest at hand; for instance, to the question of what a thing is (WTH: 73)

It is in this sense, Heidegger argues, that numbers are something mathematical because we do not grasp numbers as if they were some property that belonged to thing. Rather numbers come into play in the specific ways of handling things such as counting. In this

numbers are something we already have. “Numbers are the most familiar form of the mathematical because, in our usual dealing with things, when we calculate or count, numbers are the closest to that which we recognize in things without producing it out of them” (WTH: 75, translation modified)

Heidegger is thus able to isolate two senses of the mathematical as he explains it here:

Our expression “the mathematical” always has two meanings. It means, first, what can be learned in the manner we have indicated, and only in that way, and second in the manner of learning and the process itself. The mathematical is that evident aspect of things within which we are always already moving and according to which we experience them as things at all, and as such things. The mathematical is this fundamental position we take toward things by which we take things as already given to us, and as they have been given. Therefore, the mathematical is the fundamental presupposition of the knowledge of things (WTH: 75)

Note how, in accordance with what we had discussed earlier, the mathematical constitutes that metaphysical space within which any knowledge of objects becomes possible. By metaphysical space we mean the prior projection of the objectivity of the object only on the basis of which something like the experience of an object like a piano or a gun is possible.

### 3.4.2. The Mathematical Character of Modern Science

We get a clear glimpse of the specific sense in which modern science is mathematical and what Heidegger means by projection (*Entwurf*) when we review the dispute between Galileo and his opponents over his experiment at the Tower of Pisa from where he dropped two balls of different weights to prove that bodies dropped from the

same height fall to the ground at the same time irrespective of their weights and any difference in times could be attributed to air resistance. Now despite the balls taking slightly different times to come down, Galileo still upheld his claim much to the chagrin of his opponents. Heidegger's point is that despite experiencing the same state of affairs, Galileo and his opponents came to a different understanding of what was actually going on with the balls. As Heidegger says:

But they interpreted the same fact differently and made the same happening visible to themselves in different ways. Indeed, what happened to them as the essential fact and truth was something different. Both thought something along with the appearance but they thought something different, not only about the case, but fundamentally, regarding the essence of a body and the nature of its motion. (WTH: 90)

According to Heidegger, we cannot explain this conflict by simply saying that only Galileo saw what was going on and his opponents did not. Rather Heidegger explains that both Galileo and his opponents had a fundamentally different way of approaching things in the world. For Galileo, even before he had embarked on his experiment, had already posited what it was for an object to move. As he says and Heidegger carefully notes:

I think in my mind (*mente concipio*) of a body thrown on a horizontal plane and every obstacle excluded. This results in what has been given a detailed account in another place, that the motion of the body over the plane would be uniform and perpetual if this place were extended infinitely. (WTH: 91)

So for Heidegger, Galileo does not passively observe the nature of the motion of bodies from his experiment. Inviting us to focus on the meaning of the term *mente concipere* Heidegger argues that Galileo thinks anew the fundamental idea of what it is for a body to be in motion in order to interpret what really happens in his experiment. Now this thinking is not merely what we ordinarily take to be conceptual. It is prior to conceptual

thought in the regular sense of the term. This is what Heidegger means by projection (*Entwurf*). For Heidegger this is of profound significance for philosophy because it reveals to us the very nature of thought and its relationship to being. And Newton's First Law of Motion is a systematic articulation of this new thought of motion. The subject of Newton's first law is a body which is in a state of rest or state of uniform motion in a straight line which is left all by itself. Such a body, Heidegger argues, is not something that is given to experience in a straightforward way and there is no experiment by which such a body can be perceived. Heidegger's provocative claim is thus that Newton's First Law is not simply inferred from the experience of motion. Newton's First Law involves a lot more than that. It is a principle which allows us to organize in a new way our very experience of motion. Newton's first law involves a kind of thinking that, in accordance with what we have said before, is prior to conceptual thinking. It is a new way of accessing things and a new way of thinking the thingness of things which is not passively inferred from the things themselves. This is what Heidegger means when he says:

The mathematical is based on such a claim, i.e., the putting forth (*Ansetzung*) of a determination of things which is not produced experientially from the thing itself and which yet lies at the basis of every determination of things, makes it possible and makes room for it for the first time. Such a fundamental conception of things is neither arbitrary nor self-evident. Therefore, it required a long controversy to bring it into power. It required a change in the mode of approach to things along with the achievement of a new manner of thought. (WTH: 89-90, translation modified)

So Newton's formulation of the laws of motion heralds a revolution in thought. Aristotle understood motion as something that stems from the nature of the body, its capacities and forces, and saw a fundamental distinction between the motion of the celestial bodies and the heavenly bodies. By contrast Newton understands motion as something basic and on

the basis of which the forces, capacities and the nature of a body have to be explained. In doing so he obliterates the distinction between celestial and earthly motion.

The mathematical character of modern science is evident in the *mente concipere*. It involves a projection (*Entwurf*) of thingness onto things. Such a projection springs over individual things, as it were, towards their thingness. It is the kind of thinking that can somehow take in a glance all things at once. But it is not an inference. The projection opens up a space in which things and facts can present themselves. This projection is prior to sensation and logical thinking and makes both possible. It is because of this prior projection that we can sense the presence of objects and organize our sense data under concepts.

Such a projection involves a prior assessment of things so that they may be taken as something. Such an assessment is what, according to Heidegger, the Greeks call *axiomata*. Modern science, taking Newton's *Principia* as the theoretical articulation of its fundamental principles, is axiomatic. In fact, the most crucial part of Newton's *Principia* is the section containing the axioms of the laws of motion. These axioms contain the most comprehensive and systematic articulation of what it is for a body to be a body and what it is for a body to move and interact with other bodies. These axioms involve the projection of the very thingness of the thing and on the basis of which we can organize experience. They thus provide "the basic blueprint (*Grundriss*) of the structure of everything and its relation to every other thing is sketched in advance." (WTH: 92)<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> I refrain from characterizing the axiomatic, mathematical structure of the modern sciences as a priori. On this issue of the a priori character of the mathematical, my position differs from the accepted interpretation we see Kockelmans, *Nature and Science* as well as Kisiel and Sallis. Trish Glazebrook (Glazebrook, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Science*) who summarizes the positions of the Sallis and Kisiel on the a priori character of the mathematical also accepts this characterization. As I have explained in this section, Heidegger's account of

It is only when thought has already projected such a blueprint of the very thingness of the thing in advance that it becomes possible for us to explain natural phenomena as an interaction between material bodies or corpuscles. Natural things thus come to be understood in terms of “relations of places and time points and in the measures of mass and working forces.” (WTH: 93) Experience thus cannot be understood as simply a passive reception of sense data in a vacuum. Experience has to take its lead from this blueprint. This is brought out in the way modern science conducts experiments. In experiments, “a line of questioning can be instituted in advance in such a way that it poses conditions in advance to which nature must answer in one way or another.” (Ibid.) Now within the unique mathematical framework of modern science, our experience of bodies is organized in such a way that the qualitative distinctions between bodies are eliminated. There are now no qualitative differences between celestial and earthly motion. Since all bodies are treated uniformly only “according to relations of space, time and motion,” (Ibid.) there is a need for a uniform numerical measure to determine what is essential to the thing. Thus mathematics in the narrower sense of a strict numerical discipline comes to occupy a central place within modern science. It is only within such

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sciences is not a transcendental account. As we have seen in the previous two chapters, for Heidegger, the transcendental account is simply not able to go back to things themselves, so to speak, and remains bogged in irresolvable dualisms. Heidegger therefore attempts to dissolve these dualisms by resorting to an alternative historical account. But history (*Geschichte*) here is understood as the history of being and not mere historiography (*Historie*). Modern science is mathematical, in the sense, that it involves an interpretation of very thingness of the thing. Ancient and medieval science also involves such an interpretation of the thingness of things. And it is this interpretation that undergoes a fundamental transformation as we move from ancient, to medieval and then to modern science. And it is these transformations that Heidegger, as we have seen, is interested in bringing to the fore. What we thus have here is a new attempt to understand modern science within this radically new ontological framework of the history of being. So if equate the mathematical with the Kantian a priori we give up this ontological framework of the history of being within which Heidegger is working.

a mathematical framework that the philosophical disjunction between mathematical formalism and direct perceptual experience of things can make sense.

### 3.4.3. Explicating the Fundamental Determination of the Thingness of the Thing that lies at the basis of Modern Knowledge: Heidegger's Readings of Descartes and Kant

#### 3.4.3.1. Descartes' Attempt to Give Knowledge a New Metaphysical Determination

In the light of these claims, Heidegger argues that the traditional interpretation of Descartes' thought – the first modern philosopher – is in desperate need of revision. Contrary to the traditional interpretation, which sees Descartes as providing us with a method to attain the most certain knowledge of the external world and thereby elevating epistemology to a first philosophy, Heidegger's interpretation sees Descartes' philosophy as an attempt at a new way of thinking the very being of this world. It is only on the basis of a transformed understanding of the very thingness of the thing that the Cartesian method can make sense.

Descartes' reflections are an attempt to come to grips with the mathematical being of the external world and are thus of a metaphysical nature. Heidegger argues that he engages in a reflection precisely of this kind in his early work *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*. Here Descartes is interested in understanding exactly what makes a mathematical being mathematical by laying out the kind of rules a mathematical being is subject to so that one can employ the right method to know it. Descartes' project is only thus a *mathematica universalis* whereby he can lay out essence of the mathematical object. For a mathematical object to be so, its essence must be expressible in clear and



distinct axioms. For modern philosophy all objects are mathematical and so by laying the essence of the mathematical it lays out what it is for an object to be an object. The axioms have also to be orderable from the highest to the lowest whereby the highest principles express what it is for the object to be such. The highest axioms have to be foundational and so they cannot be therefore founded on anything else. They have to be intuitively evident. Here we have the 'I think,' which is in Descartes' philosophy, the indubitable foundation from which all other axioms are derived. The 'I' does not designate a bundle of individual psychological characteristics, one of which is doubt. If the 'I think' was simply another object with a specific set of properties then it would have to be grounded on another object and so on. "The "I think" is reason, is its fundamental act, what is drawn solely from the "I think," is gained solely out of reason itself. Reason so comprehended is purely itself, pure reason." (WTH: 107) Far from being a descent into subjectivism, the I-principle is a new foundation of knowledge which is brought about by the transformation in the very thinking of the beings of beings. According to Heidegger, Descartes is thus not just interested in the question of how one can know the external world. Much more than that, he is interested in trying to understand the very being of the external world. He is thus interested in first tracing the metaphysical space only within which knowledge can gain its sense. Heidegger's interpretation of Descartes is thus a defense of his thesis that all knowledge is always embedded in a metaphysical space and it is impossible to articulate what knowledge is without some prior awareness of the very objectivity of objects of knowledge. This prior awareness as we have seen takes the form of a projection of thought which finds systematic articulation in Descartes' *Regulae* and his subsequent founding of knowledge on the "I think."

When all knowledge of world is thus founded on pure reason with the advent of Descartes, metaphysics in his successors comes to be known as rational metaphysics with its three foundational principles – the I- principle, the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason. In the theoretical systematization of modern metaphysics that follows after Descartes, the metaphysical space – the thought of the being of beings - comes to be articulated in terms of the three principles of pure reason. If the metaphysical space is mathematical, as Heidegger argues, then the elucidation of pure reason will also be an elucidation of the mathematical. It is Kant who succeeds to providing the most comprehensive account of the mathematical in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. The *Critique* draws and sketches for the first time an outline of pure reason. It is a survey that sets the boundaries for the entire domain of pure reason. But it is a survey that does not involve referring to facts; it occurs from principles. It is in the *Critique* that Heidegger believes one can find the most comprehensive answer to the question: What is a thing? from the point of the view of modern philosophy. The place where one can find this answer is Book Two, Chapter Two titled “System of all principles of pure understanding.” Heidegger’s focus is thus different from the one in his earlier *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* where he was mainly concerned with the chapter on the schematism immediately preceding this. What follows then is Heidegger’s novel interpretation of Kant’s *Critique*.

### 3.4.3.2. The Culmination of the Cartesian Project in Kant's Reformulation of Knowledge

#### 3.4.3.2.1. Reformulating the Relationship between Intuition and Thought

For Kant in the *Critique*, human experience has a very specific form of the mathematical-physical sciences. Kant thus accepts all the major pronouncements and findings of modern physics, according to which, all bodies are experienced as part of a space-time matrix within which they occupy specific positions and change those positions under the influence of external unbalanced forces. This gives rise to a distinction between perception and experience. But under the revolution of modern physics, our perceptions are now organized into experience in a very specific way. This can happen if we have access to categories (the most fundamental of which is thingness or the being of beings) under which perception can be organized prior to and independent of experience. These categories under which perceptions are organized are not derived from perceptions themselves. These categories thus constitute the metaphysical space in which our experience can unfold as the experience of individual objects classifiable under universal concepts. The specific manner in which our experience unfolds depends upon a metaphysics of which we may not know anything but it is the task of philosophy to find a way to articulate this metaphysics. Our experience of objects is a product of the union of intuition and thought. And what makes intuition and thought unitable is the fact they are both representational in character. Whereas intuition represents its objects as particular, thought represents its objects as universals. Human experience has a peculiarity. In the case of human experience and human knowledge, which is what Kant is concerned with,

intuition is superior to thought and thought is subservient to it. The subservience to intuition is not a mere additional characteristic of thought. So we cannot simply inherit the old understanding of thought as logic and simply add this new characteristic. Kant's discovery of thought's subservience to intuition entails a fundamental transformation in the way logic is understood and characterized, and according to Heidegger Kant himself was very slow in recognizing this. It also entails a significant break with the rational metaphysics that was so dominant prior to Kant. Kant's reformulation of the relationship between intuition and thought signals a new way of doing metaphysics and logic. In Kant we have the most comprehensive and superior account of the mathematical which rational metaphysics tried to provide but ultimately failed. These transformations that Kant ushers in are based however on a fundamental re-understanding of what a judgment is. Kant accomplishes this by radically re-conceptualizing the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments.

#### 3.4.3.2.2. Reformulating Judgment

According to Heidegger, judgment for Kant is no longer just a relationship of representations. In judgments there is in addition to perception also an apperception that is the grasping of the relationship of the object to the 'I.' So in a judgment, in addition to the object, the 'I' is perceived in a special way, not as an object but as an againstness – as something against which the object stands. This is not a mere extension of the definition of judgment but a fundamental transformation of it.

In this light, an analytic judgment is one in which we have no explicit relation to the particular object in front of us. Rather we skip over it and are concerned only with the subjective concept of it and make this subjective concept clearer by dissecting it. There is no new knowledge acquired here. The relationship between the subject and predicate is founded on the concept of the object. What we have in the analytic statement is a reflexive relationship of the subject to itself whereby the subject apperceives itself as the source of concept.

In synthetic judgments, however, the relation between subject and predicate is grounded in the object in its particular givenness. Here we cannot merely stay within the confines of the subjective concept but need to make a passage through the given object. Here we have an apperception of the subject as something against which the object comes to stand.

In both the synthetic and the analytic judgment there is a relation to an objective unity which grounds the relationship between the subject and the predicate. While in the case of the analytic judgment this objective unity is the concept, in the case of the synthetic judgment, it is the object in its particular givenness. It can also be seen that analytic judgments being concerned only with the concept of the thing and not with the thing given to us in its particularity are a priori. That is to say these judgments do not depend upon sensory experience of the particular object to establish the relationship between subject and object. The a priori is thus the notion of the essence of a thing. On the other hand, synthetic judgments are concerned with the manner in which the object is given to us in its particularity. Synthetic judgments are a posteriori because the relationship between subject and predicate, which is established in them, is based upon

the sensory experience of the object. Rational metaphysics since Descartes has claimed to provide knowledge of objects such as God, the soul and the entire cosmos but by engaging solely with these concepts. Rational metaphysics has thus claimed to provide us with knowledge of these objects a priori without resorting to experience. The judgments of rational metaphysics are thus synthetic because they provide us with new knowledge but at the same they are a priori, that is to say, independent of experience. The question with which Kant inaugurates his critique is how synthetic a priori statements are at all possible. The question, according to Heidegger, is simply another way of asking how rational metaphysics can be possible at all. So Kant has to answer two questions when he does pose the question of the possibility of synthetic a priori questions: 1. in what sense are they possible and 2. under what conditions. For Kant, they are possible only under strictly determined conditions which rational metaphysics is not able to fulfill. The only restriction that rational metaphysics recognizes on judgments is that they must not be self-contradictory because it does not recognize the subservience of thought to intuition in all human knowledge. But Heidegger argues that Kant discovers for the first time that a judgment even if not self-contradictory, that is to say, even if its subject harmonizes with the predicate, could still very well be false and even groundless because Kant recognizes precisely that thought is always subservient to intuition in human knowledge. For Kant, the principle of non-contradiction is a merely formal principle prescribing only a negative condition for the connection between subject and predicate, never prescribing any positive conditions of the content of the judgment. So while the absence of the self-contradiction is definitely a necessary condition for the judgments of metaphysics, it is not a sufficient condition in itself. Since it cannot exhaust

the essence of judgments, the principle of non-contradiction is not a metaphysical principle as rational metaphysics took it to be. Heidegger argues that it is Kant who shows us this for the first time. So the question of the thingness of the thing which is a metaphysical question is not governed only by the principle of non-contradiction. As Heidegger says:

...mere thought cannot be the final court of appeal for the determination of the thingness of the thing, or, as Kant would say, for the objectivity of the object. Logic cannot be the basic science of metaphysics. (WTH: 176)

So it is only transcendental logic which takes into consideration the relationship of judgment with its object that can truly do justice to judgments. Thus by distinguishing transcendental inquiry from scientific inquiry Kant seeks to renegotiate the object of metaphysics and the scope of its claims.

Doing science and understanding how science is done or what a scientist does when he is doing science are two different endeavors – different not only in content but also in method. The latter requires a different perspective and this is not self-evident. There is also a qualitative difference in the manner in which we formulate concepts and perform demonstrations in the latter which is a transcendental undertaking. It is great error, argues Heidegger, to think that scientists could accomplish the latter endeavor as easily as they do the former.

The transcendental perspective is a unique perspective in which we are concerned with how the object becomes an object for the human subject, how it gives itself to human thought. Here we are concerned not with the object itself as it impresses upon the senses as in the sciences nor are we concerned simply with the way we speak about objects as in logic. In the transcendental perspective we are concerned with the

relationship between object and assertion. We are concerned with showing how the assertion can correspond to the object and represent the object in advance. The question that we seek to answer is: How is the subject confronted with a unified object represented in assertion? The transcendental perspective thus attempts to fathom the very links between intuition and thought. By embracing this perspective we wish to do more than just satisfy ourselves with a superficial and extrinsic connection between the psychological and the logical. This is what Heidegger says regarding the transcendental perspective:

We are now not only not directed to the object of the assertion, but also not to the form of the assertion as such, but rather to how the object is the object of the assertion, and how the assertion represents the object in advance, how our knowledge passes over to the object, *transcendit*, and how, thereby, and in what objective determination the object encounters. Kant calls this way of considering transcendental. In a certain sense the object stays in our view and in a certain sense so does the assertion, because the *relation* between the assertion and the object is to be grasped.

This transcendental consideration, however, is not a mere external hooking up of the psychological and logical modes of reflection, but something more primordial, from which these two sides are separately lifted out. Whenever, within a science, we reflect in some way upon that science itself, we take a step into the line of vision and onto the plane of transcendental reflection. (WTH: 178-9)

Whenever we have a domain of scientific objects, for Heidegger, the objectivity of these objects has to have somehow been already decided. The scientist already has a sense of what it means for so and so scientific object to be so and so. It is only on the basis of this prior knowledge, which is precisely what is articulated by Kant's synthetic a priori judgments that she can be confronted by a scientific object at all and begin to acknowledge its presence. These pre-determinations of the objectivity of objects are absolutely necessary for a science and without them there would be no domain towards which science can determine its inquiries. "There is no presuppositionless science,



because the essence of science consists in such presupposing, in such pre-judgments about the object.” (WTH: 180) For Heidegger there can be no absolute vantage point from which one can gain the absolute knowledge of everything. This is what marks human knowledge out in its specificity. Kant was the first to become aware of the finite nature of human knowledge and attempted to articulate the conditions upon which it depends. This involved a radical shift away from the way metaphysics was construed. We have seen how Heidegger argues that Kant moves away from the traditional understanding of judgments as simply a connection between representations. In this new understanding there is in every judgment a relationship to an object and it is the representation of this unity of the object that guides the connection between the subject and the predicate in a judgment. While in analytic judgment it is the representation of the concept that guides the connection between subject and predicate, in the synthetic judgment it is the representation of the object in its specificity that guides the connection between subject and predicate. With this Kant redefines the very essence of thought. We do not see the real force of this new understanding if we restrict our treatment to analytic judgments. It is only when we consider synthetic judgments that the real significance of Kant’s re-understanding becomes apparent. In synthetic judgments, we have in addition to the connection between the two representations also a relationship to a unified object which stands against the ‘I’ making the judgment. This object is already represented as a unity and acts as the basis for the connection between subject and predicate. In a judgment there is thus a presupposition or anticipating representation of a unity without which no connection between subject and predicate is possible. According to Heidegger, the traditional theory of judgment prior to Kant simply failed to see this thereby

restricting their definition of a judgment to a connection between representations. The work of the anticipating representation belongs to the pure understanding. To speak with Heidegger:

Each kind of subject-predicate connection in judgments presupposes and bears in itself the representation of unity as the guiding regard, according to which and in whose sense the connecting occurs. The anticipating representing of such unities, which guides connection, belongs to the essence of the understanding...The representations of these unities belong to the functions of the understanding, to the essence of connecting. They lie purely in the essence of the understanding itself and for this reason are called pure concepts of the understanding: categories. (WTH: 187)

#### 3.4.3.2.3. Reformulating the Relationship between Thought and its Object

One of the most serious implications of Kant's radical revision of the notion of judgment is that the essence of the thing, its thingness is not independent of its relationship to the subject who makes assertions about it. It lies in the very essence of the thing to give itself to assertion and its essence can be determined only if we take into account the nature of its relationship to the subject. To put it more succinctly, the essence of the object, its very objectivity consists of its relationship to the subject and one cannot arrive at its essence without taking this relationship into account. This is what is expressed by the highest principle of synthetic judgments which explicitly equates the condition for the possibility of experience with the condition for the possibility of the objects of experience. The categories are thus to be understood as the different modes by which the subject can relate to its object. These relations precede sensory intuition and logical thinking and make them possible. These relations between the subject and the

object and what makes the object appear to us as an object are laid out in the principles of pure understanding.

It is the principles of the pure understanding that determine what the pure concepts of the understanding, namely, the categories are. Kant, according to Heidegger, is interested in laying out these principles which contain the genesis of the categories and not simply enumerating the categories. These principles are synthetic a priori judgments. Synthetic a priori principles are unique in that they are not grounded in mere thought nor are they empirically derived from the experience of objects. For Heidegger Kant's synthetic a priori principles which outline the conditions for the possibility of knowledge are metaphysical principles which taken together contain the most comprehensive response that modern philosophy can provide to the question: What is the thingness of the thing? So Kant's question about the possibility of synthetic a priori judgments is, according to Heidegger, the equivalent of asking: How is a thing as such and in advance possible as a thing? To summarise with Heidegger:

Principles which ground the essence of an object cannot be grounded upon the object. The principles cannot be extracted by experience from the object, since they themselves first make possible the objectivity of the object. Nor can they be grounded in mere thought alone, because they are principles of *objects*. Consequently, the principles do not make the character of general formal logical propositions, such as "A is A," of which we say that they are self-evident. Recourse to common sense fails entirely here. (WTH: 185)

Kant describes the pure understanding as the source and the faculty of rules. What does Kant mean by this? According to Heidegger, this statement reflects Kant's deep metaphysical insight into the very relationship between thought and its object. To say that pure understanding is the source of rules is to say that it is pure understanding that makes it possible for the subject to encounter an object as something that stands

independently beside the subject as well as something that is constant and does not fall apart. Heidegger takes very seriously the connotation of the German word *Gegenstand* where the first part of the word – *gegen* – means against and *stand* means standing or constant. Without the role played by the pure understanding it would not be possible for the subject to have a unified object present before it. The mere impingement of sensations such as touch, sight, smell and hearing upon the human subject cannot by themselves account for or result in the presence of a unified object in front of the subject. Causation alone cannot explain how objects become intelligible to us. It is only with the collaboration of the rule giving pure understanding that our sensations can yield objects that correspond to our experiences. These rules are the principles of the understanding whose necessity belongs to the very essence of human knowledge. They are not as we have explained before, merely logical rules that originate in the mind and based only upon conceptual thought nor are they passively abstracted from objects. They occupy a middle position between thought and object making the correspondence between thought and object possible.

#### 3.4.3.2.4. Reformulating the Object

In making possible the presentation of objects as independent and constant, that is to say, as something objective, these rules are concerned with the very objectivity of the object, the thingness of the thing. It is in this two-fold aspect of objectivity, namely, the independence of the object and its constancy that the two sets of principles of the pure understanding – the mathematical and the dynamical are grounded.

In the *Critique*, there are two aspects that belong to the thingness of the thing. Firstly we always experience things as objects of the mathematical-physical sciences. So a natural thing, for Kant, is an object which occupies space and is either at rest or motion and whose motion and dimensions can be measured mathematically. The amenability of a natural thing to precise mathematical determination is not something accidental to it but belongs to its very essence and makes the thing what it is. This first aspect of its thingness is accounted for by the mathematical principles.

Secondly, the thing is able to hold itself together as a thing. It is thus something that resists external forces and keeps itself from disintegrating by exerting an equal and opposite force of its own. This second aspect is accounted for by the dynamical principles. Thus the mathematical and the dynamical principles belong to the very thingness of the thing. Heidegger states that it is Kant who for the first time comprehensively laid out these principles as well as their inner unity.

As the reader of the *Critique* is aware the Axioms of Intuitions and the Anticipations of Perception make up the mathematical principle and the three Analogies of Experience make up the dynamical principles. But as we can also see these principles render, for Heidegger, the very essence of the mathematical. An understanding of these principles is critical to Heidegger since it is only with these principles that an answer to the question of the thingness of the thing can be arrived at. For our purposes a clear understanding of the mathematical principles will be crucial for two reasons. Firstly, it gives us some very important clues for tracing the metaphysical space within which modern-scientific knowledge of things becomes possible because only in that way do we understand how the Dasein of a people makes a prior projection or thinks this originary

thought of the thingness of things. Secondly, it is in the context of his interpretation of the mathematical principles that Heidegger takes up some of the more basic questions that have troubled the discipline of traditional epistemology such as our knowledge of the external world and the nature of sensory knowledge. We must be absolutely clear however that Kant does not understand the principles in this manner. Within his critical system, these principles are synthetic a priori universal principles that extend our knowledge of objects without recourse to experience. The determinations of the objectivity of the object that they reveal are not given in experience but they are what make the very experience of objects possible. Hence they are conditions for the very possibility of knowledge. Keeping this in mind let us now proceed to explicate each of these principles as Heidegger understands them.

The principle of the axioms of intuition states that all intuitions are extensive magnitudes. Heidegger's strategy for interpreting this principle is as follows. He first explains what Kant means by magnitude thereby showing how space and time are magnitudes. He then goes on to address how space and time can be intuitions. Having done this he can then show how space and time are pure intuitions of our understanding. According to Heidegger, Kant uses the term magnitude in two senses. There is magnitude understood as *quantum* and magnitude understood as *quantitas*. As *quantitas*, magnitude is understood as a determinate finite measure. As Heidegger indicates:

Magnitude as *quantitas* answers the question "How big?" It is a measure, the how much of a unity taken many times. (WTH: 195)

However one can measure something only when it is measurable, that is to say, it is always already spatial, that is to say, it is a *quantum*. Here we arrive at the second sense of magnitude. Magnitude understood as quantum is an indefinite whole. Something can

possess a determinate measure (*quantitas*) only when it is given to intuition as a *quantum*. While magnitude as *quantitas* can be understood only in terms of an analysis into parts taken in terms of standard units and a subsequent synthesis of those standard units into a whole, magnitude understood as *quantum* is not understood in terms of analysis and synthesis. It is what is given to intuition in advance and makes such analysis and synthesis possible in the first place. It is only because intuitions are given in this manner as quanta that quantification is possible in the first place. For Kant, according to Heidegger, *quantitas* presupposes *quantum*. Heidegger reads the principle of the axioms of intuition as concerned primarily with *quanta* and only secondarily with *quantitas*. Space and time have the nature of *quanta*. It is only because a body is spatio-temporal that it can be quantified. Heidegger says about space:

Space is a magnitude (*quantum*) in which the finite, measurably-determined parts and combinations always come too late, where the finite of this sort simply has no right and achieves nothing for the definition of its essence. For this reason, space is called an “infinite magnitude” (A 25, N.K.S., p. 69). This does not mean “endless” with respect to finite determinations as *quantitas*, but as *quantum*, which presupposes nothing end-like as its condition. Rather, on the contrary, it is itself the condition of every division and finite partitioning. (197)

But how can space and time taken as extensive magnitudes in the sense of *quanta* be intuitions since intuitions are “immediate representing of a particular?” (Ibid.) Here Heidegger distinguishes between empirical and pure intuition. All our empirical intuitions require a prior awareness of spatiality and temporality. Space and time understood in the sense of *quanta* are not given to our sense organs. Space and time are pure intuitions and it is only on their ground that our sense organs can sense objects in space. So we find that our empirically intuited objects are always in space. But space itself is never in space. It makes it possible for anything to be encountered. Space is thus

a mode of presenting. Spatiality is thus a determination of the very objectivity of the object – the thingness of the thing.

Going still further, in explaining the proof of this principle in the second edition of the *Critique*, Heidegger shows us how Kant in this proof connects the concept of pure understanding like unity with the pure intuition of space as quantum. Things appear in space and time with a certain shape and size and at a certain distance that can be measured. But this requires the synthetic activity of putting together the parts of which this thing is composed. It is this synthetic activity that allows us to distinguish the limits of a thing, distinguish it from other objects and specify the spatial relationships between them. However this kind of determinate synthetic activity is possible only on the basis of indefinite and undifferentiated unity of space in which the specific object encounters us. It is this unity of manifoldness that “regulates the representation and consciousness” (WTH: 203) of the object. The consciousness of the synthetic unity of the manifold is possible only on the basis of the concept of unity. Unity as the concept of the pure understanding is the rule of unification. This rule of unification corresponds to nothing but the indefinite unity of space in the sense of *quanti*. It is this rule of unification that makes it possible for us then to represent objects as unities standing beside us. Thus the same unity which governs the rule of unification also governs the unity of objects in space and time. And it is only because it is one and the same unity that experience of objects is possible in the first place. Hence we can say that that objects must appear to us in advance as extensive magnitudes. As Heidegger says here:

Our question about the thingness of the thing, about the objectivity of the object, is answered by the principle and its proof as follows: because objectivity as such is the unity of the collection of something manifold into a representation of unity, and is a conception in advance, and because



what is manifold encounters in space and time, what encounters must itself stand against us in the unity of quantity as extensive magnitude (WTH: 205)

Our immediate awareness of things reveals to us that they occupy space, they have a shape and they have a magnitude. Traditional epistemology calls this the primary qualities of the object. This knowledge seems not to require any other foundation. It seems self-evident and necessary. But Heidegger's interpretation of Kant reveals to us that this knowledge is grounded on a prior projection of what the objectivity of the object or the thingness of thing really is. According to Heidegger, this is an originary thinking whose principles Kant tries to partly lay out as synthetic a priori propositions in the axioms of intuition. This projection of the thingness of the thing constitutes, for Heidegger, the metaphysical space within which knowledge of traditional epistemology can happen. It is only when we are in such a metaphysical space or clearing that we can have the knowledge of traditional epistemology. For Kant this metaphysical space takes the form of synthetic a priori propositions which lay out the conditions for the possibility of knowledge. But Kant never asks how this metaphysical space cleared out by originary thinking can be expressed in principles. This is because Kant never questions the mathematico-physical understanding of objects. He simply takes the mathematical as the universal way of determining objects without for once asking whether that necessarily is the case and how.

The second mathematical principle – anticipations of perception – is concerned with sensation and what in traditional epistemology are called secondary qualities. The principle goes as follows in the second edition:

In all appearances, the real that is an object of sensation has intensive magnitude, that is, a degree. (WTH: 206)

Heidegger's interpretation of the second principle involves a radically new understanding of the major terms of this principle. By doing so he departs significantly from the way in which these terms have been traditionally understood by commentators of Kant.

Heidegger argues that only by such a new understanding can one truly comprehend the revolutionary nature of Kant's undertaking in formulating this principle. For Heidegger, Kant's formulation signals a radical shift in the account of sensation from that of his predecessors and is singularly superior to all previous accounts.

We human beings, because we do not create the objects of cognition, have to have the objects given to us through the senses. Thus we have sensations by which objects impinge upon us. These sensations are distributed among the fields of touch, sight, smell, taste and hearing. Sensation, says Heidegger, is a complicated term whose exact meaning always eludes us. This is because sensation occupies a mid-way position between subject and object which makes it impossible to understand it exclusively in terms of the subject or the object. Accordingly, Heidegger says that it has been understood so far in two senses. From the side of the object, sensation can mean "what is sensed – red as perceived, the sound, the red-sensation, the sound-sensation." (WTH: 209) However, from the side of the subject, it can also mean "sensing as a state of ourselves." (WTH: 208) And depending upon our interpretation of what is subjective and what is objective, sensation can be understood differently. However while the two predominant senses mentioned above privileged the passivity of sensation this need not be the case. As Heidegger shows sensation can also be understood as an activity and in this sense we learn and cultivate and share in this activity. We learn to see and hear what others see and thereby cultivate our own sight and hearing and in doing so share in their world of

sights and sounds. Here, according to Heidegger, we understand the significance of a work of art such as a painting. The painter in depicting things on canvas invites us to see what he has seen. In doing so he challenges our conventional ways of seeing things and teaches us to see again and in new ways. As we will see Heidegger will show that Kant's second mathematical principle takes into account precisely this active aspect of sensation. The most common and dominant theory of sensation is the causal theory of sensation called phenomenalism which Heidegger delves into although he does not use that title. The theory analyses sensation in two steps. The first step is to interpret things as collections of sense data. So everything is said to be composed of colors, sounds, smells and touch. Everything if need be can thus be analyzed into the sense data of which it is constituted.

The next step is to interpret these sense data as effects of a cause. What is objective is the cause of the sensation that lies outside the subject and what is subjective are its effects on the subject. So the color red of the traffic light stimulates the optic nerves thereby causing one to see red. The objective red is the frequency of the light waves reflected by the object. The subjective red is the stimulation of the optic nerves which causes them to assume a specific state corresponding to red.

However the causal analysis which tries to understand sensations in terms of frequency of light waves and the states of sensory organs is still unable to explain the unity of red cherry hanging from the tree. In order for us to understand sensations causally, it is necessary to interpret them in a very specific manner. Here we abstract the redness of the cherry and only focus on the red as a state of our optic nerves corresponding to the specific frequency of light waves. But the original unity of the red cherry which

confronts us as one whole is lost by this abstraction. How is this way of understanding sensation related to the experience of the red cherry? Causal theories of sensation simply fail to answer this question because they cannot account for this original unity of our sensory experience. In fact the causal analysis simply sidesteps what is actually in dire need of explanation – the unity of our sensory experience. Our experience of an object like a green leaf enjoys a unity first and foremost into which consideration of cause and effect never enter. We never experience the greenness of a leaf as the effect of a cause. We are confronted with the green leaf and nothing more. The dichotomy of cause and effect is a subsequent rational reconstruction of our experience which tells us nothing about the unity of our sensory experience. This is what Heidegger means when he says of the causal theory:

Such an explanation of sensation appears to be very scientific, and yet it is not, insofar as the domain of the givenness of sensations and what is to be explained, i.e., color as given has at the same time been abandoned...If we observe – apart from any theory of knowledge – the givenness of the color of the thing, e.g., the green of a leaf, we do not find the slightest cause which might produce an effect on us. We are never aware of the green of the leaf as an effect on us, but as the green of the leaf. (WTH: 209-210)

If it is not at all obvious then as to why sensations must be understood only as the states of nervous system or the properties of light waves then the question of what sensations are is certainly not settled. It may be reasonable then for us to conclude that the causal theory of sensation tells us only part of the story omitting in the process the most important part – the fundamental unity of sensory experience. What account of sensation would be able to grasp for this unity in a satisfactory manner? In this context, Heidegger argues that Kant's second principle takes a different approach towards sensation and is more effective in explaining what the causal approach misses. To understand Kant's

approach, we however need to understand in a new way what Kant means by the real as he uses the term in the second principle. This will require that we cast aside all the previous misinterpretations of this term by commentators, according to Heidegger, and start again. It is a blunder of the highest degree to equate the real with the actual. Real, in contemporary thinking has been understood as what is actual or what exists out there in the world. So in the English language when we use the colloquial expression “Get real” we are asking the person we are addressing to start conforming to the state of affairs that actually exists. We are exhorting him to put an end to the kind of behavior he or she is presently indulging in whereby he simply fails to take into account the facts of the matter. We impress upon him or her the need to face the facts – the need to face what actually exists. In using this expression we take reality to mean what actually exists. However, according to Heidegger, Kant does not use the term reality in this sense at all.

To speak with Heidegger:

Reality comes from *realitas*. *Realis* is what belongs to *res*. That means a something (*Sache*). That is real which belongs to something, what belongs to the what-content (*Wasgehalt*) of a thing, e.g., to what constitutes a house or tree, what belongs to the essence of something, to the *essentia*. Reality sometimes means the totality of this definition of its essence or it means particular defining elements. Thus, for example, extension is a reality of a natural body as well as weight, density, resistance. All such is real, belongs to the *res*, to the something “natural body,” regardless of whether the body actually exists or not. (WTH: 212-213)

Kant gives us, what Heidegger terms, the critical concept of reality. This critical concept of reality is concerned with the essence of the thing and those properties that belong to its essence. In this context, Kant also shows how the existence or the actuality of the thing is not and can never be a part of its essence. Existence is thus not a predicate, not a property of the object under consideration. So a possible five hundred dollar bill and an

actual five dollar bill are both real in the sense in which Kant understands the term, argues Heidegger. The critical concept of reality is even more basic than actuality and inactuality and is the condition for the possibility of either. It is only because something is real in the critical sense that it can be actual or inactual as the case may be. Even for a thing to be inactual, it must possess reality in the sense in which Kant uses the term in his second principle.

Reality is thus the appearance of an object in space and time. When an object impresses itself upon us it is said to have reality. The object signals its presence to us by filling space and time. Even dream objects and hallucinations have a reality because they too fill space and time in a manner identical to actual objects. It is because both dream objects and actual objects have reality in this critical sense that we can even begin to distinguish between them.

The real is thus subject to measurement just like spatiality. But while the latter is measured in terms of extensive magnitude, the former possesses intensive magnitude. The amount of space occupied by the object is measured as an aggregate of basic units, the reality of the object is measured by the degree of intensity of its surface. The more intense the surface, the greater the degree of pressure imposed on its sensory organs. Hence it is difficult to see the sun at noon whereas the same sun can be viewed very comfortably at dawn or at dusk. The reality of the object can thus vary from zero degree in which case it has no reality to the  $n$ th degree of intensity.

Sensation in the *Critique*, according to Heidegger, is cashed out in terms of this critical concept of reality which is anterior to actuality. Since causality is a category that is applicable only at the level of actuality, Heidegger believes that Kant's characterisation

of sensation allows him to move beyond causality and address the concept of sensation in a more fundamental way. "Sensation is not a thing for which causes are sought, but a given whose givenness is to be made understandable through the conditions of the possibility of experience." (WTH: 217) It is only within such an intensive field of reality that we can have sense objects. This concept of intensive reality is a synthetic a priori concept. It is not something sensed. It is only on the basis of such an anticipation of a reality with intensive magnitude that sensations can be given to us in the first place. In the absence of such an anticipation of reality our sensations would be a chaotic disorganized flux and would never yield us objects determined by mathematico-physical laws. Thus we arrive at the rather strange discovery of Kant, according to Heidegger, whereby even sensation, which has taken to be purely passive in the dominant causal theories, involves an anticipation of reality and is thus in some sense active.

### 3.5. Heidegger's Characterization of the Knowledge in Opposition to Kant: A Case for an Epistemology of Ruptures

The first and second mathematical principles thus provide us with two aspects of the thingness of the thing. For a thing to be a thing it must firstly be encountered in a space-time continuum within which its co-ordinates can be precisely specified. Secondly, it must be able to fill a space and time and give itself to sensation in varying degrees of intensity. The proofs that Kant provides for these two principles, Heidegger argues, are circular because these principles have to show us how thought and intuition are united in sensory experience. But how can they show this without taking recourse to the very experience that they are supposed to make possible. It is the very nature of these

principles that make their proofs circular. However this circularity is not something detrimental to Kant's critical enterprise. All it shows for Heidegger is that one cannot escape circularity while trying to provide a metaphysical determination of objects. The circularity of course has deep metaphysical implications for any theory of knowledge which cannot be ignored. For one, it shows that the relationship between thought and intuition cannot be explained in terms of the simple application of the categories of logic to the physics of sensation. Epistemology simply takes the unity between thought and intuition, or to put it more simply, the correspondence between humans and the things, for granted. For Heidegger it is the correspondence that is precisely in need of explanation. What Kant's account of this correspondence shows is that any explanation of this relationship is bound to suffer from circularity. And this is not because our accounts are in any sense inadequate but rather because of the very nature of the relationship between thought and intuition. Sensory experience is the unity of thought and intuition. All we can do then is to recognize the circularity and inhabit the circle. What does this mean? It means that thought and intuition are not two independent entities that can occasionally interact with each other. Rather thought is dependent upon intuition and intuition leads back to thought. The relationship is thus circular. In the same way relationship between humans and things cannot be understood as a relationship between two independent entities that can occasionally or accidentally interact. Rather to the essence of a thing there belongs its amenability to be given to human knowing and to the essence of the human being belongs an openness to be confronted by things. Human beings thus always find themselves in the midst of things. This openness is what Kant's investigations reveal to us and make us aware of the relational nature of humans and



things. That is to say we are not closed off from things. There is an opening in between things and humans. So Heidegger calls this openness the in-between (*Zwischen*) between humans and things. This openness, this in-between is the metaphysical space only within which knowledge of things is possible. To be open to things is to have a pre-understanding of the essence of the thing, of what it is for a thing to be a thing. Were it not for this pre-understanding we would be simply closed off from things with no possibility of ever knowing things.

While Kant's characterization of this openness or this pre-understanding of the thingness of the thing is static in that he resorts to an axiomatic structure to lay it out, Heidegger differs from Kant in arguing that this openness is dynamic. He characterizes the dynamic version of this openness as the history of be-ing. It is the dynamic nature of this openness that Heidegger brings to the fore when he discusses the radical rupture that happens with the Greek, the Medieval and the Modern pre-understanding of the essence of the things. Heidegger can thus claim that his account of the thingness of the thing is historical. For Heidegger, what Kant gives us is the most comprehensive account of the modern mathematical essence of things that was inaugurated by Galileo and found its systematic expression in Newton. Heidegger's thesis thus moves away from an epistemology of continuity that we observe in Kant and later Husserl to an epistemology of ruptures.

#### 4. Conclusion

What we have been able to do so far is lay out in clear terms the two different frameworks that Husserl and Heidegger resort to in order to account for our knowledge of things. Both philosophers are motivated by the need to move away from the traditional causal-inferential or representational theories of perception and undo the irreducible knots into which it has tied thinkers up for so long. The irreducible conundrum that traditional epistemology is saddled with may be very briefly summarized as the unbridgeable gap between things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves. To put in even more accessible terms it is the schism between how the world seems to us in everyday experience of the world and the modern scientific understanding of the world which is supposed to tell us how the world really is. Husserl and Heidegger can be seen as attempting to resolve this dualism that has plagued traditional epistemology in one form or another. In the process, they end up transforming in a radical manner the very idea of knowledge. Husserl tackles this problem by addressing the question of the thing-in-itself and Heidegger by addressing the question of the very thingness of the thing.

Against Hermann Phillipse<sup>98</sup> who concludes that Husserl and Heidegger implicitly accept what he calls the incompatibility thesis that “what elementary particle physics says about the world is incompatible with many of our everyday perceptual claims or in the terminology of Wilfred Sellars, that the scientific image is incompatible

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<sup>98</sup> Herman Phillipse, “Overcoming Epistemology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy*, ed. Brian Leiter and Michael Rosen (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 334-378

with the manifest image” (Phillipse, “Overcoming Epistemology,” 345); we can say that what Husserl and Heidegger furnish us with are precisely two different lines along which we could challenge the incompatibility thesis.

By replacing the simplistic causal relationship between subject and object with a more complex correlation between consciousness and object, Husserl gives us a way to reconcile the gap between the scientific image and the manifest image. Viewed from within the framework of the correlation between consciousness and object, the scientific object or the object-in-itself (which is what the sciences are after) is a correlate of a complex unity of acts of consciousness. Far from being incompatible with the object as it is given to consciousness or the manifest image, the scientific object is now nothing if it cannot be cashed out in perceptual acts, acts of judgment, acts of evidence and other such conscious acts. Any validly posited scientific object must contain in itself the possibility to be given to consciousness either directly or indirectly. As a correlate of a complex unity of conscious acts, the scientific object is different from a cultural object and from the objects given to us in everyday experience because while the scientific object is the correlate of the synthesis of a specific kind of act of a scientific consciousness the cultural objects and the objects of everyday experience are correlates of a different synthesis of conscious acts belonging to a cultural consciousness or the everyday consciousness, as the case may be. Objects may thus be correlates of conscious unities of a higher and lower kinds but there is no denying that they are correlates of the conscious unities of one kind or the other. In Husserl’s own words:

There may be different levels and types of transcendent things given and above all different levels in relation to the reality of “Nature” in the sense of the exact natural sciences. Each of these transcendent things thus has a truth which is relative and limited through the perspective to which it

belongs. As an example we have the pure sensible thing (which is related to an individual 'I' subject but before its opposition to a you), the sensible thing (*Sinnending*) or the sensible thing (*Sinnending*) normally sensible human beings in general (the sensible thing (*Sinnending*), which plays a role in the descriptive natural sciences), the intersubjective sensible thing in the wider sense, the object of the exact natural sciences. (Hua XXXVI, 62-63)

The scientific object may not be given to consciousness in the same way as an everyday object but it has to be given to consciousness all the same. It is possible for the everyday consciousness to learn to perform the necessary adjustment to its attitude so that the objects in everyday world may now be given to it as scientific objects. It is only by overlooking this correlation between consciousness and objects that traditional epistemology falls into this muddle of the irreducible dichotomy between the scientific image and the manifest image whereby the manifest image is dependent upon the caprices of the individual subject while the scientific image is independent of the subject and stands in and of itself.

By reformulating the very notion of the object-in-itself in the manner we have described, Husserl strives to retain the objectivity of the object because the object, on the one hand, is not just an arbitrary unity of conscious acts and not dependent upon individual caprices. It is an index of a rule according to which conscious acts proceed and this involves moments of evidence, doubt and indeterminacy. But on the other hand, the existence of the object-in-itself cannot be understood as anything other than the correlate of consciousness. Husserl is thus able to provide a way to resolve the immanence-transcendence divide and thereby challenge the incompatibility thesis. We may criticize the adequacy of Husserl's reformulation and ambivalence that lies at the

heart of the object-in-itself but that criticism can only come out of the acceptance that Husserl has indeed challenged the incompatibility thesis.

Heidegger follows a different track but his motivation is the same: to challenge the dichotomy between the scientific and the manifest image. Heidegger even challenges the conventional readings of Descartes which see him as the originator of this divide. He argues that the dichotomy between the scientific and manifest image points to underlying unity from which the dichotomy emerges. He spends the entire book trying to articulate this underlying unity.

For Heidegger science does not happen in a vacuum and requires a prior projection of the being of beings. We can understand this prior projection as a pre-understanding of the being of beings. It is only on the basis of such a pre-understanding that a science can become possible. So in Heidegger we find the simplistic causal relationship of stimulus and response between subject and object replaced by a more complex projection of being of beings by the Dasein of a people. Heidegger also characterizes this projection as the decision of a people and one can discern it in the tasks that Dasein of a people sets itself and the works that it produces. Since the projection or the decision concerns the being of beings, it is truly metaphysical. This projection is the manifestation of the openness, an in-between, a metaphysical space within which the encounter between subject and object can occur.

Different from Kant and later Husserl, for whom the relationship between subject and object is still harmonious and proceeds in a regular rule-bound manner, for Heidegger the relationship between the subject and object is no longer regular but prone to ruptures. For Heidegger a closer look at radical transformations that happened with

arrival of Greek, the medieval and the modern sciences reveals to us the ruptures to which the relationship between subject and object is prone. Under the Heideggerian framework, to characterize the move from the Greek to the medieval to the modern as a calm, assured progress is thoroughly inadequate and does not do justice to the things themselves. In these three epochs what we have is a radical revision of the very understanding of the being of beings. Each of these epochs of being signals the advent of a new metaphysics and it is within such a metaphysical space that that knowledge of things can be configured. What we have are thus three radically different configurations of knowledge. In Heidegger's new framework, knowledge is not just an act on the part of the individual subject; it is an event, but not a physical or psychological event in the confines of the knower's mind.<sup>99</sup> Much more than that, it is a metaphysical event in the history of being.

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<sup>99</sup> I owe this distinction between act and event to Pol Vandavelde who makes it in his discussion of sense and event. See Pol Vandavelde, *The Task of the Interpreter: Text, Meaning and Negotiation* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 15ff

## Chapter IV

### The Nature of Thought in an Archaeological History: Reading Foucault's *The Order of Things*

#### 1. Introduction:

Whereas in the previous chapters we saw how Heidegger's work could be seen as an attempt to broaden our understanding of what thinking is by showing how conceptual thinking is only a derivative form of a more original non-conceptual thinking of be-ing, we will now be seeing how Foucault, in his own way, makes a similar effort at redefining what thought is and showing how thought cannot be restricted to logic or conceptualization. According to Foucault thought is not just the activity of the human subject; it is also a discursive formation. Foucault gives us a novel method that he calls archaeology for analyzing the broad field of human cultural achievements. In his work, *The Order of Things*,<sup>100</sup> Foucault asks:

How can a thought melt away before anything other than itself? Generally speaking, what does it mean, no longer being able to think a certain thought? Or to introduce a new thought? (OT: 50)

Although Foucault does not answer these questions directly in his work, he clearly suggests that analyzing thought as a discursive formation would go a long way towards contemplating an answer to some of these questions.

In this chapter, I would like to show how his work *The Order of Things* provides us with the clearest account of thought as a discursive formation. In this work Foucault analyzes the Renaissance, the Classical and Contemporary thought as three distinct

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<sup>100</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). Originally published as *Les mots et les choses* (Gallimard, 1966). It will be referred to in in-text citations as OT

discursive formations. In taking us through his descriptions of these three periods, I will show how a description of thought as discursive formation is a precise description of a network of factors, which are neither purely subjective nor purely objective but which make possible the existence of subjects and objects and also facilitate the relationships between subjects and objects. By describing how each of these periods is a form of thought, I show how with the advent of every new form of thought, we have the emergence of new kinds of subjects, new kinds of objects and new kinds of relationships between subjects and objects.

If we take Foucault's analysis seriously then thought can no longer be understood just as a representation of an already existing object outside the confines of thought. It can no longer be understood strictly in anthropological-psychological terms. The movement of thought in history can no longer be understood in terms of continuity but it must be understood in terms of ruptures and abrupt discontinuities. The reasons for the reformulation and the transformation of thought in the course of history can no longer be understood simply in terms of the acquisition of better accounts of the world with the erroneous older accounts being discredited in favor of the new, more comprehensive true accounts. History can no longer be understood as a slow if not steady advance toward more accurate representations of the world in our thoughts.

In what follows, I provide a detailed and close reading of this work in order to provide an account, as systematic as it possibly can be, of this new understanding of thought. In a manner similar to Heidegger, Foucault attempts to bypass the anthropological-psychological level to open up a new level of analysis, the discursive level, and in doing so he provides us with a novel understanding of thought and



knowledge.<sup>101</sup> However, it is not my contention that Foucault is an epistemologist and what he is giving us is a new theory of knowledge along the lines one sees in the history of philosophy. My point is only that Foucault's work has very significant implications for epistemology and his work challenges some of the generally accepted positions in epistemology. It is worthwhile to lay out these implications in a systematic manner as they have the capacity to question some of our most beloved theories about knowledge.

## 2. The New Understanding of Thought and Knowledge in *The Order of Things*

*The Order of Things* is a continuation of Foucault's experiments with his new found archaeological method and in this work he applies it to the history of the human sciences to come to some provocative conclusions, the most stunning of which is that man is only a recent invention in western history and has existed only since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Although Foucault tells us nothing directly about the nature of thought, there are still plenty of indirect statements on this subject which are difficult to ignore and worthy of sustained reflection. In fact, Foucault even addresses his project in this work as an "archaeology of thought."<sup>102</sup> What does Foucault mean by thought here? In order to get some preliminary clues to answer this question let us recount what Foucault says in his account of the Velasquez painting *Las Meninas*:

It is not that words are imperfect, or that, when confronted by the visible, they prove insuperably inadequate. Neither can be reduced to the other's terms: it is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in

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<sup>101</sup> I devote the next chapter towards providing a systematic account of knowledge through a reading of Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*. However in this chapter I will focus on the notion of thought although I will from time to time talk about the relationship between thought and knowledge.

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, OT: 50, 387

what we say. And it is in vain that we attempt to show, by the use of images, metaphors, or similes, what we are saying; the space where they achieve their splendor is not that deployed by our eyes but that defined by the sequential elements of syntax. And the proper name in this particular context, is merely an artifice: it gives us a finger to point with, in other words, to pass surreptitiously from the space where one speaks to the space where one looks; in other words, to fold one over the other as though they were equivalents. But if one wishes to keep the relation of language to vision open, if one wishes to treat their incompatibility as a starting point for speech instead of as an obstacle to be avoided, so as to stay as close as possible to both, then one must erase those proper names and preserve the infinity of the task. It is perhaps through the medium of this grey, anonymous language, always over-meticulous and repetitive because too broad, that the painting may, little by little, release its illumination. (OT: 9-10)

We can see this passage as an indirect summary of everything Foucault is attempting to accomplish in this book. Foucault is speaking here of the relationship between words and things. But words are also most tangible manifestations of our ideas or thoughts. So this passage can thus be seen as an extensive comment on the relationship between thoughts and their objects, namely, the things that we see. It seems very intuitive, commonsensical to speak of a correspondence between the words we speak or the thoughts we entertain and the things we see and about which we entertain thoughts. It therefore again seems intuitive, commonsensical to suppose that the subject who speaks and thinks and the objects that he sees exist in a vacuum, so to speak, completely independent of each other and occasionally coming into contact in planned activities the subject performs and unplanned accidents it suffers. It seems rather obvious that things have been waiting for an eternity before they could become the object of the subject's thoughts. But Foucault denies this.<sup>103</sup> He suggests that the relationship between words/thoughts and things is

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<sup>103</sup> Foucault makes this denial quite explicit in following passage from his work *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 45. Originally published as *L'archéologie du savoir* (Gallimard, 1969)

not that simple correspondence. Neither can be fully reduced to the other and enter into a quiet harmony with other.<sup>104</sup> Although proper names seduce us into thinking that words/thoughts and things correspond without remainder to one another; their relationship, Foucault wagers, is quite messy. If one has to do justice to this complex relationship and articulate it with some measure of adequacy then one has to engage, according to him, in an infinite task. Contrary to appearances, subject and object do not exist in a vacuum such that the thoughts of the subject correspond simply to the things he encounters through his senses. Rather, the subject and the object always find themselves in an epistemological domain (*savoir*)<sup>105</sup> or an episteme<sup>106</sup> – a field of knowledge– which defines their specific mode of being and determines the relationship between them. Foucault also characterizes this field of knowledge as thought.<sup>107</sup> Subject and object can distinguish themselves only in this field of knowledge (*savoir*) or thought.<sup>108</sup> The field is not to be understood as simply a collection of individual entities like subjects and objects. It has to be understood as an anonymous material network of relations – a discursive formation.<sup>109</sup> Here we are dealing with a very novel anonymous notion of thought that cannot be attributed to any individual subject. It certainly does not have anything to do

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“The object does not wait in limbo the order that will free and enable it to become embodied in a visible and prolix objectivity; it does not preexist itself, held back by some obstacle at the first edges of light. It exists under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations.”

<sup>104</sup> “I would like to show with precise examples that in analysing discourses themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice.” (Foucault, *Archaeology*, 48-9)

<sup>105</sup> OT: 119

<sup>106</sup> For some instances where Foucault employs the term episteme see OT: 30, 62, 308.

<sup>107</sup> See OT: 57, 58, 62, 219 where Foucault uses the term “Classical thought” and 63, 307, 308 where Foucault identifies Classical thought and the Classical episteme and 217 where Foucault uses the term “Renaissance thought.” All these expressions suggest that he does use the term ‘thought’ in a very special sense so as to equate it with episteme.

<sup>108</sup> See OT: 75 and more where Foucault identifies the field of knowledge, *episteme*, and the system of thought.

<sup>109</sup> See Foucault, *Archaeology*, 31-40

with mental phenomena or the human mental act of ideating. We can only say of it that it exists. It is this anonymous field of relations, what Foucault calls a field or knowledge or thought, which makes it possible for us to say, “X exists” and “X has knowledge (*connaissance*) of Y,” and “X has a thought of Y.” Thus we have the provocative thesis that it is only when something like a field of knowledge or thought exists that it becomes possible to speak of individuals like subjects and objects with their specific modes of being.<sup>110</sup> In the immediate case of this painting by Velazquez, when we take Foucault’s claim regarding the immense complexity of the relationship between words/thoughts and things seriously, the painting is no longer to be seen just as an accurate depiction of a few royal dignitaries and their servants by the royal painter Velazquez. The painting acquires a completely new dimension. It now becomes a concrete and living representation of the very specific configuration of the anonymous field of knowledge (*savoir*) or thought. It is thus thought that determines the complex relationship, specific to the Classical age, between subject and object to which Velazquez belonged. This complex relation between subject and object, Foucault terms representation. Hence the painting, for Foucault, is a representation of representation. This painting could not exist and was made possible only because this network of material relations – this field of knowledge – was already in place.

In order to describe this field of knowledge, Foucault develops a new method – the archaeological method – of which we get a glimpse in *The Order of Things*.

Archaeology is a new way of reading the historical record of a certain time period. Here Foucault attempts to study the history of the human sciences from the Renaissance to the present as bodies of knowledge or what he calls positivities or discursive practices rather

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<sup>110</sup> OT: 160

than as a set of ideas conceived, transmitted and modified by various individuals from time to time. Foucault calls his exercise a history of thought rather than a history of ideas.<sup>111</sup> We thus get in this book a concrete illustration of what Foucault means by thought, how it exists and how it can undergo transformations. This book focuses on two drastic transformations or ruptures in this field of knowledge (*savoir*) from the Renaissance to the present. Let us now turn to a concrete illustration of Foucault's radically new conception of thought in the context of the human sciences that we find in *The Order of Things*.

### 3. From the Renaissance to the Classical Age: Mapping the Radical Transformations in Knowledge and Thought

#### 3.1. The Thought of the Renaissance

##### 3.1.1. The Four Figures of Resemblance

In the Renaissance, pre-classical age, thought takes the form of resemblance. And although Foucault admits that several different figures of resemblance can be identified and distinguished in Renaissance literature and science, he discusses four figures of resemblance, which he asserts are indispensable to circumscribing the field of knowledge that we call the Renaissance. They are *convenientia*, *aemulatio*, *analogy* and *sympathy*. It might seem tempting to think of these figures of resemblance as categories that the mind uses for organizing the ideas it has acquired from its objects of its investigation.

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<sup>111</sup> See James D. Faubion, ed., *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 459.

We must eschew from understanding resemblance and its figures in such a manner in Foucault's archaeological descriptions. They should rather be seen as field descriptors. They help map and describe this anonymous field of knowledge or thought in the a-subjective sense. I argue that this is the field in which subjects and objects come to be and are able to enter into a relationship with each other. In other words, it is resemblance that characterizes both the being of the objects of knowledge, the being of the subjects who investigate and attempt to know things in conjunction with the specific type of relationship they enter into. In what immediately follows I will attempt to make clear how this is the case for the Renaissance.

While describing the Renaissance notion of *convenientia*, Foucault says: "This word really denotes the adjacency of places more strongly than it does similitude. Those things are 'convenient' which come sufficiently close to one another to be in juxtaposition; their edges touch, their fringes intermingle, the extremity of the one also denotes the beginning of the other... adjacency is not an exterior relation between things, but the sign of a relationship, obscure though it maybe... *Convenientia* is a resemblance connected with space in the form of a graduated scale of proximity. It is of the same order as conjunction and adjustment. That is why it pertains less to the things themselves than to the world in which they exist." (OT: 18). The notion of *convenientia* thus establishes a relationship between things by the fact that they are adjacent to each other. This adjacency is, in the thought of the Renaissance, not an accidental relationship but one that is necessitated by the world itself and so it says something about the being of those objects that are in such a relationship to one another. Foucault mentions how in the Renaissance, the body and soul were considered convenient to each other. The plant is

convenient to the animal and man is convenient to all things in the world. Convenience establishes a necessary relationship between all beings as if they were strung together side by side like pearls on a chain. This chain extends itself from the lowest being - base matter - to the highest being - God. So every being, in the Renaissance, is in some way related to every other being.

The second figure of resemblance – *aemulatio* – is a relationship between things at a distance. In contrast to *convenientia*, *aemulatio* does not depend upon space, and things can emulate each other even if they do not stand adjacent to each other. “The relation of emulation enables things to imitate one another from one end of the universe to the other without connection or proximity: by duplicating itself in a mirror the world abolishes the distance proper to it; in this way it overcomes the place allotted to each thing.” (OT: 19) In this way Foucault cites how in the Renaissance flowers are said to emulate the stars in the sky and the earth is said to emulate the sky. The partners in this emulative relationship are not equal. The stars are the dominant partner and the flowers are influenced by them. The emulative relationship is a rivalry between the two partners trying to influence one another. “The links of emulation unlike the elements of *convenientia*, do not form a chain but rather a series of concentric circles reflecting and rivaling one another.” (OT: 21)

The third figure of resemblance that characterizes Renaissance thought is analogy. Different perhaps from its Greek and medieval predecessors, analogy in the Renaissance involves the superimposition of *convenientia* and *aemulatio*. (OT: 21) “Like the latter, it makes possible the marvelous confrontation of resemblances across space; but it also speaks, like the former, of adjacencies, of bonds and joints. Its power is immense, for the

similitudes of which it treats are not the visible, substantial ones between things themselves; they need only be the more subtle resemblances of relations.” (OT: 21)

Foucault cites how the relation between stars and the sky is seen, in the Renaissance, to be analogous to the relationship between living beings and the planet they inhabit, the plants and the earth and moles and the skin. However in this space where analogy reigns, the human being has a central position. For, the human being is a part of every analogous relationship. The human being is a point that “is saturated with analogies (all analogies can find one of their necessary terms there), and as they pass through it, their relations may be inverted without losing any of their force.” (OT: 22) Foucault indicates how the human being was seen as analogous to the earth. Like the earth it carries rocks (the bones), it carries rivers (the veins with the blood running through them), contains a sea (the bladder) and metals (the seven principle organs). “The space occupied by analogies is really a space of radiation. Man is surrounded by it on every side; but, inversely, he transmits these resemblances back into the world from which he receives them. He is the great fulcrum of proportions – the centre upon which relations are concentrated and from which they are once again reflected.” (OT: 23)

We now come to the fourth and final figure of resemblance, sympathy. Sympathy can be understood as the communication of properties from one thing to another and renders them similar in some respect. “Sympathy plays through the depths of the universe in a free state. It can traverse the vastest places in an instant... such is its power that sympathy is not content to spring from a single contact and speed through space; it excites the things of the world to movement and can draw even the most distant of them together. It is the principle of mobility: it attracts what is heavy to the heaviness of the



earth, what is light up towards the weightless ether; it drives the root towards the water, and it makes the great yellow disk of the sunflower follow the curving path of the sun.”

(OT: 23) If the power of sympathy were not countered in some way, we would have no plurality and the universe as we know it would cease to exist with everything coming to coincide at a single point. This countervailing principle to sympathy is thus antipathy.

“Antipathy maintains the isolation of things and prevents their assimilation; it encloses every species within its impenetrable difference and its propensity to continue being what it is...” (OT: 24)

But these figures of resemblance would remain concealed were it not for some characteristic marks in the things themselves that help to discover these figures of resemblances and in the process grant us access to the things themselves. So for the Renaissance thinkers things themselves concealed within themselves the signatures that betrayed their relationship to other things. Knowledge thus took the form of knowing the characteristic signs hidden in things that related them to other things. What is the nature of these signatures? “Every resemblance receives a signature; but the signature is no more than an intermediate form of the same resemblance.” (OT: 29) Resemblance is indicated by nothing other than resemblance itself. “The form making a sign and the form being signaled are resemblances, but they do not overlap.” (OT: 29) One form of resemblance is basically the sign of another form of resemblance. In this system of knowledge, analogy becomes the sign of the sympathy, emulation the sign of analogy, convenience the sign of emulation and sympathy becomes the sign of the convenience. And so the circle is completed. The world itself is a vast array of signatures and all one needs to do is find them.

We must be absolutely clear here as to what Foucault's description of the figures of resemblance amounts to. They are not, as he expressly states it, meant to give us the spirit of a certain age or the explicit ideas that some thinkers of the Renaissance entertained in their own reflections nor is the description an attempt to uncover a *Weltanschauung*. Foucault is describing the field of knowledge or thought that characterized the Renaissance. This, he terms the *episteme* of the Renaissance. This field of knowledge or thought or the *episteme* has three general characteristics which need to be highlighted.

### 3.1.2. The Mode of Being of the Object in Renaissance Thought

Firstly, this field of knowledge or thought circumscribes the very being of objects as they were experienced by the Renaissance subject. In this regard, Foucault asserts: "The nature of things, their coexistence, the way in which they are linked together and communicate is nothing other than their resemblance." (OT: 29) The being of an object consists in its resemblance to other things. A thing is a thing only if it can become a part of this dense network of resemblances. A thing gains its thingness, its being, as it were, only when it finds a place in the chain of convenience and the concentric circles of emulation, when it is influenced by or influences other things via sympathy and stands in opposition to other things via antipathy.

### 3.1.3. The Mode of Being of the Subject in Renaissance Thought

Secondly, this field of knowledge circumscribes the being of the subject.

Foucault illustrates this through the figures of the madman and the poet as they are understood in the post-Renaissance, classical age. On the one hand, we have the persona of the madman who is understood as someone who sees resemblances everywhere.

Foucault explains:

The madman, understood not as one who is sick but as an established and maintained deviant, as an indispensable cultural function, has become, in Western experience, the man of primitive resemblances. This character, as he is depicted in the novels or plays of the Baroque age, and as he was gradually institutionalized right up to the advent of nineteenth-century psychiatry, is the man who is *alienated in analogy*...he sees nothing but resemblances and signs of resemblances everywhere; for him all signs resemble one another, and all resemblances have the value of signs. (OT: 49)

So the normal Renaissance subject, who painstakingly documents all the signs of resemblance between things and whose knowledge of the world consists in mastering these resemblances is, in the post-Renaissance, Classical age, the madman. On the other hand we have the figure of the poet of whom Foucault says:

...the poet is he who, beneath the named, constantly expected differences, rediscovers the buried kinships between things, their scattered resemblances. Beneath the established signs, and in spite of them, he hears another, deeper, discourse, which recalls the time when words glittered in the universal resemblance of things; in the language of the poet, the Sovereignty of the Same, so difficult to express, eclipses, the distinction existing between signs. (OT: 49)

While the madman sees resemblances where there are none, the poet searches after a unified reality beneath the plurality of ordinary language descriptions in the post-Renaissance age that order reality according to the categories of identity and difference.

Both the madman and the poet, in their own way, give us a glimpse of the field of knowledge or a kind of thought which gave rise to and sustained them – the Renaissance. The tragicomic misrepresentations of the madman and the unflagging attempts of the poet to find a reality beneath the everyday reality are like the attempts of two travelers suddenly transplanted from their home into a new and unfamiliar place and trying to find their way back. Indeed they are confirmation for Foucault of the existence of a different kind of subjectivity linked to a different field of knowledge, of a different kind of thought in which subjects and objects were ordered differently which we denote as the Renaissance.

#### 3.1.4. The Relation between Subject and Object in Renaissance Thought

Thirdly and lastly, the field of knowledge circumscribes the manner in which the subject relates to the object, through which both the subject and object acquire their specific modes of being. We have already seen how in the Renaissance the world is a configuration of signs waiting to be deciphered. So long as knowledge consisted of deciphering signs, divination becomes an integral part of the body of valid knowledge assembled in the Renaissance. Thus Foucault shows how in the Renaissance natural magic was a project that was legitimately pursued in order to acquire knowledge of the world. Magic is neither a desperate attempt by primitive minds to understand an inscrutable world nor is it a sign of blindness and superstition on the part of the Renaissance thinkers and scientists. Quite to the contrary, it is a perfectly rational choice legitimated by the Renaissance field of knowledge. For the same reason that the world

was nothing but a text to be read, there could be no distinction between the signs found in nature and the signs found in ancient texts. For, the ancients were seen as engaged in the same task of deciphering signs. “There is no difference between the visible marks that God stamped upon the surface of the earth, so that we may know its inner secrets, and the legible words that the Scriptures, or the sages of Antiquity, have set down in the books preserved for us by tradition.” (OT: 33) Thus Renaissance naturalists like Aldrovandi, according to Foucault, related to the world that is etched through and through with signs. Hence when we find in his works physical descriptions of animals alongside legends and myths about them, it does not mean that Aldrovandi was a poor scientist, resorting to dubious methods, not rigorous in his attempts at description and unable to make even the most basic distinction between fact and fiction.<sup>112</sup> Foucault says:

“Aldrovandi was neither a better nor a worse observer than Buffon; he was neither more credulous than he, nor less attached to the faithfulness of the observing eye or to the rationality of things. His **observation was not simply linked to things in accordance with the same system** or by the same arrangement of the *episteme*. For Aldrovandi was meticulously contemplating a nature which was, from top to bottom, written. (OT: 40, bold mine)

Foucault’s descriptions are radical because they do not take manner of the relationship of subjects and objects as constants and consequently neither the being of the objects nor the being of the subjects. Rather they are the function of the field of knowledge or the

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<sup>112</sup> “This history of the living being was that being itself, within the whole semantic network that connected it to the world. The division, so evident to us, between what we see, what others have observed and handed down, and what others imagine or naïvely believe, the great tripartition, apparently so simple and so immediate, into Observation, Document and Fable, did not exist. And this was not because science was hesitating between a rational vocation and the vast weight of naïve tradition, but for the much more precise and much more constraining reason that signs were then part of things themselves, whereas in the seventeenth century they became modes of representation.” (OT: 129)

thought or the *episteme* that is prevalent in a certain period in western history, which he seeks to faithfully describe by employing his archaeological method.

### 3.2. From Renaissance to Classical Thought

#### 3.2.1. From the Play of Resemblances to the Play of Identities and Differences

If we examine closely the history of the west, along the lines suggested by Foucault, he wagers that we would find a most drastic transformation, a rupture in history right about the beginning of the seventeenth century with the emergence of a new field of knowledge or thought as the Renaissance gives way to the Classical age. “At the beginning of the seventeenth century, during the period that has been termed, rightly or wrongly, the Baroque, thought ceases to move in the element of resemblance. Similitude is no longer the form of knowledge but rather the occasion of error, the danger to which one exposes oneself when one does not examine the obscure region of confusions.” (OT: 51)<sup>113</sup> Instead of a teleological progression in the acquisition of knowledge as witnessed

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<sup>113</sup> Later in another work, Foucault clarifies how one should understand these ruptures that he is describing:

“To say that one discursive formation is substituted for another is not to say that a whole world of absolutely new objects, enunciations, concepts and theoretical choices emerges fully armed and fully organized in a text that will place that world once and for all; it is to say that a general transformation of relations has occurred, but it does not necessarily alter all the elements; it is to say that statements are governed by new rules of formation, it is not to say that all objects or concepts, all enunciations or all theoretical choices disappear.” (Foucault, *Archaeology*, 173)

He says further:

The idea of a single break suddenly, at a given moment, dividing all discursive formations, interrupting them in a single moment and reconstituting them in accordance with the same rules – such an idea cannot be sustained. The contemporaneity of several transformations

by the historian of ideas, an archaeologist of thought is confronted with ruptures and non-teleological transformations whereby knowledge is acquired in accordance with one system of rules and then suddenly there is a another beginning and knowledge comes to be acquired according to another system of rules implying drastic transformations in the relationship between the subject and the object and with it in the very being of the subject and the object. Now Foucault admits that it is hard to find the precise reasons to explain this transformation but as a first step to any such explanation he wants to first map this transformation as accurately and rigorously as possible. In the seventeenth century resemblance gives way to representation. The field of knowledge is now re-organized on the basis of new rules, that of representation. It is in Bacon and Descartes that we see this break from the old order of things into a new order with both thinkers rejecting resemblance in their own way.

In Bacon the reliance on resemblance is attributed to a weakness of the mind which must be dispelled by recourse to prudence. “Only prudence on the part of the mind can dissipate them, if it abjures the natural haste and levity in order to become more ‘penetrating’ and ultimately perceive the differences inherent in nature.” (OT: 52)

In Descartes, however, Foucault argues that we see a rejection of resemblance but in accordance with different principles. While in Bacon we see sixteenth century thought struggling with itself and attempting to grow out of what it sees as its immaturity and naïveté by depriving itself of its most dominant form, namely, resemblance, in Descartes we do not see an outright exclusion of resemblance but rather a distillation of resemblance into its simplest and purest form. Resemblance is no longer the subtle,

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does not mean their exact chronological coincidence: each transformation may have its own particular index of temporal ‘viscosity.’ (Foucault, *Archaeology*, 175)

multi-faceted and complex figure one sees in the Renaissance. The act of finding a resemblance between two things is now understood simply as the act of comparing two things. In this regard Foucault remarks:

Though Descartes rejects resemblance, he does so not by excluding the act of comparison from rational thought, nor even by seeking to limit it, but on the contrary by universalizing it and thereby giving it its purest form. (OT: 52)

Gone now are the different figures of resemblance and the complex relationships between them. With Descartes, resemblance, now understood as comparison, has only two forms: “the comparison of measurement and the comparison of order.” (OT: 53) We compare two things on the basis of their size or we can compare things on the basis of their complexity, that is to say, the total number of parts they possess. The former requires a third element on the basis of which the comparison can be made while the latter requires no such third element. When we compare two things on the basis of their size, we have to make use of a third element, a neutral unit in order to make that comparison. But in comparisons of order no such third element intervenes. For, the comparison of order can be made by restricting oneself to the two things under consideration. Since comparisons can be rationally made only along these lines, the complex system of resemblances on which the being of subjects, objects and their relationships were founded becomes illegitimate.

As we have seen, this signals a drastic transformation in the history of the west which, Foucault points out, exhibits five fundamental aspects. Firstly, in place of a “hierarchy of analogies” (OT: 55) founded on a world that is convenient and allows for similitudes among all things, what we have is analysis which is founded on relationships of identity and difference. The result is that resemblance is simplified into comparisons



of measurement and order to establish relationships of identity and difference between things. Secondly, this “interplay of similitudes” (OT: 55) is no longer infinite and open to new possibilities for it now becomes possible to enumerate all the elements of a whole; it becomes possible to find all the elements of a series that could be ordered from the simplest to the most complex. The infinite interplay of similitudes gives way to a finite order of identities and differences. Thirdly, the always incomplete and always uncertain knowledge of similitudes now gives rise to “an absolutely certain knowledge of identities and differences.” (OT: 55). Fourthly, subjectivity does not consist in bringing things together and discovering “the hidden resemblances and kinship, attraction, or secretly shared nature within them.” (OT: 55). To the contrary, the normal subject is the subject who discriminates between things. To identify an object is for the subject to see in what connection it stands to a series of other objects “providing oneself by intuition with a distinct representation of things, and apprehending clearly the inevitable connection between one element in a series and that which immediately follows it.” (OT: 55) Finally while history and science, in the Renaissance, were seen as integrally connected into a homogenous body of knowledge containing the key to the same problem of deciphering the manifold resemblance between things, in the classical age, science and history are severed from each other. Now science becomes the sole authority on the nature of things and only it can provide answers to questions concerning the nature of things. For only science is based on the direct intuition of things and the connections between these intuitions. History can familiarize us with the opinions of the thinkers of the past but the knowledge of these opinions by themselves cannot constitute science. Words in the classical age are only the means of representing the truth. They are not the repositories of

the truth anymore and so the written words handed down to us can have no claim to the truth sans confirmation by independent intuition on the part of the subject. With these transformations the field of knowledge is reorganized along new lines and we now have a new field of knowledge with the dawn of the Classical age. What then are the specific characteristics of Classical thought? What kind of transformations do the being of the object, the subject and the relationship between the subject and object undergo as a result of this reorganization? These are some of the questions that we will concern ourselves with in the remainder of this section. I will attempt first to find Foucault's more general answers to these questions in the broader context of the whole of Classical thought (or the Classical field of knowledge or the Classical *episteme*). We will then see Foucault's more concrete and detailed handling of these questions in the context of an empirical field very specific to the Classical *episteme*, namely, natural history.

### 3.2.2. The Mode of Being of the Object in Classical Thought

Contrary to the historians of ideas, some of whom characterize the Classical age as the time of the triumph of mechanism and the attempts to reduce nature to something "mechanical and calculable" (OT: 56) and others who see Classical rationalism as a conflict between life and mathematics with the former resisting any quantitative reduction through mathematics, Foucault finds both these characterizations insufficient when it comes to pin-pointing the specificity of the Classical *episteme*. For Foucault, the defining characteristic of the Classical *episteme* is its relation to "*mathesis*, understood as a universal science of measurement and order." (OT: 57) In the classical field of

knowledge “relations between beings are indeed to be conceived in the form of order and measurement, but with the fundamental imbalance, that it is always possible to reduce problems of measurement to problems of order. So that the relation of all knowledge to the mathesis is posited as the possibility of establishing an ordered succession between things, even non-measurable ones.” (OT: 57)<sup>114</sup> Beings are beings only when they can be ordered in a series and related to other beings in this manner. Ordering of beings in Classical thought has a position similar to deciphering of beings as signs in Renaissance thought. But this process of ordering, according to Foucault, should be equated neither to mechanistic reduction nor to mathematization. In fact it allows, says Foucault, for the emergence of three specific “empirical fields” (OT: 57), namely, general grammar, natural history and the analysis of wealth, none of which would have been possible in Renaissance thought.

### 3.2.3. The Mode of Being of the Subject in Classical Thought

Classical thought allows for the emergence of a new kind of subjectivity – the discriminating subject in place of the divining or deciphering subject. One must inquire into how this is the case. The emergence of the discriminating subject is very closely linked to a profound transformation in the very understanding of what a sign is. “On the threshold of the Classical age the sign ceases to be a form of the world; and it ceases to

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<sup>114</sup> Foucault explains later that *mathesis* deals exclusively with the knowledge of simple natures and most universal form of *mathesis* is of course algebra. But where more complex natures like living beings and other things we experience in everyday life are involved, we have *taxinomia* and *taxinomia* is possible only on the basis of a complex system of signs. *Taxinomia* must ultimately lead to *mathesis* because it must be possible for every complex nature to be analyzed into simple natures and *mathesis* can conversely be seen as a form of *taxinomia*.

be bound to what it marks by the solid and secret bonds of resemblance to affinity.” (OT 58) Signs are no longer embedded in the world. They are no longer seen as part of the world. In the old field of knowledge marked by the Renaissance, the relationship of the sign to the subject who deciphered the sign was by no means a necessary relationship. The sign found its natural home outside the confines of human subject. And the subject had to employ different methods, divination being an important one, to decipher the signs by confirming the relation of resemblance between the sign and what it signified. In the new field of knowledge marked by the Classical age, the sign has a necessary connection to human subjectivity. In fact there is no sign that has no necessary link to human subjectivity. The sign finds its existence only with the confines of human subjectivity. For, it is the human subject and not nature that first relates the sign to the signified. This does not guarantee that the classical subject has an innate mastery of the relationship between every sign and what it signifies. Rather, it is precisely this necessary link between the sign and human subjectivity that makes the relation of the sign to the signified certain or probable. In the Classical episteme a sign without a certain or possible connection to the signified is nonsense. There are no signs hidden in the bowels of the earth waiting to be deciphered. As Foucault remarks in this regard:

In the sixteenth century, signs were thought to have been placed upon things so that men might be able to uncover their secrets...they did not need to be known in order to exist: even if they remained silent, even if no one were to perceive them, they were very much *there*...From the seventeenth century onward, the whole domain of the sign is divided between the certain and probable: that is to say, there can no longer be an unknown sign, a mute mark. This is not because men are in possession of all possible signs, but because there can be no sign until there exists a *known* possibility of substitution between two *known* elements. The sign does not wait in silence for the coming of a man capable of recognizing it: it can be constituted only by an act of knowing. (OT: 59)

Thus in Classical thought the knowing subject is configured in a different way from that of Renaissance thought. The Classical subject is in the position to establish a relationship between the sign and the signified all by itself. This is made possible by the sign having been dissociated from its necessary connection to the world in the Classical age. The sign is now either a part of the object it signifies or is completely separate from what it signifies. It is thus in the subject's capacity to distinguish between two elements and see one as the sign of the other. This requires nothing more on the part of the subject than to assign an object as the sign of another object. This is because the sign not only represents the signified but in the same gesture it represents its very capacity for representation. The existence of the sign is thus at the same time the legitimacy of its capacity to represent. The sign requires nothing outside of its relationship to the signified to grant it legitimacy as a sign. This is in contradistinction to the Renaissance in which element A cannot be a sign of element B without the existence of a third element, the prior relation of resemblance (*convenientia*, *aemulatio*, analogy or sympathy) between the two that legitimates the sign-signified relationship. Because of this essential transformation in the very notion of the sign the subject can now discern the sign and its ability to signify in the same instant. It does not have to search for any external legitimating factor as was the case in Renaissance thought. So in the Classical age it is the subject that is the foundation of the sign-signified relationship. The discriminatory and associative powers of the subject alone legitimate this relationship. Foucault's argument is thus that it is not the case that we have a more perceptive, more rational, more meticulous subject in the Classical age as opposed to the Renaissance. These adjectives, Foucault argues, can be equally well applied to the Renaissance thinkers who

were as meticulous and thorough going as their Classical counterparts if not more. What we see in the Classical age is subjectivity organized in a fashion different from that of the Renaissance because the field of knowledge from which subjectivity emerges undergoes a radical transformation. Subjectivity is in one way a parameter of the field of knowledge or thought. Any transformation in thought is going to result in a transformation in subjectivity. This is precisely the point Foucault makes when he reminds us:

But if we question Classical thought at the level of what, archaeologically, made it possible, we perceive that the dissociation of the sign and resemblance in the early seventeenth century caused these forms – probability, analysis, combination, and universal language system – to emerge, not as successive themes engendering one another by driving one another out, but as a single network of necessities. And it was this network that made possible the individuals we term Hobbes, Berkeley, Hume, or Condillac. (OT: 63)

### 3.2.4. The Relation between Subject and Object in Classical Thought

This transformation in the mode of being of the subject and object is possible through the transformation in the manner in which the subject relates to the object from the Renaissance to Classical thought. In Renaissance thought, the act of knowing involves the ability to describe the manifold resemblances between things. As opposed to that in Classical thought, to know is to be able to order things in a series and specify precisely the position of one thing in relation to the other in this series. The link between signs and things having been severed the subject now relates to things by ordering them by means of signs. Signs are available to the subject for one and only one purpose, to order the things in the world. In the Renaissance resemblance was the teleological end that governed the relationship between subject and object. The subject could have been

said to know the world only when it could ultimately lay out precisely how things resembled other things and how the world constituted itself as a unity. In the Classical age, the resemblance between the simplest representations is only the crude starting point that allows the subject to know things by enumerating them in an ordered series. Rather than being the noble end of knowledge, resemblance only gives us the motive for further investigation and further clarification and description of world resulting in its being ordered in a series. To speak with Foucault:

Whereas in the sixteenth century resemblance was the fundamental relation of being to itself, and the hinge of the whole world, in the Classical age it is the simplest form in which what is to be known, and what is furthest from knowledge itself, appears. It is through resemblance that representation can be known, that is, compared with other representations that may be similar to it, analysed into elements (elements common to it and other representations), combined with other representations that may present partial identities, and finally laid out into the order of the table. (OT: 68)

Resemblance no longer counts as knowledge as it had done in the Renaissance and the subject's perception of resemblance is no longer an act of rational reflection.

Resemblance is now prior to knowledge and it can be manifest only in the pre-reflective imagination. It is in this relationship between resemblance and imagination, which happens spontaneously prior to thinking, that the human subject gets a glimpse of nature in its raw and chaotic form. It is in this reciprocal relationship between resemblance and imagination that human nature and nature intersect and it is on this intersection that the edifice of classical knowledge is founded. For in a strange way, although resemblance is banished from knowledge and thought to the pre-reflective imagination, it is what validates the existence of nature and thus our knowledge of this nature.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> See OT: 68-9ff

It is thus order that becomes the teleological end that governs the relationship between subject and object. It is because the relationship between subject and object is organized in this manner that we have emergence of general grammar, natural history and analysis of wealth all the about the same time. From the archaeological standpoint these disciplines belong to the same field of knowledge and display the same characteristics.

### 3.2.5 Taking a Closer Look at Classical Thought

#### 3.2.5.1. Natural History

Let us now turn to Foucault's archaeological account of natural history in order to answer in detail the questions concerning how Classical thought opens up the space for a new kind of relationship between the subject and object and subsequently a new mode of being of subject and object. Foucault summarizes the historical descriptions of the classical period which document a broad conflict between Cartesian mechanism and the new approaches to understanding life that were mushrooming in the Classical age. The historians document how the early naturalists inquiring into the phenomenon of life were followers of Cartesian mechanism but soon found mechanism too reductive and constraining to do justice to the complexity of living beings. It is against the background of this broad conflict that the small variations in different forms of 'vitalism' are discussed as well as differences among the naturalists like Linnaeus and Buffon on the question of classifying living beings with the former believing "in the immobility of nature" (OT: 126) holding that it is possible for all living beings to be accommodated in a



single taxonomy and the latter believing that the diversity of living beings is “too rich to be fitted within a single framework.” (OT: 126) The opponents of Linnaeus such as Bonnet, Benoit de Maillet and Diderot who believed in the “life’s creative powers...its inexhaustible power of transformation and plasticity,” (OT: 127) are seen as the precursors of Darwin. What we have then in standard histories of ideas and sciences is a documentation of the conflicts in the opinions of the thinkers of that period with the general acknowledgement that this was the time when the concept of life was being taken seriously and the foundation for life sciences of the nineteenth century was being put in place. According to Foucault, this is not the true picture of natural history and its place in the Classical age. He makes two claims that go against the grain of conventional thinking. Firstly, he argues that when one studies the Classical period at the archaeological level by providing a description of the field of knowledge that prevails in that period, then the conflicts documented by the historians turn out to be just apparent conflicts. This is because natural history and classical mechanism owe their existence to the same field of knowledge and likewise the conflicting theories of fixism and evolutionism. As a result neither fixism nor evolutionism is a precursor of the evolutionary biology of Darwin. “In fact, the possibility of natural history, with Ray, Jonston, Christophorus Knauth, is contemporaneous with Cartesianism itself, and not with its failure. Mechanism from Descartes to D’Alembert and natural history from Tournefort to Daubenton were authorized by the same *episteme*.” (OT: 128) Secondly – this is Foucault’s more important point – the standard histories of this time assume that the Classical naturalists were biologists who were interested in understanding life:

Historians want to write histories of biology in the eighteenth century; but they do not realize that biology did not exist then, and that the pattern of

knowledge that has been familiar to us for a hundred and fifty years is not valid for a previous period. And that, if biology was unknown, there was a very simple reason for it: that life itself did not exist. All that existed was living beings, which were viewed through a grid of knowledge constituted by *natural history*. (OT: 127-8)

It is in the course of defending these two claims about the inadequacy of standard histories that we see Foucault grapple in detail with the being of objects of natural history, the being of the naturalist and the specific manner in which the naturalist relates to his object, the living being. It is Foucault's claim that it is only when we turn our focus to the archaeological level that we can understand how unique and specific the subjects, objects and the subject-object relationship in a field like natural history are and how they come into being.

### 3.2.5.2. The Mode of Being of the Object of Natural History

Natural history, from the standpoint of archaeology belongs to the specific field of knowledge associated with the Classical age which, as we have seen, emerged suddenly after a period of drastic transformation at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Natural history did not exist in the Renaissance, and for the Renaissance naturalists such as Aldrovandi history meant something completely different. As Foucault explains:

Until the time of Aldrovandi, History was the inextricable and completely unitary fabric of all that was visible of things and of the signs that had been discovered or lodged in them: to write the history of a plant or an animal was as much a matter of describing its elements or organs as of describing the resemblances that could be found in it, the virtues that it was thought to possess, the legends and stories with which it has been involved, its place in heraldry, the medicaments that were concocted from its substance, the foods it provided, what the ancients recorded of it, and what travelers might have said of it. (OT: 129)

So the being of a creature for Aldrovandi encompasses all the signs that one finds of it in texts, oral accounts etc. There is no distinction between the direct perception of the animal by way of one's own senses and the things that have been written about it. The things written about it, the signs that were proliferated about it, in accordance with the field of knowledge prevalent in Renaissance, are an integral part of the very being of the animal. It is not the case that Aldrovandi was an irrational and imprecise naturalist who clumsily mixed the stories and myths about a creature with physical descriptions of it. Existing in the field of knowledge of the Renaissance, he was doing full justice to what constituted the being of his object.

But Jonston in his work *Natural History of Quadrupeds* published in 1657 completely eliminates everything that has to do with the use of the animal's name, the stories and legends around its name etc., in short the whole section on "animal semantics" (OT: 129). But this does not make Jonston a better naturalist than Aldrovandi. It is only the case that with the transformation in the field of knowledge and its reorganization along new lines the literary accounts of the animal is now no longer seen as integral to its very being. As Foucault writes:

Jonston subdivides his chapter on the horse under twelve headings: name, anatomical parts, habitat, ages, generation, voice, movements, sympathy and antipathy, uses and medicinal uses...None of this was omitted by Aldrovandi, and he gives us a great deal more besides. The essential difference lies in what is *missing* in Jonston. The whole of animal semantics has disappeared, like a dead and useless limb. The words that had been interwoven in the very being of the beast have been unraveled and removed: and the living being, in its anatomy, its form, its habits, its birth and death, appears as though stripped naked. Natural history finds its locus in the gap that is now opened between things and words – a silent gap, pure of all verbal sedimentation, and yet articulated according to the elements of representation, those same elements that can now without let or hindrance be named. (OT: 129-30)

What then is more precisely the object of natural history? What constitutes the being of this object? In order to be an object of natural history, the designated living being must have a structure. The living being is shorn of all the signs that were previously part of its being in form of oral accounts, stories, myths etc. that were told about it and its structure is precisely what presents itself to the human senses. But even this is not as simple as it sounds. The structure of a living being is not a plethora of visual, gustatory and tactile sensations that one seems to normally encounter when in contact with a living being. The structure consists of those aspects of the living being that present themselves to the eye and to touch. Taste and smell are excluded from the very outset. Only roughness and smoothness are the two tactile sensations that enter into the structure of the object and so the eye reigns supreme but the structure does not coincide with the entire range of visual sensation. Colors have no place in the structure of the living being. It is only the physical shape and contours of the living being that enter into its structure:

Displayed in themselves, emptied of all resemblances, cleansed even of their colours, visual representations will now at last be able to provide natural history with what constitutes its proper object, with precisely what it will convey in the well-made language it intends to construct. (OT: 134)

Presented to us in this manner, the being of the object of the natural sciences consists of a set of definite elements that “can be analysed, recognized by all, and thus given a name that everyone will be able to understand.” (OT: 134) It is now identified and distinguished from other living beings on the basis of “four variables only: the form of the elements, the quantity of those elements, the manner in which they are distributed in space in relation to one another, and the relative magnitude of each element.” (OT: 134) While the first and the fourth variable are numeric and can be assigned numeric values after measurement, the first and the third variable need to be specified by using geometric

figures or by providing a clear analogy with a known shape. Foucault suggests the following example to illustrate more clearly the being of such an object:

For example, when one studies the reproductive organs of a plant, it is sufficient, but indispensable, to enumerate the stamens and pistil (or to record their absence, according to the case), to define the form they assume, according to what geometrical figure they are distributed in the flower (circle, hexagon, triangle), and what their size is in relation to the other organs. (OT: 134)

As we have already seen, the being of the object is no longer saturated with signs but it is now amenable to being completely substituted by signs. That is to say, living beings assume a form that is capable of clear and distinct definition and description. The structure of the living being provides a set of elements that can be converted without residue into a linguistic description. The living being enjoys a perfectly reciprocal relationship to language. What we see is interchangeable with what we say and vice versa. In addition to this, the structure of a living being can be interchanged for a unique and singular description capable of being ordered in a series. What we have here is a radically different kind of object that has no precursors. We have a being amenable to *mathesis*. As Foucault concludes:

By virtue of structure, the great proliferation of beings occupying the surface of the globe is able to enter both into the sequence of a descriptive language and into the field of a mathesis that would be a general science of order. And this constituent relation, complex as it is, is established within the apparent simplicity of a *description of the visible*. (OT: 136-37)

### 3.2.5.3. The Mode of Being of the Subject of Natural History

But what about the being of the subject who studies these living beings? As we have already indirectly noted, the subject of natural history is primarily an observing subject, and only secondarily the subject who communicates with other subjects and records what they say, the latter having no real place in this vocation. But observation is not as simple as noting down what is presented to the senses. Observation is a specific way of experiencing the object and not all experiential acts can legitimately enter into the act of observation. As Foucault remarks:

Natural history is nothing more than the nomination of the visible. Hence its apparent simplicity, and that naïveté it has from a distance, so simple does it appear and so obviously imposed by the things themselves. One has the impression that with Tournefort, with Linnaeus or Buffon, someone has at last taken on the task of stating something that has been visible from the beginning of time, but had remained mute before a sort of invincible distraction of men's eyes. In fact, it was not an age-old inattentiveness being suddenly dissipated, but a new field of visibility being constituted in all its density. (OT: 132)

So what we have is not the same subject that existed during the Renaissance and which has been freed from the constraints that held it back to at last make use of its senses and take a look at the living beings that stand before it. What we have here is a new and rather peculiar subject, whose existence is only possible given the drastic reorganization of thought and the emergence of a new thought in the Classical age. This subject has to be equipped at least with two senses, sight and touch. It makes no use of the senses of smell and taste. It uses its sense of touch only for distinguishing between rough and smooth sensations. It privileges its sense of sight over everything else. And even when it comes to sight it excludes sensations pertaining to color. Such is the

constitution of the observing subject. A question that Foucault discusses in this regard is the use of the microscope. The use of the microscope is adduced as evidence by historians for the pure quantitative and qualitative leap made over any past attempts at describing living beings. If it were really the case that the microscope improved the observations of the naturalist qualitatively and quantitatively then one would have to conclude that the observations of the Classical naturalists were quantitatively and qualitatively better than the Renaissance naturalists so that what we have here is not a different regime of observation but a progression towards a better, more thorough manner of observation. And secondly and more importantly it shows that contrary to the restriction on the use of the senses, the microscope augmented our senses and freed them from their limitations. Foucault responds to this argument by stating that it is the same conditions that govern the use of the senses and shaped the observing subject that also open up the possibility for the use of instruments like microscopes. One would not use the microscope if one did not give up on hearsay and the senses of smell and taste, if one did not privilege the sense of sight. Moreover, the microscope was used to resolve problems that arose within the framework of visibility established by the specific way in which the senses were put to use in the Classical period. Far from breaking with this framework of visibility, the use of the microscope, for Foucault, confirms the existence of a distinctive framework of visibility opened up by the reorganization of the field of knowledge in the Classical age. The use of the microscope and the specific manner in which the senses of the observer are put to use are conditioned by the same field of knowledge.

#### 3.2.5.4. The Relation between the Subject and Object of Natural History

We now come to the relationship between the subject and object in natural history. So long as we can specify the four variables of the form and quantity of the elements, the manner of distribution and relative magnitude of each of those elements for any part of a plant or animal, we have the structure of that part of the plant or animal. The encounter between the naturalist and the living being happens only along the surface of that living being. The first step towards knowing the living being is to be able to describe clearly what is visible, namely, the structure of that living being, in such a manner that what is written or spoken about that living being is a perfect substitute of what one sees. The encounter between the subject and object never traverses the depth of the creature. There is thus no need in this system to look at the insides of the creature. The essence and the truth of the creature lie on the outside. Anatomy, the study of the internal structures of living beings, has no place in natural history and botany, the study of plants which relies far more on the surface of the living being takes precedence over zoology, the study of animals. But the identification of the structure of the creature is alone not enough to guarantee knowledge of the living being. For, the structure does not give us any opportunity to make general statements about living beings. How do we move from the specific identification of the structures of various living beings to making general statements about them? General statements involve the relation of a living being to other living beings. One needs “to establish the identities and differences existing between all natural entities.” (OT: 139) For, only that would give natural history the status of a science that is capable of systematically augmenting our knowledge of living



beings. This is precisely what is done when in natural history the character of living beings is established. This character tells us what distinguishes one living being from another. But it follows from the specific mode of interaction between the subject and the subject, which we have discussed above, that the classification of living beings into larger groups can happen only on the basis of their visible characteristics. That leaves us with only two ways of establishing character in natural history. The first is called System. It involves selecting a specific set of visible attributes and seeing how these attributes remain constant or vary in any individual being. The second way, which is called Method, would consist in selecting a large group of living beings that are largely similar and then ordering them according to the differences in their attributes. The successful establishment of identities and differences between all natural beings is possible only if nature itself is continuous. If nature were not continuous then there would be no guarantee that the structures the subject identifies is common among the various living beings. If there were nothing common, it would be simply impossible to establish the identities and differences between living beings. If it were impossible to establish the identities and the differences between living beings and order them in series then it would not be possible to have any knowledge of living beings because knowledge in the Classical age is founded on the ability to order things into a series. To be more specific, if we could not guarantee the continuity of nature then any attempt at finding the character of a living being is futile. For, we can establish the character of a living being only when there is a possibility of at least one component of its structure overlapping with that of another living being. Hence this specific type of relationship between the naturalist and living beings, which consists of establishing visible identities and

differences between objects, can be founded only on the continuity of nature. The task of ordering living beings on the basis of their identities and differences is also necessary only in a world in which such an order is not already found. For if nature were an already ordered set of living beings natural history would be a redundant exercise and there would be really nothing to know. But what makes natural history necessary is that nature is a terrible house-keeper. Living beings are found in disorderly groups. Humean skepticism thus belongs to the same Classical field of knowledge because Humean skepticism is of a very specific type. What Hume is skeptical about is basically the continuity of nature and hence the viability of an enterprise such as natural history. So to conclude, the Renaissance subject is related to an already ordered totality strewn with signs in which every individual object carries a mark that indicates its place in this ordered totality. In the Classical age this relationship is reorganized. The subject now relates to a totality that is continuous and disordered but whose constituents can be ordered in a series by the subject through the use of signs.

#### 3.2.5.5. The Notion of the Historical *A Priori*

From what we have discussed so far about Natural history we can see why Foucault argues that it is less like the biology of late eighteenth century and much more like its fellow discipline in the Classical age, general grammar. Like its classical counterpart – general grammar, which tasks itself with finding the universal grammar underlying all the natural languages, namely, the grammar of representation – natural history tasks itself similarly with developing the language for describing living beings.

This relation between general grammar and natural history is not to be understood as “the transference of method” (OT: 157), nor is it to be understood as a successful model being tried in other fields, nor should it be construed as “a more general rationality imposing identical forms upon grammatical thinking and upon *taxinomia*.” (OT: 157)

Archaeologically speaking, general grammar and natural history belong to the same field of knowledge that makes possible a very specific mode of being of the subject and object and a very specific type of relation between subject and object. It is in this context that Foucault tentatively invokes the term “historical *a priori*” as another designation of this field of knowledge or thought in order to explicate the specific relationship between general grammar and natural history. One could say that the choices the natural historian and the general grammarian make with respect to their objects of study are necessitated as it were by the same historical *a priori*.<sup>116</sup> That is why it is not correct to see natural history as a precursor to biology. In this context Foucault explains the historical *a priori* as follows:

This *a priori* does not consist of a set of problems uninterruptedly presented to men’s curiosity by concrete phenomena as so many enigmas; nor is it made up of a certain state of acquired knowledge laid down in the course of the preceding ages and providing a ground for the more or less irregular, more or less rapid, progress of rationality; it is doubtless not even determined by what is called the mentality or the ‘framework of thought’ of any given period, if we are to understand by that the historical outline of the speculative interests, beliefs, or broad theoretical options of

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<sup>116</sup> The provenance of the term in Foucault’s thought has sparked a lot of discussion. For comparative accounts and criticisms of Foucault’s notion of the historical *a priori* see Beatrice Han-Pile, *Foucault’s Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, trans. Edward Pile (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 38-73, Petra Gehring, *Foucault – Die Philosophie im Archiv* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2004) 38-40. The authors seem to hold contrasting views on the provenance of the term in Foucault. The former sees the historical *a priori* as a modification of Kant while the latter claims the notion of historical *a priori* to be borrowed from Husserl’s later works. In this regard see also David Hyder, “Foucault, Cavailles, and Husserl on the Historical Epistemology of the Sciences,” *Perspectives on Science* 11, no 1 (2003): 107-129

the time. This *a priori* is what, in a given period, delimits in the totality of experience a field of knowledge, defines the mode of being of the objects that appear in that field, provides man's everyday perceptions with theoretical powers, and defines the conditions in which he can sustain a discourse about things that is recognized to be true. In the eighteenth century, the historical *a priori* that provided the basis for inquiry into or controversy about the existence of characters from generation to generation, was the existence of a natural history: the organization of a certain visible existence as a domain of knowledge, the definition of the four variables of description, the constitution of an area of adjacencies in which any individual being whatever can find its place. (OT: 157-8)

Natural history tries to develop a perfect language of beings in which a single representation is correlated to one and only one proposition, namely, the name of the living being. Natural history is the attempt to construct an absolutely transparent language, the ideal of the classical age, in which sign has no materiality whatsoever but, like a finely polished sheet of glass, is completely transparent to its contents, the structure of the living being. Natural history is thus not a science of life but a universal language for describing living beings. And this is because it belongs to a field of knowledge in which the being of the object is connected essentially to description and synchronic order.

As Foucault says here:

Natural history is contemporaneous with language: it is at the same level as the spontaneous play that analyses representations in the memory, determines their common elements, establishes signs upon the basis of those elements, and finally imposes names. (OT: 158)

If natural history is moreover a kind of language for describing objects of a certain type then it does not gain its legitimacy from the notion of life. Foucault argues that life did not exist in the classical age because the notion had no place in the thought of that period. The mode of being of the subject and object, based on kind of relationship that existed between the two, made the emergence of the notion of life impossible. To speak with Foucault:

...natural history, in the Classical period, cannot be established as biology. Up to the end of the eighteenth century, in fact, life does not exist: only living beings. These beings form one class, or rather several classes, in the series of all the things in the world; and if it is possible to speak of life it is only as of one character – in the taxonomic sense of that word – in the universal distribution of beings. (OT: 160)

What we have discussed so far are two concrete historical examples of Foucault's singular notion of thought understood in an a-subjective sense. We have used the terms thought, field of knowledge and *episteme* interchangeably. The reasons and specific implications of doing so will be explained in the conclusion. What we need to note though is the peculiarity of Foucault's use of the term 'thought' in the a-subjective sense. It has been my argument that thought for Foucault has ontological implications and that it characterizes the field or the space in which subjects and objects emerge and relationships between subjects and objects are possible. One can also say that thought is the condition for the existence of subjects, objects and relationships between subjects and objects. These statements involve ontological entailments of a very special kind which I will again discuss in the conclusion. Archaeology, it has to be said, describes how subjects, objects and relationships between subjects and objects are established and how their mode of being can undergo drastic changes. This is precisely what we have seen in the discussion so far.

In what follows I would like to document Foucault's account of the dissolution of the classical thought and the emergence of a field of knowledge to which our age may belong or to which our age is the closest. In this regard, I would like to focus on Foucault's most provocative thesis concerning the recent invention of man which sheds further light on the notion of a-subjective thought that we have been discussing so far.

#### 4. Moving from the Classical Age to the Contemporary Age: From Order to History

##### 4.1. From the Thought of Order to the Thought of History

Similar in its suddenness and overall scope to that of the rupture one saw in early 17th century that led to emergence of the Classical age, we have at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century a rupture of similar magnitude and scope. Even though this rupture and the new field of knowledge that ensues from it is very close to our time it is also the most difficult to analyze and describe. As Foucault acknowledges:

This event, probably because we are still caught inside it, is largely beyond our comprehension. Its scope, the depth of the strata it has affected, all the positivities it has succeeded in disintegrating and recomposing, the sovereign power that has enabled it, in only a few years, to traverse the entire space of our culture, all this could be appraised and measured only after a quasi-infinite investigation concerned with nothing more nor less than the very being of our modernity. (OT: 221)

Despite its inscrutability, Foucault does give us fairly clear indications of the scope of this rupture that occurred at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. First, the disciplines we found in classical age undergo complete reorganization around new principles and starting points. According to Foucault, we see how in the case of grammar the major starting point for investigation is no longer the name but the “systems of inflection.” (OT: 218) In the sciences of nature, function comes to occupy a central position and visible attributes are no longer considered critical for determining character. We also find the emergence of new entities. We have the emergence of language, production, and organic function as new objects of investigation. In the case of general grammar, according to Foucault, signs were really absolutely transparent as a medium of representation and had no being

outside of their relationship to a specific content that they signify. But with philology, signs gain a new opacity. The study of signs can no longer be exhausted by an analysis of representation. Signs and sign systems such as natural languages must now be studied for their own sake. While in the classical age we only had discourse, now we have language, an entirely new object of investigation. New relations now emerge between the new disciplines of our age, namely, philology, biology and economics. Lastly, knowledge now does not consist in plotting the identities and differences between objects by laying them all out on a table in a continuous series. Knowledge now consists in finding out the analogies and succession between objects, be it the study of languages or organisms or the study of human forms of production. This is because objects gain a certain density. Objects cannot be grasped by simply scanning the surfaces of things (in case of a living being, its real surface; in the case of sign, the content that it reflects). We need now to look inside objects and see how the various parts of an object are unified to perform specific functions. We need now to compare objects on the basis of whether their parts, albeit different in appearance, are analogous to each other by coalescing around the same function. We now try to show how objects succeed one another and how one object emerges from another through suitable modifications in the former. As Foucault remarks:

The Classical order distributed across a permanent space the non-quantitative identities and differences that separated and united things: it was this order that held sovereign sway – though in each case in accordance with slightly differing laws – over men’s discourse, the table of natural beings, and the exchange of wealth. From the nineteenth century, History was to deploy, in a temporal series, the analogies that connect distinct organic structures to one another. This same History will also, progressively, impose its laws on the analysis of production, the analysis of organically structured beings, and lastly, on the analysis of linguistic groups. History *gives place* to analogical organic structures, just

as Order opened the way to *successive* identities and differences. (OT: 218-19)

Broadly speaking, according to Foucault, Classical thought, which was characterized by Order now gives way to a new order characterized by History giving rise to new kinds of objects, new kinds of subjects and new types of relations between subject and object. We must be clear as to what Foucault means by History.<sup>117</sup> By history here Foucault does not mean a succession of events, according to conventional understanding. History is to be understood as a descriptor of field of knowledge that came into being in the nineteenth century just as Order is to be understood as field descriptor for the Classical Age. As it has been clarified earlier, it is not to be understood either as a category abstracted from things or as a category in the human mind that is used to organize the things around it. History is what defines or makes possible the very subjectivity of the subject, the very objectivity of the object and even the most basic relationship between subject and object. As Foucault explains:

Obviously, History is not be understood as the compilation of factual successions or sequences as they may have occurred; it is the fundamental mode of being of empiricities, upon the basis of which they are affirmed, posited, arranged and distributed in the space of knowledge for use of such disciplines or sciences as may arise. Just as Order in Classical thought was not the visible harmony of things, or their observed arrangement, regularity, or symmetry, but the particular space of their being, that which, prior to all effective knowledge [*connaissance*], established them in the field of knowledge [*savoir*], so History in the nineteenth century, defines the birthplace of the empirical, that from which, prior to all established chronology, it derives its own being. (OT: 219)

This new rupture has the same kind of effects as the previous rupture that led to the Classical age. We have the formation of a new type of subject, a new type of object

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<sup>117</sup> For a detailed analysis of Foucault's use of the term History (with a capital H) see Beatrice Han-Pile, "Is Early Foucault a Historian? History, history and the Analytic of Finitude." *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 31 (2005): 585-608.



through a transformation in the very relationship between subject and object, which is now founded on entirely new principles. Let us see what they are.

#### 4.2. The Mode of the Being of the Object in Modern Thought

While the objectivity of the object in the Classical age was constituted by its representable surface, the objectivity of the object is constituted in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by an unrepresentable depth. What does this mean? This acquisition of a new depth by objects is clearly seen in the case of biology. Cuvier's work is demonstrative of this. The distinctive visible attributes of a living being no longer constitute its essence. Its identity is no longer coupled with what distinguishes it ever so slightly from other living beings and which grants it its place in the continuum of living beings and subsequently a distinctive place in the very continuum of being. It is the continuity of being or nature that ensured that everything had its place. Nature was of course in reality a jumbled mess of living beings but it was in principle possible to establish the place of every living being in the continuity of being. This was the task of natural history. In the nineteenth century, the living being gains a new essence, as it were, given that it is correlated to a new field of knowledge. In this new field of knowledge the essence of the living being is constituted by a new principle which is itself not amenable to observation or description in any direct way. This is the principle of life. It is around this principle that the organs of an animal or plant are organized. They are meant to serve various functions that will keep the organism living and thriving. This principle creates a fundamental rift between the living and non-living and the continuity

that being or nature enjoyed in the Classical age is now dissolved. Being or nature now exhibits a fundamental discontinuity because the living can no longer be reconciled with the non-living. Living beings in the process gain a new density, a new depth. To grasp the essence of the living being one must now explain how it is able to sustain itself as a living creature and the different systems – the circulatory, the digestive, the locomotive – which perform different functions in the service of life. The principle of life is a force that drives the animal to interact with its environment in different ways. It acquires things from the outside and transfers them into its inside in a constant effort to keep living. Zoology now displaces botany as the model of the science of living beings. Foucault here provides a very vivid picture of this displacement:

The plant held sway within the frontiers of movement and immobility, of the sentient and the non-sentient; whereas the animal maintains its existence on the frontiers of life and death. Death besieges it on all sides; furthermore, it threatens it also from within, for only the organism can die, and it is from the depth of their lives that death overtakes living beings. Hence, no doubt, the ambiguous values assumed by animality towards the end of the eighteenth century: the animal appears as the bearer of that death to which it is, at the same time, subjected; it contains a perpetual devouring of life by life. It belongs to nature only at the price of containing within itself a nucleus of anti-nature. Transferring its most secret essence from the vegetable to the animal kingdom, life has left the tabulated space of order and become wild once more. (OT: 277-8)

The various life functions of an animal as they sustain it between life and death have their own distinct temporal rhythm. The animal has to consume food and it takes time for it to digest the food and convert it into energy. But soon enough it will need food again and will have to hunt or graze. These processes are beyond the control of the animal itself and they have a distinct rhythm. The animal has to dance to the inner rhythm of its life. It is now possible for the animal to have its own history too. It becomes possible to talk of the modifications that its organs have undergone to make its interactions with nature

more conducive to the furtherance of its species. Talk of evolution has now become possible. And living beings have subsequently gained a historicity. They have acquired a kind of depth that was simply impossible in the Classical field of knowledge. Living beings are now no longer just a part of the all-encompassing historicity of nature, of its catastrophes, displacements and changes which affect all beings, living as well as non-living, from the outside as was the case in the Classical age. Now, as we have seen, living beings have a distinct internal historicity of their own by way of the fact that their own internal bodily systems function in accordance with distinct temporal rhythms. What we have is nothing short of a transformation in the very new mode of being of the object and the emergence of a new object.

We find similar reorganizations in the other fields devoted to wealth and grammar in the classical age. The analysis of wealth is no longer founded on the equivalence of human needs and desires but on the principle of production. The objects of exchange are no longer mere signs of human need. They are invested with labor and follow their own laws determined by production and labor. We now have political economy that studies these laws. In the same way language and signs acquire their own historicity because it now becomes possible to speak of the changes in way the roots are conjugated and to chart these changes in time and compare the patterns with other languages. These transformations are independent of the capacity of language to represent. Language thus acquires its own history worthy of study and this gives rise to philology. To sum up, labor and life become the two principles along which what was previously the analysis of wealth and natural history are reorganized into political economy and biology. It is only language, according to Foucault, that does not find a principle of organization and

consequently gets fragmented. This was however ignored by philosophy before it was raised as problem again and again by Nietzsche. Language becomes a problem only in nineteenth century thought because it has no organizing principle. With the fragmentation of language, we have the emergence of a new entity, man.

#### 4.3. The Mode of Being of the Subject in Modern Thought: The Emergence of Man

We now come to the question of the being of the subject in this field of knowledge. What is the new mode of being of the subject in the nineteenth century? It is in this regard that Foucault propounds perhaps the most stunning thesis about nineteenth century thought, namely that it is only in the nineteenth century that the entity called man emerged. In his own words:

Before the end of the eighteenth century *man* did not exist – any more than the potency of life, the fecundity of labour, or the historical density of language. He is a quite recent creature which the demiurge of knowledge fabricated with its own hands less than two hundred years ago: but he has grown old so quickly that has been too easy to imagine that he had been waiting for thousands of years in the darkness for that moment of illumination in which he would finally be known. (OT: 308)

Man is thus not an entity that has been existent since the dawn of time and has just been noticed by keen eyes. To the contrary, man is a very specific configuration, a specific mode of being that has come into existence in nineteenth century thought. In order to defend his claim, Foucault does three things. First, he explains how and in what sense man did not exist in the Classical age. Second, he goes on to explain the factors that necessitated the emergence of this new entity called man. He finally goes on to enumerate some of the peculiar characteristics of this entity to specify explicitly this

mode of being and the mode of relation between subject and object that it entails. This will also provide us with plenty of avenues to discuss the new kind of relationship between subject and object that is made possible by this new field of knowledge.

#### 4.3.1. Distinguishing between Human Nature and Man

Although man was discussed in the Classical age as a species in the natural sciences, and although concepts such as “need and desire, or memory and imagination” (OT: 309) are prevalent in disciplines such as general grammar and analysis of wealth, still Foucault argues, “there was no epistemological consciousness of man as such. The Classical *episteme* is articulated along lines that do not isolate, in any way a specific domain proper to man.” (OT: 309) The main reason behind this was the way the concept of human nature functioned in classical thought. In classical thought nature and human nature enjoy a perfectly reciprocal relationship. While nature is the principle of difference or contrast because it sets different things next to each other in chaotic and disorderly fashion, human nature is the principle of identity because by comparing the representations of the present with those of the past it is able to identify things as they are. On the one hand, nature acts on beings which in principle form a continuous series by juxtaposing them randomly in space and time and creating disordered representation. On the other hand, human nature is able to act on these representations and identify and order beings by comparing representations from the present and the past. “They act in fact upon identical elements (the same, the continuous, the imperceptible difference, the unbroken sequence).” (OT: 309) It would not be possible to analyze beings and order

them in a series in accordance with the knowledge of their identities and differences if they did not enjoy this reciprocal relationship and if beings and representation did not mirror each other. What further supports this reciprocal relationship is the sign, which does nothing else than represent the representation. As we have seen earlier, the sign in Classical age at once represents a representation and its own capacity to represent. The sign in itself has no being of its own. It is absolutely transparent to the representations it signifies. Foucault designates a language that consists of such signs as “discourse” in order to distinguish it from what we now call “language.” In the Classical age, there is no language, only discourse. Discourse is what acts as the lubricant between nature and human nature. For, it is discourse that allows the preliminary representations of nature that are received in a chaotic and disorderly fashion to be ordered according to their partial differences. As Foucault says here:

...in the Classical age, discourse is that translucent necessity through which representation and beings must pass – as beings are represented to the mind’s eye, and as representation renders beings visible in their truth. The possibility of knowing things and their order passes, in the Classical experience, through the sovereignty of words: words are, in fact, neither marks to be deciphered (as in the Renaissance period) nor more or less faithful and masterable instruments (as in the positivist period); they form rather a colourless network on the basis of which beings manifest themselves and representations are ordered. (OT: 311)

In Classical thought any discussion of human nature always implies a relationship with nature. Hence the Classical age discusses need and desire, memory and imagination, all of which imply a representation of nature, but it never discusses man, which is a kind of human nature that is divorced from nature and has as a result acquired a strange independence. This independence as we will see is precisely what transpires in the

nineteenth century. However, such an entity has no place in Classical thought. In

Foucault's own words:

If human nature is interwoven with nature, it is by the mechanisms of knowledge and by their functioning; or rather, in the general arrangement of the Classical *episteme*, nature, human nature, and their relations, are definite and predictable functional moments. And man, as a primary reality with his own density, as the difficult object and sovereign subject of all possible knowledge, has no place in it. (OT: 310)

#### 4.3.2. Explaining the Emergence of Man

Second, as we have hinted above, the advent of biology, philology and political economy signal the emergence of new objects of knowledge, which have no equivalent in the Classical age. We now have objects like language, life, and labor which, because of a recalcitrant opacity, can no longer be cashed out in terms of representations. The unshakeable alliance between representation and being, on which all the disciplines of the classical age were founded dissolves. In the absence of this bond, representation alone does not guarantee the truth of the beings that are represented. Representations are at most an effect of the object on the consciousness of the one who represents. Even descriptions do not necessarily possess the truth of their object because language which is used to describe things follows its own laws and has its own history, and its preliminary task is no longer the representation of representations. So when being has freed itself from representation and when nature has freed itself from human nature, the bearer of representations by necessity also acquires an independence of its own. It is this independent entity that comes to be designated as man:

The latter [the human being], with his own being, with his power to present himself with representations, arises in a space hollowed out by living beings, objects of exchange, and words, when, abandoning representation, which had been their natural site hitherto, they withdraw into the depths of things and roll up upon themselves in accordance with the laws of life, production, and language. In the middle of them all, compressed within the circle they form, man is designated – more, required – by them, since it is he who speaks, since he is seen to reside among animals...and since, lastly, the relation between his needs and the means he possesses to satisfy them is such that he is necessarily the principle and the means of all production. (OT: 313)

The emergence of man is not an event that defies explanation and simply posited as such by Foucault. It is rather necessitated, as we can clearly see, by a number of other more primary and inexplicable transformations that occur with the dissolution of classical thought in the nineteenth century.<sup>118</sup>

#### 4.3.3. The Finitude of Man

Lastly, what are some of the distinctive features of this new entity called man? .

The most distinctive thing about man is the distinctive nature of his finitude which explains in the clearest manner possible the specific way in which the subject relates to the object in the nineteenth century. Foucault explains this by contrasting man's finitude to the finitude of human nature. In Classical thought, human nature is also finite. This finitude can be represented in the form of limitation by comparison with the infinite. In the classical age it is possible to quasi-represent infinity by means of several religious figures, one of which is the fall of human nature. It is possible, for example, to represent

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<sup>118</sup> That is why I beg to differ from Beatrice Han-Pile, "The Death of Man": Foucault and Anti-Humanism," in *Foucault and Philosophy*, ed. Timothy O' Leary and Christopher Falzon (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 118, who interprets the emergence of man, which she equates with the Copernican turn, as a primary event of nineteenth century, not necessitated by anything else and hence not amenable to explanation.



absolute knowledge as the immediate knowledge of the exact place of all beings within the continuity of beings. And one can represent the finitude of human nature as the incapacity of human nature in possessing this knowledge all at once and the remarkable effort needed or the sheer impossibility to acquire this knowledge. In the same way, human nature cannot immediately satisfy all its needs but has to work in order to ultimately satisfy them. What makes possible this quasi-representation of infinity is the link between human nature and nature. Human nature is always embedded in this totality called nature and it is its place in this totality that allows human beings to have desires and knowledge. However, human beings in the Classical age cannot satisfy their needs and know everything at once in the manner of an infinite being. In other words finitude is always understood in relation to the infinite and this relation to the infinite precedes and conditions all human activity. This is precisely what Foucault seems to be saying here about the Classical age:

As an inadequation extending to infinity, man's limitation accounted both for the existence of the empirical contents and for the impossibility of knowing them immediately. And thus the negative relation to infinity – whether conceived of as creation, or fall, or conjunction of body and soul, or determination within the infinite being, or individual point of view of the totality, or link between representation and impression – was posited as anterior to man's empiricity and to the knowledge he may gain of it. In a single movement, but without reciprocal return or circularity, it provided the foundation for the existence of bodies, needs and words, and for the impossibility of subjugating them within an absolute knowledge. (OT: 316)

But in the nineteenth century, finitude is no longer understood in conjunction with the infinite. With the dissolution of the bond between representation and being, we have the emergence of this strange creature called man which, although it finds itself in nature, is strangely independent from it. Thus finitude in the nineteenth century can no longer be understood in contrast with infinity. Finitude has to be understood in terms of itself. In

fact for Foucault, archaeologically speaking, it is only when finitude has to be understood in terms of itself that man emerges. What does it mean for finitude to be understood in its own terms? It means that man has to understand his finitude in terms of his own condition with no reference to anything outside of him. He has no other reference point than his own knowledge to understand his finitude. In the Classical age, the finite nature of man was understood in terms of its comparison with absolute knowledge but that is no longer the case in the nineteenth century. The following passage sums this up:

...we discover a finitude – which is in a sense the same: it is marked by the spatiality of the body, the yawning of desire, and the time of language; and yet is radically other: in this sense, the limitation is expressed not as a determination imposed upon man from the outside (because he has a nature or a history) but as a fundamental finitude which rests on nothing but its own existence as fact, and opens upon the positivity of all its concrete limitation. (OT: 315)

It is precisely in this context that the distinctive nature of man's finitude comes to the fore. On the one hand, man finds that he has a body that is governed by biological necessities. He has to expend labor, which is again governed by laws of production, and he has to use natural languages that predate him by centuries and have their own laws of transformation. Man seems indeed to be at the mercy of these other objects without which he cannot survive. It is man's very knowledge that gives him the evidence of his finitude. When he studies the anatomy of the human body, the laws of production and various linguistic systems, he gets a glimpse of his limitations. But on the other hand, man is also independent from nature. He no longer has a fixed place in nature as was the case in the Classical age. Having lost his fixed place in nature, he has acquired a strange kind of sovereignty. This sovereignty and independence, in fact, make man a strange mix of finitude and infinity. Man is limited but not by anything that he can actually represent.

Since man does not see anything that limits him directly, it may be the case that he really is not limited; perhaps infinity is promised to him in the long run. As Foucault says:

But this primary discovery of finitude is an unstable one; nothing allows it to contemplate itself; and would it not be possible to suppose that it also actually promises that very infinity it refuses, according to the system of actuality? The evolution of species has perhaps not reached its culmination; forms of production and labor are still being modified and perhaps one day man will no longer find the principle of his alienation in his labour, or the constant reminder of his limitations in his needs; nor is there any proof that he will not discover symbolic systems sufficiently pure to dissolve the ancient opacity of historical languages. Heralded in positivity, man's finitude is outlined in the paradoxical form of the endless; rather than the rigour of a limitation, it indicates the monotony of a journey which though it probably has no end, is nevertheless perhaps not without hope. (OT: 314)

Man's finitude thus has a dual nature. It is manifested in the limitations that are revealed to him by his own existing knowledge. It is also manifested in the hope of achieving the infinite that is revealed to him by this very knowledge. It is of a more fundamental nature than in the Classical age because it has to be understood solely in terms of itself. This is what makes necessary, according to Foucault, an analytic of finitude in the nineteenth century. In accordance with this analytic of finitude there is a profound shift in the way subject and object relate. Now one finds that the kind of knowledge the subject has of the world and its object is founded on the very finitude of the subject. Man's finitude, rather than being an obstacle to knowing, is the very condition for the possibility of knowing. Now one finds that the subject's relation to an object is founded upon the subject itself. The positive knowledge that shows man that he is finite is ultimately founded in man himself. In the Classical age it was the bond between representation and being which guaranteed the knowledge that the subject had of

the object. But with the dissolution of the bond, the foundation is shifted from the link between representation and being into the subject, namely, man.<sup>119</sup>

#### 4.3.4. Man as an Empirico-Transcendental Doublet

The analytic of finitude, according to Foucault, renders man as “a strange empirico-transcendental doublet, since he is a being such that knowledge will be attained in him of what renders all knowledge possible.” (OT: 318). As we have already seen, since the existence of representation alone cannot guarantee knowledge anymore, one must find a proper foundation for the knowledge that man gains of himself and his surroundings. Foucault says that in the nineteenth century there are two ways of doing this. There is a positivistic analysis of knowledge, of which Comte would be the representative. This analysis “led to the discovery that knowledge has anatomico-physiological conditions, that it is formed gradually within the structures of the body, that it may have a privileged place within it, but that its forms cannot be dissociated from its peculiar functioning; in short, that there is a *nature* of human knowledge that determines its forms and that can at the same time be made manifest to it in its own empirical contents.” (OT: 319) We have, on the other hand, an eschatological analysis, of which Marx would be the representative, “by means of which it was shown that knowledge had

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<sup>119</sup> In the analytic of finitude one makes a distinction between the positive (what is to be explained) and the fundamental (and what explains), in one way, but also identifies them in another way. The positive is grounded in the fundamental. Foucault gives the following example of death. The biological death that affects my body is grounded in a more fundamental death, which is the condition for my very existence and makes my existence possible. So the biological death is of course like the fundamental death but in another way not so.

historical, social, or economic conditions, that it was formed within the relations that are woven between men, and that it was not independent of the particular form they might take here or there; in short there was a *history* of human knowledge which could both be given to empirical knowledge and prescribe its forms.” (OT: 319) Now although these two analyses appear to be independent of each other, but when we actually analyze the nineteenth century from the archaeological perspective, these two analyses belong to and are necessitated by the same field of knowledge. Foucault argues that both the positivist and the eschatological analysis of knowledge cannot achieve their goal of making their empirical contents also function as a transcendental justification of those very contents. This is because they have to resort to transcendental distinctions such as that between emergent knowledge and developed knowledge and that between ideology and scientific truth, to name a few, in order to organize their contents, which they cannot simply abstract from their empirical content. Even more fundamentally, they need to have some transcendental understanding of truth that cannot originate from their contents alone. The transcendental thus finds its way surreptitiously into both analyses and this only means that in the contemporary field of knowledge, human knowledge cannot be founded on the object, it has also to be ultimately founded in the subject, namely man. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries one always finds attempts to do justice to the empirical and the transcendental realms and to establish the proper relationship between the two by providing a theory of the subject that is the foundation of both the eschatological and the positivistic analysis. According to Foucault, phenomenology tries to do this by analyzing actual experience, thus posing as a radical alternative to both eschatological and positivistic analysis. “Actual experience is, in fact, both the space in which all empirical

contents are given to experience and the original form that makes them possible in general and designates their primary roots.” (OT: 321) However, according to Foucault, if one examines the matter archaeologically, one comes to the conclusion that phenomenology cannot really replace eschatological and positivistic analyses as the trio belong to the same archaeological formation. Phenomenology ends up legitimizing them instead. One comes to the realization that phenomenology, eschatology and positivism are necessitated by the specific mode of being that the subject assumes, namely, that of man as the empirico-transcendental doublet. If that is the case, then the only thought that can attempt to replace eschatological or positivistic analysis is not phenomenology but a thought that attempts to think beyond man by questioning whether man is a necessary reality.

#### 4.3.5. Man as the Necessary Relation between the *Cogito* and the Unthought

The emergence of man as an empirico-transcendental doublet signals the replacement of the link between representation and being with the relationship between the cogito and the unthought. Man is in a unique and disconcerting position in that his own self is not transparent to him. His own self is intimately connected to things that really do not concern the self directly. His self would not be possible without them and so these things penetrate into the very core of his self, yet they are foreign to it. Such is the nature of the body, language, and labor, without which he would not have the selfhood that he possesses but which far exceed the limits of his own selfhood and are foreign to it. He learns about his body, his words and his labor in the same way he learns

about other natural and artificial phenomena. It is this relation between the self and non-self which constitutes the very mode of being of man that Foucault characterizes by “cogito” and the “unthought.” As Foucault asks:

For can I, in fact say that I am this language I speak, into which my thought insinuates itself to the point of finding in it the system of all my own possibilities, yet which exists only in the weight of the sedimentations my thought will never be capable of actualizing altogether? Can I say that I am this labour I perform with my hands, yet which eludes me not only when I have finished it, but even before I have begun it? Can I say that I am this life I sense deep within me, but which envelops me both in the irresistible time that grows side by side with it and poses me for a moment on its crest, and in the imminent time that prescribes my death?... What is man's being, and how can it be that that being, which could so easily be characterized by the fact that 'it has thoughts' and is possibly alone in having them, has an ineradicable and fundamental relation to the unthought? (OT: 324)

#### 4.3.6. Man and his Relationship to the Origin

In the thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, man has a very different relationship to the origin. In the Classical age “to return to the origin was to place oneself as near as possible to the mere duplication of representation.” (OT: 329) What does this mean? Since there is a perfect identity between representation and being, to trace the origin of anything was to locate that point where representation and being met in a sequence of two representations giving way to each other so seamlessly as to be almost simultaneous. But that is no longer the case in modern thought. In modern thought representation and being divorce and acquire their own historicity. Life, labor and language have their own historicity now. So man's relation to the origin is of a very peculiar kind. Man's relationship to the origin takes these two forms. In one sense (the

positivist sense), one gives man's origin a date in the history of the evolution of species but in another sense it is in man's encounter with things that those things acquire a history by virtue of his memory. So if it were not for him, there would be no history of things as such. He is in a sense the origin of all things, the origin of time itself. Thus man's relationship to the origin is problematic in modern thought. On the one hand we have the time of things which gives man his own origin, but on the other hand it is man who by virtue of his memory, by virtue of his power to reflect gives things their time. There thus seems to be a time of things and another more fundamental time when time itself originated with man's ability to remember and make sense of time. So the whole problematic of man's relation to his origin is tied very closely to man's fundamental relationship to time.

The origin of man is not simply the time of his birth or some sort of ideal genesis as was the case in the classical age. Man can never locate the point where he originated. In fact there is no fixed origin, the origin is always receding, retreating further and further back. How does this happen? Man could not originate without having a body, without being able to work and without being about to speak. So his origin is tied to the origin of things such as life, production, and language, which predate him by many millennia, have evolved independently of him and thus have their own histories and their own origin. Thus man's origin is never the same as the consciousness of his origin. Man does originate at the point at which he becomes conscious of his own existence and of the faculties he possesses. When man becomes aware of himself, he also realizes he has originated a long while back when his body evolved into what it is today, when his language evolved into what it is today and his labor is organized in the manner it is today.



Man's awareness of his origin is at the same time the recession of that origin into the past. This explains, according to Foucault, the many attempts to return to the origin by redoing it, to begin again as it were. We find this in the philosophies of Hegel and Marx on the one side and those of Heidegger and Nietzsche on the other. According to the former there is man who recognizes himself in everything which he thought he was not and accepts being assimilated into this process and thereby losing his identity. For the latter, Heidegger and Nietzsche, the strategy consists in returning to the origin through the realization that such an origin has receded and can no longer be recovered. Thus, the return paradoxically consists in the realization that the origin cannot be returned to. According to Foucault, man's mode of being is defined by these four themes of the analytic of finitude, the empirical-transcendental doublet, the relation between the *cogito* and the unthought and the retreat and the return of the origin. But this mode of being emerges through a transformation in the way the subject relates to the object with the dissolution of the link between representation and being and the subsequent emergence of new types of objects like life, labor and language. As the following passage sums up:

...the connection of positivities with finitude, the reduplication of the empirical and the transcendental, the perpetual relation of the *cogito* to the unthought, the retreat and the return of the origin, define for us man's mode of being. It is in the analysis of that mode of being, and no longer in the analysis of representation, that reflection since the nineteenth century has sought a philosophical foundation for the possibility of knowledge.  
(OT: 335)

## 5. Conclusion

What we have seen from Foucault is a radical analysis of western history. It is an analysis that forces us to reexamine some of our most familiar and uncontroversial assumptions about the nature of thought, the relationship between subject and object and the mode of being of subjects and objects. The above account has focused on trying to distill what Foucault means by “thought” by differentiating three forms of thought: the Renaissance, the Classical age and the nineteenth-century (the contemporary age) from one another through specifying precisely the mode of being of objects, the mode of being of subjects and the type of relation between the subject and the object in these three periods. We have thus discovered that thought is a unity that circumscribes the mode of being of objects, the mode of being of subjects and the type of relation between subject and object.

Thought is here not the sum-total of the thoughts of the individuals who lived in these times because it does not describe what people actually thought. It tries to explain the specific conditions under which they thought what they thought. Secondly, it does not describe the spirit of the age. The spirit of the age is a dominant idea or a set of dominant ideas that were very influential at a certain time. One could say for instance that the spirit of the age in the nineteenth century was defined by the clash between the ideas of Ricardo and the incendiary ideas of Marx. But from the archaeological standpoint these two sets of ideas belonged to the same system of thought and there was no conflict between them at the archaeological level.

Foucault thus seems to give us a new sense of the term ‘thought.’ Thought, understood in this sense, is not an act of the subject. It is what explains the existence of subjects and objects and the way in which subjects think of objects. Thought is that space, that region where subjects can encounter objects. What Foucault does is to show how this space undergoes transformation. Rather than starting with an individual subject and an individual object and asking how the former could represent the latter in its thoughts, have ideas and beliefs about the latter, and giving us a history of such ideas and beliefs, Foucault starts out with the premise that there is thought and the transformations that thought undergoes giving rise to new types of subjects, objects and new kinds of relations between them. How does archaeology do this? What does it mean to say that thought simply exists? The historian of ideas, in opposition to whom Foucault situates himself, classifies the things that have been said and written, the gestures that have been made and the figures that have been drawn, namely, signs in a very specific way under very specific assumptions. One assumes that there are subjects and objects that exist independently of what has been said and written. One then goes on to classify what has been said and written according to who their author is. This is done by attributing the origins of those things said and written to ideas in the mind of the author. One also assumes that these writings designate specific things that are again independent of the signs. One tries to explain the changes in what has been written and said by attributing it to changes in the subject (from erroneous belief to true belief, from superstitious behavior to scientific behavior, from non-rigorous to a rigorous method etc. etc.) resulting in a movement towards better ideas and the discovery of new objects that were always there but were not noticed. The history of knowledge thus moves in a linear fashion in

accordance with the improvement in the observations and the understanding of the subject. In essence, the historian of ideas classifies what has been said and written by taking recourse to certain unities ('ideas,' 'beliefs,' 'things,' 'work') and certain assumptions (independence of the subject and object from what has been said and written, origins of the signs in the ideas in the mind of the subject, the strictly designative nature of signs). In contradistinction to the historian of ideas, Foucault refuses to take recourse to the familiar unities such as 'idea' and 'belief' and suspends the familiar assumptions of the historian of ideas. Without asking in whose mind the signs originated and what things they designate, Foucault takes the signs as something that is a primary given, a positivity. This is a thought but an a-subjective anonymous thought that cannot be translated into the ideas and beliefs of a subject who exists independently of the signs. Foucault tries to chart the succession and simultaneity of these signs and specify the rules according to which they succeed one another and are simultaneous. Under this new framework, the subject and the object become parameters of the succession and simultaneity of signs. They emerge in the transformations of thought in accordance with the rules of the succession and simultaneity of signs. This is precisely what archaeology tries to specify.

Foucault also designates thought as an episteme or what we can call a field of knowledge. Borrowing a term that Foucault uses in a later work, we could also designate thought as a discursive formation or simply discourse. But we must not make the mistake of equating discourse with language because Foucault explicitly warns us against it.<sup>120</sup> To say that thought is a field of knowledge is not to say that thought is knowledge and

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<sup>120</sup> Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972) 48. From here on this work will be referred to as AK.

every thing one thinks is true. The field of knowledge is not the same as knowledge in the sense of justified true belief. The field of knowledge is a set that includes both true and false propositions. The field of knowledge or thought, in fact, describes the conditions that lead the subject to prescribe a certain set of criteria to distinguish between truth and falsity. For example, as we have already seen, in the Renaissance the true description of an animal would not be restricted simply to its physical characteristics. It would also include the myths, legends and stories said about it, which is not the case in the Classical age, where a true description of an animal involves nothing but very specific physical characteristics. Here we have two different sets of criteria for distinguishing between true and false propositions. Thus the field of knowledge describes the conditions that lead the naturalist to distinguish the truth and falsity of animal descriptions in a specific way. In the words of Ian Hacking, who distinguishes this field of knowledge or discourse from Quine's fabric of sentences:

His [Foucault's] notion of discourse and Quine's "fabric of sentences" are cognate ideas. But the resemblance falters. One reason is just that Quine is ahistorical...A more fundamental difference is that Quine's fabric of sentences is different in kind from Foucault's discourse. Quine's is a body of beliefs, a "lore," partly theoretical, partly practical, but such as could be entertained as a pretty consistent whole by a single informant. Foucault's discourses are what is said by a lot of people talking, writing and arguing; it includes the pro and the con and a great many incompatible *connaissances*.<sup>121</sup>

The more challenging thing about this analysis is the ontological implications it seems to carry with it because it seems to raise a very serious question about the very being of the subject and the object and not just about our knowledge of them. What does it mean to say that the being of the objects and the subjects are different in the Renaissance and the Classical age? Were there different types of human beings, different types of things in

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<sup>121</sup> Ian Hacking, "Foucault's Immature Science," *Noûs* 13, no. 1 (1979): 44

the Renaissance and the Classical age? Does it mean that a person from the Renaissance would not be able to recognize any of things he saw in the Classical age? Let us take the example of a horse. In the time of Alrovandi, a complete description of a horse involves more than just describing its physical characteristics and in time of Buffon, it involves describing just a certain set of physical characteristics and in the time of Cuvier, it involves describing the distribution of its organs in light of the specific functions they performed, all of which contributed to keep the animal alive. Are the three naturalists speaking of the same thing or are they speaking of three different things? This is one of the most difficult questions raised by Foucault's analysis? One reply to this question would be as follows: Foucault has shown that things are always correlated to a field of knowledge. It is only when they are correlated to a field of knowledge that we have subjects and objects. So our answer would be yes, we have the same thing that goes by the name 'horse' but we have three different objects of description. Things gain their objectivity and humans gain their subjectivity only when correlated to a field of knowledge. We must not think of the emergence of objects as some kind of creation *ex nihilo* or the dissolution of a subject and objects as the dissolution of things. People work, use signs, relate to living beings and so, yes, a cow is a cow and a tree is tree in both the Renaissance and Classical age. But what Foucault has shown is that things and human beings are not just human beings and things. In our normal everyday dealings with the world the people in the Renaissance as well as in the Classical age would perhaps be able to identify and acknowledge the existence of all the everyday things. But what Foucault has discovered is that things have in addition to their everyday being also what one could call a discursive being. It is their discursive being that gives them the

status of subjects and objects of knowledge. Thus, in one obvious sense, Aldrovandi and Buffon as everyday human beings would relate to the things around them in similar ways. But, in another sense, as subjects of knowledge they differ from each other in their being and they find themselves in the midst of completely different objects as participants of different systems of thought. In a sense we can say that Foucault has discovered a new ontological layer, that of discourse which determines our status as subjects and objects. Foucault himself seems to provide a similar reply in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* when he says that his archaeological histories have nothing to do with ‘the history of the referent.’ In his own words:

In the descriptions for which I am attempting to provide a theory, there can be no question of interpreting discourse with a view of writing a history of the referent... We are not trying to reconstitute what madness itself might be, in the form in which it first presented itself to some primitive, fundamental, deaf, scarcely articulated experience, and in the form in which it was later organized (translated, deformed, travestied, perhaps even repressed) by discourses, and the oblique, often twisted play of their operations. Such a history of the referent is no doubt possible; and I have no wish at the outset to exclude any effort to uncover and free these ‘prediscursive’ experiences from the tyranny of the text. But what we are concerned here is not to neutralize discourse, to make it a sign of something else and to pierce its density in order to reach what remains silently anterior to it, but on the contrary to maintain it in its consistency, to make it emerge in its own complexity. (AK: 47)

Here Foucault clearly suggests that his employment of a very specific method of discursive analysis does not negate the fact that our signs refer to things and that we have “‘prediscursive’ experiences” which can be made a legitimate object of study. Perhaps it is because of this stance that commentators have acknowledged that Foucault is an empirical realist.<sup>122</sup> But it is simply not enough as these commentators have done to

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<sup>122</sup> See Hacking, “Foucault’s Immature Science,” 50 when he says in reference to Foucault: “In scholastic times ‘realism’ contrasted with nominalism, while Kant made it contrast with Berkeley’s idealism. In either sense we must be, to abuse Kant’s words,

acknowledge his empirical realism. We must also acknowledge in the same breath that Foucault's empirical realism is of a very special kind. For, his analyses do compel us to ask what it means for a thing to be a thing if its discursive being may vary so drastically. When we think of the being of an object we think of it ultimately as the referent of our descriptions, our judgments, our propositions. But Foucault's analyses force us to ask how the everyday being of the thing remains fundamentally the same for us to be able to pick out the same 'horse' despite its fundamentally different discursive essences. Can we really say that the description of the horse really remains somehow extraneous to the everyday essence of the horse? How do we distinguish the essence of the everyday thing 'horse' from its discursive being whose variations Foucault has plotted for us? Should we say that a drastic transformation in the way we describe things does not have any consequence whatsoever for their everyday essence? If it does what exactly is the relation between the essence of thing and the way we describe it?

One thing is clear, philosophy in general and epistemology, in particular, up until Foucault has always assumed a very smooth transition from the things that we can refer to and the descriptions that we can make of these things to the knowledge we can have of them. It has always assumed a very smooth transition from reference to knowledge via the medium of beliefs, ideas or categories and that signs are the innocent creatures that facilitate and ease this transition. But what Foucault has forced us to confront is the

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empirical realists. There is of course a rich plethora of things around us, really existing anterior to any thought."

See also Han-Pile, "Is Early Foucault a Historian," 590 when she says in reference to Foucault:

"...throughout his career Foucault remained a realist in the sense that he never doubted the existence of *empirical* objects, nor claimed that these were constituted through our practices (which is the subjective idealist's position)."



messy nature of this transition and how there is a complex network of factors, which he designates as thought, that make possible this transition from reference to knowledge. None of these factors has been adequately taken into account and described by either empirical or transcendental philosophy. What he does is to attempt to describe this complex network of factors, which can neither be strictly attributed to the subject nor to the object, and show the transformations they undergo and how objects and subjects are, in a way, a function of these factors. Foucault, I believe, has forced us to examine in this way some of our most basic assumptions regarding the relationship between being, thought and knowledge. To conclude with him:

‘Words and things’ is the entirely serious title of a problem; it is the ironic title of a work that modifies its own form, displaces its own data, and reveals, at the end of the day, a quite different task. A task that consists of not – of no longer – treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of what they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to the language (*langue*) and to speech. It is this ‘more’ that we must reveal and describe. (AK: 49)

## Chapter V

### Is the Historicity of Knowledge a Threat to its Ideality? Foucault contra Husserl

#### 1. Introduction

Are mathematical objects affected by their historicity such that they simply lose their identity and their validity in the course of history? If not, how can they always be accessible in their ideality regardless of their transmission in the course of time?

Husserl and Foucault have raised this question and offered an account, both of which, albeit different in their originality, are equally provocative. They both seem to acknowledge that the scientific object like a geometrical theorem or a chemical equation has a history through its transmission from generation to generation, but that history is in fact part of its ideality so that, although historical, a scientific object retains its identity as one and the same object.

Their account of history thus entails a significant reformulation of what an ideality is. While Husserl appeals to the possibility of reactivating an ideality, thereby repossessing, as it were, its genesis, Foucault emphasizes the role of what he calls a “statement” and which he considers to be a material unity. While these two approaches may seem irreconcilable, I try to show through a careful analysis of Husserl’s and Foucault’s methodologies that they complement each other. In the case of Husserl I will focus on how he understands the transfer of idealities across time in the *Origin of*

*Geometry*<sup>123</sup> and in the case of Foucault I will appeal to his notion of “statement” as explained in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. I will uncover in the process some of the underlying implications their approaches have for some of the more basic questions of epistemology.

I will start with a brief exposition of how Husserl understands the formation and the transmission of idealities, criticizing how Derrida and Merleau-Ponty have interpreted him. This will help bring Foucault’s archaeological method in sharp focus.

## 2. Husserl’s Phenomenological Analyses of the Historicity of the Sciences

### 2.1. Historicity and Tradition

In the *Origin of Geometry*, Husserl accepts that idealities are historical entities in the sense that they are constituted in history or in the course of history. While he avoids the problem of how we have access to them, he still has to explain how idealities can retain their identity and validity in the course of history.<sup>124</sup> In order to do this, Husserl takes it upon himself to articulate what he considers to be the phenomenological

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<sup>123</sup> Edmund Husserl, “Origin of Geometry,” in *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970). This work will be referred to as OG.

<sup>124</sup> For the Platonist idealities are outside of the warp and woof of history – eternally present. So the Platonist has to explain how these extra-historical entities can become accessible to historical animals like human beings who cannot escape history. Plato’s “third man” argument in the *Parmenides* hints at this problem. Husserl accepts that idealities are historical entities in the sense they are constituted in history or in the course of history. So he gets rid of the accessibility problem. But he will then have to explain how idealities can retain their identity and validity in the course of history. This would require that he radically reformulate the notion of ideality which I believe is precisely what he attempts in the essay on the origin of geometry.

structures underlying human historicity. He does this by attempting to answer the question: How do we as human beings come to have a history? For Husserl the answer to this question can be given only by understanding the meaning of tradition and its indispensability. Tradition constitutes the ways in which we relate to our surroundings helping us frame various projects to modify and adapt to our surroundings. By characterizing historicity in terms of tradition and tradition as a steady process of the acquisition of idealities, Husserl will provide us an account of the historicity of idealities.

Husserl understands tradition as the inheriting of a store of idealities handed down from generation to generation during the course of which new ideal objects are added to the previously existing store and some older ones are modified. Science in general and mathematics in particular (of which geometry is considered to be a part) is one such ideal product which we acquire as a tradition through history. By focusing on the historicity of geometry, Husserl believes he can uncover the historicity of the sciences and thereby the basic unchanging structures of human historicity in general. For him it is thus a matter of understanding how we are able to immerse ourselves in a tradition like geometry and transform it at the same time. He thereby aims to arrive at the essence of tradition by uncovering geometry's style of operation.

Husserl explains that geometry has sustained itself as a discipline and moved ahead at the same time because the idealities that have been forged at every stage in its history have never lost their validity as such and newer idealities have always been acquired only on the basis of all the former acquisitions. At every point in the history of geometry, geometers have always found themselves to be a part of a tradition even if they have not been explicitly aware of all the particular contributions of the past still at work

in the present. And they have attempted to take their discipline forward towards a more developed state that they see as its future. This constitutes the horizon of all their activities. Thus James Dodd explains that “tradition is an acquisition, which means that it is an accomplishment of subjectivity that remains a permanent feature of the communal world.”<sup>125</sup> The validity of the geometers’ achievements presupposes the validity of the achievements of those who came before them just as the validity of the conclusion presupposes the validity of its premises. This is the style in which geometry and every other science moves forward. Here we have a preliminary account of the historicity of geometry.<sup>126</sup>

## 2.2. The Two Ways of Transmitting Idealities through Tradition

However this preliminary account can be substantiated only if we have an answer to the following questions: How do idealities come into being? Are they merely discovered? And how can idealities be transmitted from one individual to another without losing their identity? Husserl spends a significant portion of *The Origin of Geometry* explaining how idealities are formed, transmitted and preserved over the

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<sup>125</sup> James Dodd, *Crisis and Reflection: An Essay on Husserl’s Crisis of the European Sciences*, 121 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004)

<sup>126</sup> “Clearly, then, geometry must have arisen out of a first acquisition, out of first creative activities. It is not only a mobile forward process from one set of acquisitions to another but a continuous synthesis in which all acquisitions maintain their validity, all make up a totality such that, at every present stage, the total acquisition is, so to speak, the total premise for the acquisitions of the new level. Geometry necessarily has this mobility and has a horizon of geometrical future in precisely this style; this is its meaning for every geometer who has the consciousness (the constant implicit knowledge) of existing within a forward development understood as the progress of knowledge being built into the horizon. The same thing is true of every science.” (OG: 355)

course of time and this explanation has been the subject of intricate discussions among commentators. Husserl offers two ways to understand the way the geometric tradition operates. The first way is based on a reactivation of the achievements of the previous geometers and those of one's peers in order to contribute something new to their achievements or transform their achievements in novel ways. The second way is based on a logical explication (*Verdeutlichung*) of the achievements of the geometers of the past and those of one's peers in order to take their work forward.

### 2.2.1 The First Way: Reactivation

The first way can be seen to be characterized by four stages as described by Vandevelde.<sup>127</sup> In the first stage, the first geometer is able to conceive of something in her mind that is unstable and fades away with time. But it does not completely disappear.

In the second stage, the first geometer is able to recall it initially with some difficulty. This recollection has an active and a passive element. It is passive because it is a recalling of what is past. But it is also active because there is an active realization of the past and present as being the same. This co-incidence is what constitutes the self-evidence of identity. At the intra-subjective stage the subject has articulated something for herself. And every successful re-articulation is accompanied by the self-evidence that it is one and the same thing being re-articulated. We must realize here that the initial

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<sup>127</sup> I am indebted to Pol Vandevelde who helped me understand Husserl's first way in this manner by dividing it into four stages. His analysis can be found in his article "Intersubjectivity and the Instability of the Transcendental Ego in Husserl," *Josephinum: Journal of Theology* 11, (2004): 269-302

experience is not just an event in the psychological confines of the geometer.<sup>128</sup> It is something more than that. It is an activity that the geometer becomes capable “of repeat[ing] at will” (OG: 360). She gains mastery over the activity by such repeated performances. Since it is an activity that she can redo it implies that any human being given the same capacity can redo that activity just as well as her.

So, next when she linguistically communicates her accomplishment to her companions they are able to actively reperform the act expressed by her linguistic articulation. This is accompanied by the realization that they are re-enacting the same act performed by the speaker (in this case the first geometer). The speaker too shares the same realization that the act being performed by her listeners is the same as hers. This can also be explained by resorting to James Dodd’s distinction between phenomenological meaning and linguistic meaning. While phenomenological meaning of the original act of the geometer lends itself to expression in a linguistic meaning, it is not the same as linguistic meaning. From the linguistic meaning of the speaker’s words, the listeners are able to go back to the phenomenological meaning by re-performing the act expressed by her words. This is the consciousness of self-evidence at the intersubjective level and marks the third stage.

In the final stage, verbal articulation leads to documentation in writing whereby these idealities come to be preserved for future generations who can in turn discover new idealities on the basis of what they have inherited. Writing is a virtual communication in

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<sup>128</sup> We must note the significance of this distinction between a subjective psychic process and an ideal mental act which can be re-identified and transmitted. So even if the subject was undergoing different experiences she is still performing the same mental act which can be replicated any number of times and expressed in words to fellow geometers. Husserl’s notion of ideality hinges on this difference between subjective mental processes and ideal mental acts.

which one of the interlocutors is not physically present. However the reader by reading the signs on the page can reactivate the act that is expressed by the signs just as if she were listening to the writer speaking.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> In this context let us concern ourselves with the characteristics of an ideal object, as Husserl understands it. Husserl distinguishes ideal objects from prototypes or exemplars such as tools and artefacts. We can find many instances of a single prototype but each of them is still a unique instantiation of the prototype. Each instance of a chair is thus a unique way in which the prototype “chair” is exemplified. But this is not so in the case of an ideal object. An ideal object comes into being only once and is so for all time. Thus in the case of an ideality, the individual instances are all one and the same ideal object. Their individuality adds absolutely nothing that would differentiate them from other such individual instances. The theorem of Pythagoras is the same whether it is articulated in the original Greek or translated into Sanskrit. As Husserl says:

“The Pythagorean Theorem, [indeed] all of geometry exists only once, no matter how often or even in what language it is expressed. It is identically the same in the “original language” of Euclid and in all “translations”; and within each language it is again the same, no matter how many times it has been sensibly uttered, from the original expression and writing-down to the innumerable oral utterances or written and other documentations. (OG: 357)”

Husserl makes no difference between imagined objects like works of art and literature and scientific objects. So Hamlet and the Pythagorean theorem would both be ideal in his sense of the term. As he says here:

“[The status “ideal” objectivity] is proper to a whole class of spiritual products of the cultural world, to which not only all scientific constructions and the sciences themselves but also, for example, the constructions of literature.” (OG: 356-57)

In a footnote at this point Husserl adds:

“But the broadest concept of literature encompasses them all; that is, it belongs to their objective being that they be linguistically expressed and can be expressed again and again; or, more precisely, they have their objectivity, their existence-for-everyone, only as signification, as the meaning of speech.” (OG: 357)

Husserl suggests that it is possible for a geometrical object to “proceed from its primary intrapersonal origin, where it is a structure within the conscious space of the first inventor’s soul, to its ideal objectivity” (OG: 357-58) by means of language. In language we can distinguish the assertion from what is said in the assertion – its meaning. So the meaning of the word *Löwe* in German comes into being once and for all and is thus something ideal despite the many instances of its use in speech and writing. But while the meaning of the word *Löwe* has yet to be cashed out in perceptual intuitions of a lion, geometrical terms cannot be cashed out in this manner. Their meaning is fulfilled by the ideal objects of geometry. Although Husserl does not discuss the relationship between ideality and language in greater detail in his essay he does admit that it is the existence of language that opens up the possibility for the formation and movement of tradition. The possibility of geometry to have idealities that can be communicated and form a tradition is thus founded upon the possibility of the transmission of idealities, which possibility is opened up by language.



We can thus see that the question of the structures of the historicity of the sciences is inseparably tied to the question of the constitution and perpetuation of idealities. From the way Husserl sets up the issue, it seems rather clear that we can say nothing fruitful about the former question without delving into the latter question.<sup>130</sup>

To recapitulate, the first way is thus characterized by what is called “reactivation.” Reactivation is the ability of the geometer to redo the act that the original geometer performed to constitute the geometric ideality. When geometry is still a relatively meagre storehouse of idealities, it is possible for the community of geometers to build upon the work of their predecessors by actually reactivating these idealities. In this stage geometry is a cultural activity in which a tightly knit community of geometers participate. But as the storehouse of idealities grows larger and larger, reactivating each and every past result to obtain new results becomes impossible for the finite cognitive capacity of the geometer. How then does geometry continue to thrive and produce new results without reactivation? Here is where the second way of historical motion that,

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<sup>130</sup> Commentators have rightly grappled with the question of when a geometric ideality becomes truly available with the aim of illuminating the conditions necessary for the constitution of an ideality. Some commentators, notably, Derrida [Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans. John P. Leavey (New York: Nicolas Hays, Ltd., 1978)] and Merleau-Ponty [Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, ed. Leonard Lawlor with Bettina Largo, trans. Leonard Lawlor (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002)] interpret Husserl to be saying that an ideality becomes available only with the accomplishment of writing. Both see him as suggesting that speech and writing are essential for the very constitution of an ideality. And many others have followed their lead in interpreting Husserl this way (See Alfons Grieder, “Husserl and the Origin of Geometry,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 20, no. 3 (1989): 277-289 and Robert D’Amico, “Husserl on the Foundational Structures of Natural and Cultural Sciences,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 42, no. 1 (1981): 5-22). However, as we have seen earlier, this is certainly not obvious from Husserl’s descriptions. In fact, as Vandavelde and Dodd argue, we could very well say that an ideality is available to the first geometer at the intra-subjective level because of the geometer’s capacity to redo the act constituting the ideality. Speech and writing would then only make the ideality that is already available to the first geometer accessible to everyone else thereby granting it more objectivity.

according to Husserl, characterizes modern geometry comes into the picture. This is the way of logical explication.

### 2.2.2. The Second Way: Logical Explication

Logical explication has to be distinguished from reactivation. While reactivation involves redoing the act that constitutes the ideality, logical explication involves “extracting one by one, in separation from what has been vaguely, passively received as a unity, the elements of meaning.” (OG: 364) A logical explication of the theorem of Pythagoras, for instance, would mean being able to understand all the parts of the theorem, namely, the meaning of the hypotenuse, the meaning of the two sides forming the right angle, the operation of squaring and equality. This could be done by drawing the figure of a right angled triangle and explaining the relations between the sides. But logical explication is completely dependent upon the givenness of the theorem as unity of signs written down in a language and handed down from generation to generation. It is an activity based upon the passive understanding of the theorem that is simply received as a unity. The validity and the meaning of the theorem are already taken for granted. Even going through the proof of the theorem does not require reactivation. It can be logically deduced on the basis of some axioms whose self-evidence is passively taken for granted.

Although logical explication through deduction and inference can be undertaken without having developed the capacity for reactivation, Husserl still considers that the former can be considered a meaningful activity only if the latter is in principle still

possible.<sup>131</sup> This is the crucial point: that logical meaning is not the fundamental level of meaning but is possible only on the basis of a level anterior to it. Husserl's aim is to reveal this anterior level which he calls truth meaning and which derives from the cultural historical activity of constituting geometric idealities by human beings immersed in a tradition of physical measurement. What he wants to do is reveal to us the inner structure of the tradition upon which the logical structure of geometry in particular and science in general is based.

Since Husserl is interested in discovering the grounds for the validity of geometry, and he considers that neither the logical coherence of geometry in its deductive structure nor its immense practical benefit is enough to grant it such validity, only the cultural historical conditions under which geometry originates and develops can truly validate geometry. But cultural historical conditions for Husserl do not denote contingent facts. The origin of geometry is not just a psychological event undergone by the first geometer that we are called upon to remember. Geometry originates with the constitution of an ideality. This is an act that can be redone ad infinitum by any human being who possesses the capacity to do so. Husserl's methodology thus depends upon bracketing out the factuality of the events surrounding the origin and the development of geometry as a science to focus upon the style in which geometry has originated and developed. This allows him to discover an inner rational structure in the way the geometrical tradition operates and only on the basis of this does he believe he can legitimize the discipline of geometry.

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<sup>131</sup> For Husserl, logical explication is in itself an irrational enterprise and the crisis of the sciences is manifest when this activity takes centre stage and no effort is made to ask how this activity can be rational in itself. Logical explication can be deemed rational only if it is grounded upon the possibility of the more original rational activity of reactivation.

### 3. The Question of Historicity: Derrida and Merleau-Ponty on Husserl's "Origin of Geometry"

#### 3.1. Derrida: Historicity as Pure Equivocity

Among the many commentaries on Husserl's *Origin of Geometry*, I will focus on Derrida and Merleau-Ponty and then contrast these accounts to Foucault's treatment of the historicity of the sciences.<sup>132</sup>

In his commentary<sup>133</sup> on the *Origin of Geometry*, Derrida focuses on two issues:

1. the role of language and writing in the historicity of geometry and 2. the distinction between inner historicity and outer history. In his reading of this essay, he claims that for Husserl the geometric idealities require language and writing for their very constitution. The paradox he sees here is that while language and writing constitute idealities, they are factual entities made up of signs. The question then is whether something so factual can constitute something that is devoid of all factuality – the geometric ideality. So the univocity of sense that Husserl wants to preserve by grounding it upon idealities is doomed given that he has to resort to material signs and sounds for their constitution, which are susceptible to equivocity every step of the way.<sup>134</sup> This impinges directly upon

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<sup>132</sup> The reason I choose Derrida and Merleau-Ponty following Vandvelde (See Vandvelde, "Intersubjectivity and the Instability of the Transcendental Ego") is that being independent philosophers in their own right, their commentaries even though they are about Husserl's text still do not fail to reflect their own views on the historicity of the sciences.

<sup>133</sup> See footnote 129

<sup>134</sup> It is in this context that Derrida contrasts Husserl's exercises with those of James Joyce. While the former is bent on distilling and preserving the univocity that underlies all our utterances; the latter, according to Derrida, is interested in doing exactly the opposite, namely, exposing the equivocity that lies at the basis of all our utterances.

As we have seen however and as shown by Vandvelde (See Vandvelde,

the second issue. Can Husserl isolate an inner historicity of geometry from the warp and the woof of factual history when the transmission of idealities which manifests this inner historicity is itself dependent upon factual entities like the marks, signs and tones of writing and speech?

Derrida's implicit criticism of Husserl's attempt to uncover the style by which history advances through the formation, sustenance and development of tradition hinges upon the question of univocity of meaning in natural language. To repeat, Derrida claims that for Husserl mathematical idealities are constituted by the written signs of natural language. According to Derrida, "...words and language in general are not and can never be absolute objects. They do not possess any resistant and permanent identity that is

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"Intersubjectivity and the Instability of the Transcendental Ego") Husserl allows us to conceive of a stage prior to linguistic articulation in which the subject entertains a sense which can be reactivated by the same subject. This sense is not a clear and distinct idea to which linguistic articulation is merely extrinsic. Linguistic articulation thus does not merely represent an already clear and distinct sense which is not really in need of articulation. The relationship between linguistic articulation and sense is thus not one of correspondence. Far from it, this sense is inchoate and it invites linguistic articulation. Rather than merely representing the sense, linguistic articulation completes and provides material support or an anchor for the sense. In this case, linguistic articulation in signs need not be seen as contaminating the sense. Husserl can thus be interpreted as suggesting that the constitution of an ideality does not thus happen at the level of the sign but at the level of the sense which can be reactivated. But this sense requires material support in signs which are not extrinsic to the sense. At the same time, because sense has a standing apart from the linguistic articulation, the signs alone do not determine the content of the sense but collaborate with and anchor the sense.

Let us take Shakespeare's Hamlet. We can think of Shakespeare having a sense of Hamlet prior to writing it down in the English language. This sense is an ideality which he can reactivate. But this sense of Hamlet is not a clear and distinct idea which has no need for linguistic articulation. Rather the sense of Hamlet that Shakespeare has calls for linguistic articulation. Again with a complex literary object like Hamlet the sense maybe understood as what guides or leads Shakespeare towards writing Hamlet but the Hamlet as we know it is not fully present at the level of sense. It appears gradually through a complex process whereby the sense that Shakespeare entertains initially in an inchoate way which he can reactivate is anchored in signs and this anchoring helps constitute new senses which are again anchored in signs. Husserl by allowing for a stage prior to linguistic articulation thus makes room for a more sophisticated understanding of constitution of idealities whereby the ideality albeit constituted at the stage prior to linguistic articulation as an reactivatable yet inchoate sense is still in need of language but is not determined entirely by language.

absolutely their own. They have their linguistic being from an intention which traverses them as meditations. The “same” word is always “other” according to the always different intentional acts which thereby make a word significant [*signifiant*]. There is a sort of pure equivocity here, which grows in the very rhythm of a science.” (Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry*, 104) So history would simply remain static if there was no equivocity of meaning. Derrida expresses this very poignantly when he says, “...absolute univocity would itself have no other consequence than to sterilize or paralyse history in the indigence of an indefinite iteration.” (Ibid., 102)

But one wonders whether Husserl understands univocity of meaning as a simple repetition of the same. Rather as we have seen above, Husserl argues that history forges ahead by way of the development of new idealities on the basis of pre-existing ones that are gathered together under a tradition. So historical development always results in the formation of new idealities through new acts of meaning which are however built upon an edifice of pre-existing acts of meaning that have come to consolidate a tradition. If Riemann geometry can be seen as a break from the old Euclidean geometry then we can understand these two senses of geometry only on the basis of a univocal sense of geometry sustained by a tradition. There could be no history of geometry without its proponents past and present believing that they were engaged in an enterprise that carried a single sense over time. So far from paralysing history and rendering it into a sterile repetition of the same, it is the univocity of the meaning of geometrical terms that allows geometers to understand themselves as heirs to a practice to which fellow geometers in the past and present have contributed; it is also univocity that allows geometers to go beyond what their predecessors are doing by coming up with new meanings for existing

terms or developing new terms. It is in this sense that we can say that Riemann geometry belongs to the same tradition as Euclidean geometry and yet goes beyond it.<sup>135</sup>

Derrida's reading of Husserl's work ends up being far too ontological when he suggests that Husserl's phenomenological explorations are motivated by a need to make a sharp distinction between "the pure sense of historicity" and "empirical history." (Or to isolate the pure sense of historicity from the dregs of empirical history) He thus completely nullifies the methodological impetus of phenomenological reflection.<sup>136</sup> It seems that Husserl is more interested in giving us a phenomenological description of history so that the distinction between "pure historicity" and "empirical history" is a methodological one made to describe the style in which history operates. Derrida's reading seems to unnecessarily reify the terms of this distinction.

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<sup>135</sup> There is a discontinuity in geometry when Riemannian geometry is conceived. However this can be conceived as a discontinuity within geometry only if we accept a weak or minimal notion of univocity, wherein the Riemannian geometer sees himself as providing an alternative geometry and not an alternate physics or chemistry or biology. He does not, for example, see himself as the originator of a new science like psychopathology. This certainly does not mean that Riemannian geometry is reducible to Euclidean geometry or simply an iteration or repetition of Euclidean geometry. This would imply a very strong sense of univocity which is how Derrida understands it. There is I believe, nothing in Husserl that suggests that we have to accept this strong sense of univocity. By giving no space whatsoever to this weak sense of equivocity Derrida I think presents us with something of a false choice between this strong sense of univocity or equivocity. The criterion for a leap into something new would be a new development being simply unrelatable to anything that has gone by where even the weak sense of univocity does not hold. But continuity would require the strong sense of univocity. In between the two we could have situations which are neither simply continuations of the past nor leaps into something new but discontinuities like what happens between Euclidean and Riemannian geometry. And I take Husserl's account of history to include discontinuities in the sense that I have just described and continuities but not leaps into the new. And therein I guess lies the strength and weakness of his account. For Heidegger, on the contrary, history is essentially constituted by leaps.

<sup>136</sup> Burt Hopkins makes a similar point in "Husserl, Derrida and the Origin of Geometry," *Derrida and Phenomenology*, ed. William R. Mckenna and J. Claude Evans, 61-93 (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995).

### 3.2. Merleau-Ponty: Historicity as Forgetfulness

Merleau-Ponty in his lectures<sup>137</sup> on the *Origin of Geometry* sees the main thrust of Husserl's work as concerning the formation and transmission of idealities through the medium of tradition. I will focus on two of the questions Merleau-Ponty ponders: How is an ideality constituted and how are idealities handed down (*tradiert*) to succeeding generations?<sup>138</sup>

For Merleau-Ponty an ideality cannot be constituted in the confines of the subject's consciousness but it emerges only at the point where the subject communicates with other subjects as part of a linguistic community (*Sprachgemeinschaft*). There is no ideality for Merleau-Ponty even when the subject gains the competence to redo the productive act (*Erzeugung*) at will because ideality and openness to linguistic communication with the other are for Merleau-Ponty two sides of the same coin.<sup>139</sup> Both the terms are fundamentally interwoven with each other and neither can make sense without the other.

In order to understand how idealities can be handed over from one generation to another, Merleau-Ponty engages with the question of the sense of geometry that prevails undivided over the past and the present, the sense that the past has handed over to the

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<sup>137</sup> See footnote 129.

<sup>138</sup> In his lectures Merleau-Ponty also focuses on a third question: How is it that the concepts employed by Husserl in the analysis of the historicity of the sciences can be developed only from a standpoint that is opposed to the Copernican standpoint but which at the same time grounds the latter?

<sup>139</sup> "The recognition of the *Erzeugung* by the *Erzeugung* of memory is not yet a recognition of the ideal object itself precisely because it is still attached to the synthesis of subjective time." (Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits*, 23)  
 "...ideality is neither first nor second in relation with linguistic *Verstehen*, that ideality emerges in linguistic understanding, that it is not reduced to it as a positive content." (Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits*, 24)



present and that which the present has inherited from the past. For Merleau-Ponty, this implies a forgetfulness of the empirical origins of this sense. We, geometers, do not know who the first geometer was who constituted the sense of geometry as a scientific discipline by her first creative act. We are not even sure there was one. But we still know what this sense is and despite our forgetting “it had the possibility of surviving in a new different way from something which was past. It had the possibility of inhabiting all minds, of enduring without using it up, of being History.” (Merleau-Ponty. *Husserl at the Limits*, 28) The fact that geometry propagates itself from generation to generation in an anonymous sense as a set of human operations that began at no particular time in the past and which will be developed further in the present in order to arrive at a more developed science in the future is precisely for Merleau-Ponty what tradition is. “Tradition is forgetfulness of origins as empirical origins in order to be an eternal origin.” (Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits*, 29) So tradition, according to Merleau-Ponty, essentially involves forgetfulness of empirical origins with the formation of a sense that can be transmitted over time and involving no conception of an origin.

Husserl’s account, as we have laid it out, however does not seem to necessitate such a reading. It is certainly not clear whether Husserl means to say that tradition essentially involves forgetfulness. Husserl does suggest that in order to uncover the structure of traditionality one does not have to concern oneself with empirical facts involving the names of the first geometers and the dates of their achievement. Traditions can develop in the absence of any factual knowledge of the founders of the tradition and the time of its founding. But this certainly does not imply that traditions necessarily require a forgetfulness of the empirical origins of that tradition. Husserl’s account does

not seem to support the stronger claim made by Merleau-Ponty, in this regard. Let us now turn our attention to Foucault.

#### 4. Foucault's Archaeological Analyses of Historicity of the Sciences

##### 4.1. Archaeology as the Analysis of Statements

In some sense parallel to Husserl's introduction of the role of language in the formation of an ideality, Foucault sees geometry to the extent that it is a branch of science as a discursive practice. This allows him to deemphasize the role of the geometer and his activities so that mathematics, which includes geometry, becomes a very unique science possessing features not possessed by any other science. The question of the validity or invalidity of geometry as a discipline becomes secondary and the focus is on the conditions under which geometry could come to exist. Foucault attempts to reveal the rules that govern geometry as a practice. These rules are not transcendent as imposed upon geometry from the outside but immanent to the very practice of doing geometry. Foucault describes these rules by showing how the statements of geometry relate to one another and form an interconnected and interdependent set. Opposed to Husserl, this focus on statements allows him to bracket out meaning itself, bypassing the level of logical propositions and grammatical sentences.<sup>140</sup> What is revealed is the set of rules

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<sup>140</sup> In my reading, Foucault suspends meaning itself and, thus, distances himself from questions of univocity and equivocity of discourses since they concern the level of meaning. My interpretation thus differs from that of Andrew Cutrofello, who in his article "The Completeness of Foucault's Table of the Classical Episteme," *Philosophy Today* 47 (2003): 56-62, characterizes Foucault's archaeological analyses of statements as an attempt to "maximize equivocity."

that allow a discipline to exist, a dimension overlooked by the history of ideas. A statement is thus not reducible to a logical proposition or a grammatical sentence or a speech act.

#### 4.2. The Statement as a Repeatable Materiality

While explaining what statements are and how they exist, Foucault explicitly contrasts their mode of existence to that of sentences in a language and propositions of logic. If we want to know whether a group of signs is a sentence or a logical proposition, we check whether the signs are arranged in accordance to certain rules – the rules of language or logic whatever the case may be. But if we want to know whether a group of signs is a statement, we cannot confine our gaze to certain internal properties that the group of signs may possess. We must look at external properties, namely the other groups of signs – a domain of statements to which this particular group of signs may belong. The criteria for the existence of a statement include the kind of objects that the statement brings into existence, the distinctions that it brings into play and the position and status it prescribes for subjects who can articulate it. The statement is thus not a unity like a sentence or a logical proposition. For, the existence of a statement is the existence of several domains of subjects, objects and relations that it brings into play. While logical and linguistic analysis of signs is always concerned with the meaning and reference of signs and never concerned with their existence, an analysis of statements, by contrast, concerns itself only with the existence of signs and not with their meaning or reference. Statements thus are not individuals that can exist independently of one another

expressing some state of affairs. They can never be isolated. Take the theorem of Pythagoras: in one respect it can be seen as a sentence that is formulated in accordance to the rules of the grammar of the language in which it is expressed. In another respect it can also be seen as a logical proposition and analysed into its components. But the theorem of Pythagoras is also a statement and this means the following: It is correlated to a domain in which figures can have just two dimensions in a mathematical space (different from a physical space); it belongs to a domain where the veracity of the statements is governed by formal rules and not perceptual evidence; it can be uttered only by a subject who is immersed in and adept at using the technical language of geometry.

Since statements are not to be understood as isolatable autonomous entities, they cannot be described by focussing on the criteria of individuality and other such conditions of identification. To describe a statement is in fact to describe a specific mode of the existence of signs.<sup>141</sup> Such a description involves a description of the objects these

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<sup>141</sup> We must be very careful to not conflate the existence of the statement with the existence of the group of signs. A statement for Foucault is not simply a collection of signs. It is much more than that. We can understand this more clearly if we contrast the manner in which a collection of signs relates to a sentence or a proposition to the manner in which it relates to a statement. Given a collection of signs, if we can specify a set of rules according to which this collection could have been generated and other possible collections of signs could be generated, we would call that collection of signs a proposition or a sentence. In the case of the sentence such a set of rules would be called the rules of grammar and in the case of the proposition such a set of rules would be called the system of axioms. We would call the collection of signs a sentence or a proposition even if such a set of rules did not actually exist. That is to say they need not have been articulated prior to the existence of the collection of signs. This is simply not the case when it comes to the statement. A collection of signs cannot be called a statement unless there is an associated field in which the collection of signs is embedded and we could specify the relations between it and the associated field. It is only the existence of the associated field that brings the statement into existence. Were there to be a collection of signs and nothing else it is possible for the collection to be either a sentence or a proposition but it can certainly not be a statement. Hence we can say that the statement specifies the mode of existence of a collection of signs and this mode of existence varies depending upon the way the collection of signs is related to the associated field. Hence the mode of existence of the mathematical statement varies from

groups of signs bring into existence, the kind of distinctions they support, the material substance of the signs and the positions that the subject must take in order to articulate them. Every statement has a correlate which is not a group of objects but rather the principles according to which objects are differentiated. What the correlate is are the principles according to which objects can be distinguished and placed in different domains. In fact it is these principles that decide whether a logical proposition makes sense or a grammatical statement has meaning.

The sentence ‘Colourless green ideas sleep furiously’ (Chomsky’s example which Foucault makes use of) makes no sense, besides the combination of colourless and green, because the corresponding statement is correlated to a principle that distinguishes between the domain of physical objects to whom the qualities colour and sleep could apply and a domain of non-physical objects like ideas to whom those qualities do not. The sentence defining the theorem of Pythagoras makes sense because the correlate of the statement corresponding to it is a domain of two-dimensional objects belonging to a non-physical space.<sup>142</sup>

Let us summarize some of the features of the statement: It always belongs to a domain; it is always bounded by other statements; a statement is thus never isolated; the statements to which every statement is always related form the associated field to which the statement belongs. Now the relation between a statement and its associated field is

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the mode of existence of the biological statement because of the different manner in which the former and latter relate to the associated field.

<sup>142</sup> As Foucault explains:

“A statement is not confronted (fact to face, as it were) by a *correlate* – or the absence of a *correlate* – as a proposition has (or has not) a referent, or as a proper noun designates someone (or no one). It is linked rather to a ‘referential’ that is not made up of ‘things’, ‘facts’, ‘realities’, or ‘beings’, but of laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are named, designated, or described within it, and for the relations that are affirmed or denied in it.” (AK: 91)

neither one of context nor one of psychological association. This is due to the fact that this associated field is anterior to the context or the association, for it is precisely the associated field of the statement that decides what should be included in the context of a sentence or a proposition or in the psychological background of a sentence. This implies that the relationship between the statement and the statements that make up its associated field is not necessarily deductive, inductive or psychological. The statement can be related to its associated field in many ways – it can repeat what its associated field says, it can modify what it says, it can comment on it or oppose it. (AK: 98)<sup>143</sup>

Contrast this to what Husserl, Derrida and Merleau-Ponty have to say about tradition. For Husserl, tradition has a deductive structure where the past acquisitions act like a premise for the present which is at the same time the conclusion of those premises and a premise for future acquisitions. Foucault's discursive formations exhibit no such deductive structure. In contrast to Derrida, they are not governed by equivocity alone. In fact, as we can see, the statement can very well comment on other statements, even repeat them. As opposed to Merleau-Ponty, they are not dependent on psychological phenomena such as forgetfulness.

Regarding the subject who articulates the statement, it is to be noted that it is not necessarily its author. Foucault warns against the temptation to reduce the one who writes or utters the statement to the author of that statement. The subject of the statement

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<sup>143</sup> As Foucault clarifies:

“...there is no statement in general, no free, neutral, independent statement; but a statement always belongs to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements, deriving support from them and distinguishing itself from them: it is always part of a network of statements, in which it has a role, however minimal it may be, to play...There is no statement that does not presuppose others; there is no statement that is not surrounded by a field of coexistences, effects of series and succession, a distribution of functions and roles.” (AK: 99)

is not an individual but a place, a site, a position that can be occupied by any individual provided he satisfies certain requirements prescribed by the statement itself. For example, medical prescriptions can be made by an individual provided he has satisfied the institutional requirements that constitute the domain of the medical prescription. Since it is only these requirements that give him the authority to write prescriptions, the author of the statement is not the physician, but the institution of which the physician is only a representative. But the sentence “Hello! How are you?” when spoken at the beginning of a conversation can be uttered only by a subject who has learned or is learning to speak the English language. The relationship of the subject to the statement is itself a function of the statement and varies from statement to statement and cannot be reduced to the author-work relationship.

To describe a formulation qua statement does not consist in analysing the relations between the author and what he says (or wanted to say, or said without wanting to); but in determining what position can and must be occupied by any individual if he is to be the subject of it. (AK: 97-98)

While Husserl offers us a view of the subject from the first person perspective as an agent of productive activities that result in the formation of idealities, Foucault offers us a view of the subject from the third-person perspective as a parameter of the discursive practice itself.

A statement can only exist if it has a material existence. Thus the description of a statement necessarily involves a description of its materiality. However, this materiality is not simply a contingent property of the statement from which it can be divorced; it is thus not a bodily guise that a spiritual content (logical, psychological) would need in order to exist. The statement, different from a logical content or a proposition, is the matter constitutive of the statement. As Foucault says, the statement is not an ideal form

that floats free above the material plane and that could be reactivated ad infinitum. Still this does not mean that the statement is an event that happens only once never to be repeated again. The statement can be repeated but under strict conditions. It has what Foucault calls a “repeatable materiality.” (AK: 109) So the materiality of a statement cannot be understood as a material substratum, which embodies the statement and makes it occupy a definite space and come into being at a certain point in time. It is not its spatiotemporal co-ordinates. It is rather the institution that determines its status as an object. For example, if the statement is published in a book, it is the institution of publishing that determines its status as a book. And the sentence repeated in all the copies of a single book constitutes the same statement despite its multiple instances.<sup>144</sup> Different from an event, a statement can be repeated, but different from Husserl’s ideal object it cannot be reactivated, but only repeated under strict conditions.

#### 4.3. Historicity as the Succession of Statements: Understanding Geometry as a Discursive Formation

By introducing this notion of the statement Foucault avails himself of a new avenue of description that allows him to analyse historically bodies of knowledge like mathematics, economics, biology etc. as discursive formations. In contrast to Husserl for whom the objects of a tradition are necessarily ideal and produced once and for all, for Foucault the statements of a discourse are not necessarily produced once and for all. They have strict conditions of repeatability that can be discovered when we analyse these

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<sup>144</sup> Let us note that the statement need not be spoken or written. It need not belong to a natural language at all. Even the raising of an index finger or a gesture of one’s hands would constitute a statement if it satisfied the conditions prescribed above. (AK: 112)



disciplines as discursive practices. Foucault's attempt is not to radically revise the very idea of the transcendental and give us a new form of transcendental philosophy like Edmund Husserl nor is it a simply retreat into the cosy confines of the empirical. His approach is not transcendental because he is not interested in finding the conditions for possibility for the validity of our knowledge but neither is it merely empirical because the statement level does not take for granted the simple correspondence between words and things and so the concepts he discovers at this level such as life, labour and language are not mere generalizations from concrete facts.

In the case of geometry, as a discursive practice, it is the set of rules by which the series of geometric statements are generated. To treat geometry as a discursive practice is to focus upon the statements of geometry and describe the rules according to which statements succeed one another and form a series, which Foucault calls their "principle of dispersion and redistribution." (AK: 107) One will then find that the statements of geometry "belong to a single system of formation" (Ibid.). The discursive practice is the law of such a series.<sup>145</sup> When we perform a discursive analysis of geometry, we are thus interested in the rules according to which geometric discourse can give rise to a set of distinctions that would help us distinguish between different objects, determine the different positions from which individuals can make geometric sentences, establish the

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<sup>145</sup> We must however note that discursive analysis is certainly only one of the ways of analysing verbal performances but certainly not the only way. Although Foucault is keen to distance himself from any characterization of discursive practices as a foundation of logical and grammatical meaning, it is hard to see logical and grammatical meaning as not dependent in some way upon discursive practices. Of course we can agree with him that discursive practices do not contain the ultimate meaning of logic and language. Linguistic and logical analysis is perfectly meaningful even if one never does an archaeology of discourse. So discursive practices are not foundational in a meaning-giving sense but they do seem to be foundational in an existential sense. As he admits logical and grammatical analysis depend upon the existence of statements or what he calls an "enunciative datum." (AK: 111)

ways in which statements can relate to each other to form concepts and strategies. To repeat, to describe a discursive formation is not to describe a totality centred on an object, a concept or an author, but rather to try to discover the rules according to which objects succeed one another, concepts succeed one another and how the qualifications required for uttering or writing a particular sentence or proposition undergo transformation.

#### 4.4. Foucault's Novel Account of the Relationship between Knowledge and Science

Because inference and deductive rules of logic as well as the syntax of language bear upon the meaning of discourse, they cannot govern the succession of discursive objects, concepts and qualifications when they are envisaged in their material existence. Foucault defines knowledge (*savoir*) as a discursive formation. Foucault has thereby provided us with a characterization of knowledge that does not rely on terms involving individual human subjectivity such as consciousness, belief, desire etc. He thus distinguishes between knowledge as *savoir* and knowledge as *connaissance*. While *connaissance* is always an accomplishment on the part of the subject and specifies how the subject can know an object, *savoir*, on the other hand, is not an accomplishment of the subject but provides the conditions for the subject and the object to separate themselves and emerge in the first place. Knowledge (*savoir*) is the epistemological field which is characterised through and through by discourse. It is the field in which objects, subjects and the manifold relationships between objects and subjects emerge. It is only within such a field that knowledge as justified true belief can emerge. Knowledge understood as *savoir* is not synonymous with truth. In fact *savoir* includes truth and

falsity. But to say that *savoir* includes truth and falsity is not to say that true and false statements persist side by side and are equally valid. We must be clear here that Foucault is concerned only with the existence of knowledge and not with its validity. With Foucault, any attempt to account for the existence and the validity of knowledge in the same gesture as transcendental and the empirical philosophy have valiantly striven for, is given up. What Foucault is trying to ask why at a certain time certain statements are accepted as serious candidates of knowledge and why certain statements are considered absurd and not worth taking seriously. While statements in the works of Darwin and Lamarck can be considered serious candidates for biological knowledge, the statements of the Renaissance figure Aldrovandi does not make the cut when it comes to biological knowledge. Aldrovandi does not have the honour of being false, his pronouncements merit no serious consideration. Foucault's inquiry thus concerns the factors that determine what is taken as a serious candidate of knowledge and what is not. What Foucault's archaeological works attempt to sketch are precisely these factors and what he opens up is a new avenue of description that uncovers the changes that occur at the level of discourse which result in the emergence of new objects of knowledge and new subjects capable of that kind of knowledge. The epistemological field or positivity is never static but prone to drastic transformations or ruptures or mutations. It is these transformations and the rules that they obey that Foucault is attempting to describe.<sup>146</sup> In fact the

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<sup>146</sup> In this regard see Barry Allen, "Foucault's Theory of Knowledge," Foucault and Philosophy, 143-161 (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) who analyses Foucault's concept of knowledge as presented in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Allen focuses mainly on the chapter six of this book titled "Science and Knowledge." Allen makes two claims in his essay. First, he writes that Foucault's characterization of knowledge is completely logocentric in that he does not acknowledge that knowledge can be non-propositional. "There is no place for knowing (*connaissance*) that cannot be summed up in a statement, no knowledge that isn't a proposition taken for true (or the rules that generate it). Hence there is

distinction between valid and invalid knowledge can be made only within such an epistemological field. Sciences can emerge only through transformations within this epistemological field. A science is formed when a set of statements coalesce under a specific law of construction. Science is now a specific transformation within the

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no “knowledge” in an engineering diagram, a bridge, an aircraft, a surgical operation, or a musical performance.” (Allen, “Foucault’s Theory of Knowledge,” 146) In response one will have to say that Foucault does acknowledge that statements need not be composed of words. Foucault acknowledges that “a graph, a growth curve, an age pyramid, a distribution cloud are all statements” (AK: 82) and these are certainly not made up of words. So it is easy to see him accepting an engineering diagram and the rest as a statement and hence as knowledge. As we have already noted, Foucault also includes gestures such as that “a brusque gesture of the index finger of designation” (Ibid. 112) in the domain of statements. Allen writes that Foucault’s characterization of knowledge makes it something entirely arbitrary. “What is or is not knowledge is as arbitrary as the color of a banknote or the sound of the word.” (Allen, “Foucault’s Theory of Knowledge,” 145). Further in the same article we find: “That I can speak and have my statement carry the day, accepted as knowledge, as the truth, is not the testimony to my epistemic virtue. It is sheer historical contingency, as improbable and arbitrary as the price of pearls in Babylon.” (Ibid. 146) Foucault’s characterization of knowledge as *savoir* is certainly not arbitrary in the sense that I could simply declare what I utter right now to be the truth or declare that Newton’s Laws of Motion are false and render them false that way. Knowledge does not succumb to the whims and fancies of the individual knower. However, what Foucault does attempt to defend is the claim that it is impossible for the knowing subject to define once and for all the criteria for what makes something true and what makes something false. For Foucault these criteria cannot be rendered transparent to the individual subject. For Foucault, the constitution of knowledge is ultimately based on factors that go beyond the consciousness of individual knowers and cannot be reduced to elements within the sphere of consciousness whether transcendental or empirical. It is these non- anthropological factors that Foucault is interested in describing using his archaeological analysis. The conditions for the constitution of branches of knowledge like biology, economics and linguistics were not completely transparent to the individual biologists, economists and linguists. It is not that the subject has no role to play at all in the constitution of knowledge but at the same time the subject can never be absolutely transparent to the myriad conditions that have to come together in order to constitute a particular branch of knowledge. This does not preclude the individual knowing subject from making local distinctions between true and false propositions in relation to a knowledge (*connaissance*) of specific objects in fields such as linguistics or economics or psychopathology and justify them as well. But this presupposes the existence of an epistemological field of statements which enables him to make these distinctions, provide these justifications. This epistemological field defines his initiative as it were but its order and configuration is never fully transparent to the knower.

discursive formation.<sup>147</sup> It does not include all the statements of the discursive formation and does not render as invalid and erroneous those statements of the discursive formation that it does not include. Even more striking: discursive formations do not exhibit an overarching rational order and hence they cannot be seen as expressions or products of a universal reason.<sup>148</sup>

What the analysis of discursive practices does is to open up a new line of attack by revealing to us this existential dimension of scientific disciplines. When we focus on statements, we have in view a dimension that is not co-extensive with the scientific disciplines but constitutes the field of objects, distinctions, concepts, strategies and positions for the subject in which they are formed, transformed and play a role.

Archaeology tries to understand the relationship between science and the field knowledge in which it is formed. And depending upon the discursive formation this relationship between science and knowledge varies. So knowledge as a discursive formation is no longer confined to the boundaries of a science. Every discursive formation, Foucault observes, can undergo four kinds of transformation each of which is marked by a corresponding threshold. They are the threshold of positivity, epistemologization, scientificity and formalization. The first threshold is the threshold of

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<sup>147</sup> It is significant to note here that this new understanding of the relationship between science and knowledge challenges the traditional belief that science produces knowledge and it produces it in its purest form. Rather within Foucault's archaeological framework science is simply a transformation within the already existing field of knowledge.

<sup>148</sup> As Foucault explains:

“[Discursive formations] form the pre-condition of what is later revealed and which later functions as an item of knowledge or an illusion, an accepted truth or an exposed error, a definitive acquisition or an obstacle surmounted. This precondition may not, of course, be analysed as a *donnée*, a lived experience, still implicated in the imagination or in perception, which mankind in the course of history took up again in the form of rationality, or which each individual must undergo on his account if he wishes to rediscover the ideal meanings that are contained or concealed within it.” (AK: 182)

positivity and it is the emergence in a discursive formation of a development whereby a single system is put into play for the emergence of several statements. The second threshold is called the threshold of epistemologization. It is crossed when a few statements become the criteria of success for all the other statements within the same discursive formation. This happens when these statements acquire the role of a “model, a critique, or a verification” (AK: 186-87) of knowledge (*savoir*) within the discursive formation. The third threshold is called the threshold of scientificity. This is crossed when the statements of the discursive formation are not subject just to the archaeological rules of the discursive practice but also to “certain laws for the construction of propositions” (Foucault: 187). The last threshold, the threshold of formalization is crossed when the science achieves the capacity to develop an axiomatic structure by which it can take some propositions as its starting point and show how other propositions can be developed out of them. At this point the particular science is able to elucidate the kind of propositions and the kind of transformations that these propositions can legitimately be subjected to. Foucault notes that the temporal span between these thresholds is not fixed like the seasons of the year. Sciences do not cross these thresholds at the same point in time. It is also not necessary for these thresholds to be distinct from one another. They can coincide so that a discursive practice could cross two or three or all of the thresholds at the same time. Thus the sciences, far from having a fixed form of development which could be seen as the manifestation of an overarching rationality, each have their own unique form of development. Every science has its own unique form of historicity, which cannot be conflated with others and which can be revealed by archaeology.

#### 4.5. The Archaeological Uniqueness of Mathematics

This brings us back to the question of geometry. Archaeologically speaking, mathematics (which for Husserl and Foucault includes geometry) is the most unique of all the sciences and not easily amenable to historical analysis. This is because mathematics crosses the thresholds of positivity, epistemologization, scientificity and formalization all at once at its very origin. And so in mathematics the origin acts as a starting point as well as the foundation of mathematics. We have at the very origin of mathematics, the formation of an ideality which can be endlessly repeated and progressively built upon.<sup>149</sup>

With regard to mathematics, we can see Foucault's archaeological account converges with that of Husserl's phenomenological one. Foucault's account in granting the existence of idealities in mathematics goes against that of Derrida which is against postulating the existence of anything like an ideality.

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<sup>149</sup> It is instructive to see Foucault's remark on this subject: "The very possibility of its [mathematics'] existence implied that which, in all other sciences remains dispersed throughout history, should be given at the outset: its original positivity was to constitute an already formalized discursive practice (even if other formalizations were to be used later)...hence the fact that in the first gesture of the first mathematician one saw the constitution of an ideality that has been deployed throughout history, and has been questioned only to be repeated and purified; hence the fact that the beginning of mathematics is questioned not so much as a historical event as for its validity as a principle of history..." (AK: 188-189)

## 5. Conclusion: The Meta-Scientific Approaches of Husserl and Foucault and their Epistemological Implications

Let us now sum up the results of our exposition by contrasting the methodologies that Husserl and Foucault resort to in their respective descriptions of the historicity of the sciences. I will start with some preliminary observations on the basis of the above exposition and then explore their implications more deeply.

What is striking is that both the phenomenologist and the archaeologist take a meta-scientific standpoint by reflecting on what scientists do, but from two opposite and maybe irreconcilable perspectives: Husserl's analyses are conducted from the meta-scientific standpoint, analogous in part to a historian of science, but with this crucial difference that the phenomenologist, although at the meta-scientific level, still claims to take a first person perspective by putting himself in the position of the scientist at the moment this scientist thinks as a scientist. By contrast the archaeologist, although taking a similar meta-scientific standpoint, analogous to the historian of science, adopts a third person perspective: it is different from the phenomenologist, because the archaeologist does not want to find out what the scientist under investigation thinks or thought and it is also different from the historian of science, because the historian wants to know how ideas gave rise to other ideas. Taking his leave of questions of meaning the archaeologist focuses on the conditions of possibility for particular views to be held at the times they were held, regardless of what scientists may know about these conditions of possibility (phenomenology), but also regardless of the questions of precedence, antecedence, and even validity of these ideas (history of science). Let me explain.



In the case of phenomenology it is a meta-scientific standpoint, but a first person account (or it is the first person perspective of the historicity of the sciences, which turns a science into a living link in a process of traditionalization). In fact the very first sentence of Husserl's essay shows this to be the case. He remarks that the reflections in which he is going to indulge did not occur to Galileo. They should have occurred to him but they did not and if they had occurred to him, we would not be facing this crisis of meaning in the sciences. Husserl's question is as follows: What is it for a scientist to be a scientist? And this can be answered only if we can find what it means for a scientist to be doing science. Husserl's answer as we have seen is that for a scientist to be doing science is to be immersed in the tradition of the sciences which is a reserve of idealities that are transmitted from generation to generation so that the next generation can improve upon the successes of the previous generation. According to Husserl the question of the historicity of the sciences can be meaningfully asked only from the standpoint of the scientist to whose consciousness science is given as an object. We see him analyse science as a tradition which moves forward and yet remains the same. The scientist is conscious he is a part of this tradition and knows himself to be contributing to its progress. In this regard, Husserl starts out his analysis by inquiring into the origin and the development of geometric idealities which would act as a model for understanding the way scientific traditions develop.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> This is a crucial point that we cannot overlook. Husserl is resorting to a meta-scientific first person perspective. So we should try not to conflate this perspective with a third person perspective because it is only from the third person perspective that questions concerning the kind of productive processes occurring in the psyche of the first geometer make sense. So we cannot justifiably demand that Husserl provide an answer to these questions in the analyses he sets himself to conduct. Alfons Grieder, for instance, concludes that Husserl commits himself to the idea that the first geometer intuits the first concepts of geometry. From what we read in *the Origin of Geometry*, I think there is no reason why he must commit himself to

With regard to Foucault his analyses are directed not towards the meaning of a science but towards the existence of the sciences. That is the reason why his analyses are conducted from the third person perspective of someone who is not actually doing the science. Foucault is interested in finding out how science comes to be, how it functions and what kind of transformations it undergoes over time. In order to do this Foucault uncovers a new perspective – that of the archaeologist. In fact the bulk of the work in his *Archaeology* is devoted to showing the plausibility of such a perspective. From the standpoint of the archaeologist, looking at the sciences from the perspective of the science is not going to give us an accurate account of the historicity of the science. The reason for this is that by inquiring into how science is given to the consciousness of the scientist, we overlook those aspects of a science that escape his consciousness; we can only account for these aspects if we treat the sciences as discursive practices. The archaeologist thus occupies a unique position: on the one hand, he is not a participant in the science investigated, different from the phenomenologist, and on the other hand, he is not an observer contemporaneous to what he describes, like a historian of science is, who tries to make alive again how new ideas arose on the basis of old ones and helped in preparing transformations. By contrast with the contemporaneous spectator (the historian of science), the archaeologist is rather a trans-temporal spectator. Trans-temporal because, different from the phenomenologist, he does not re-enact the same acts as those under investigation and thus does not share the same re-created “temporal” intentional

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such a position. Within the scope of his analyses, the productive moment (*Erzeugung*) that Husserl refers need not be characterized as invention or intuition. All Husserl is doing is acknowledging the presence of something new being introduced into history with the advent of geometry for which the original activity of a human being - first geometer - has to be responsible and whose activities were emulated by other individuals and they continue to be emulated to this day.

framework; and, different from the historian of sciences, he is not interested in how the inner temporal framework under investigation is linked to what preceded or followed. Freed from issues of meanings, the archaeologist is also freed from the temporal framework of these meanings and can reject the phenomenological non-participating spectator for a radically a-intentional position: the indifferent spectator. In his analysis geometry comes to occupy a unique position among the sciences. It is an exception that proves the rule so to speak.

To elaborate upon the above point even further, Husserl does make a distinction between descriptive sciences and a deductive science like geometry. In the case of the descriptive sciences evidence is grounded in sense-intuition. So a new proposition in such a science would have to be made evident through sense-intuition. But in geometry and its fellow mathematical sciences, Husserl tells us, this is not the case. Here the proposition can be made evident not by taking recourse to sense-intuition but by reactivating all the idealities upon which the new proposition is grounded. This is because idealities are constituted by an original act on the part of the geometer and this act can be redone ad-infinitum. So idealities expressed by geometric propositions can be made self-evident only by redoing the act contained in these idealities in a chain right down to the very first ideality.

But despite the different modes of arriving at self-evidence, namely, sense-intuition and reactivation, Husserl still does not see any fundamental difference in the structure of historicity of these two types of sciences. The reason for this is that for Husserl every science, be it descriptive or deductive, has a meaning that has to be constituted by human activity. To uncover this meaning is to uncover the style in which

sciences develop historically. This style is the process of traditionalization, which is a continuous and constant building upon the achievements of the past. Thus the development of all the sciences exhibits an overarching rationality.<sup>151</sup>

To this Foucault does not respond that the historicity of the sciences is irrational and random, but he shows that a science manifests an adherence to certain rules which can be brought to the light of day. With regard to the historicity of the sciences, he also shows that it is not a continuous process, except for mathematics. His aim as an archaeologist of knowledge is to reveal the sudden transformations that punctuate the development of the sciences and the rules that these transformations obey. Foucault does make a distinction between the pure sciences like physics and mathematics and the impure sciences like medicine, psychiatry, linguistics, biology and economics. Instead of being a model for the historicity of science in general, mathematics becomes a unique case whose uniqueness must be accounted for. The account Foucault gives of mathematics relies upon its formal nature. In the case of Husserl, we saw that he wants to move away from a formal account of geometry based on logical explication and instead reveal its truth meaning by tying it to the act of the geometer performing idealizations. But for Foucault, it is because mathematics is a formal science at its very origin that it can form a domain of its own and hermetically seal itself off from external

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<sup>151</sup> “If one thinks over our expositions...what they make obvious is precisely that what we know – namely, that the presently vital cultural configuration “geometry” is a tradition and is still being handed down...[To] understand geometry or any given cultural fact is to be conscious of its historicity, albeit “implicitly.” This, however, is not an empty claim; for quite generally, it is true for every fact given under the heading of “culture,” whether it is a matter of the lowliest culture of necessities or the highest culture (science, state, church, economic organization, etc.), that every straightforward understanding of it as an experiential fact involves the “coconsciousness” that it is something constructed through human activity. No matter how hidden, no matter how merely “implicitly” coimplied this meaning is, there belongs to it the self-evident possibility of explication, of “making it explicit” and clarifying it.” (OG: 370)

influences and simply keep working on its past results and developing new results. And in doing so remains unaffected by the discursive practice of which it is part. It has no need to play a role in this surrounding world to which it belongs.<sup>152</sup>

Archaeology has been mainly seen to be in conflict with phenomenology. Foucault's own remark to the effect that with archaeology he aims to free history from the clutches of phenomenology is seen as a confirmation of this claim. But is his remark really a testimony of the conflict between phenomenology and archaeology rendering the two enterprises mutually exclusive? Can we not take Foucault's remark to mean that archaeology brings in a perspective on history that challenges phenomenology's claims to provide an exclusive account of history? As we have seen above, when we consider the positions occupied by the subject of phenomenology and archaeology, we find that they approach history from two opposing and seemingly irreconcilable perspectives – the meta-scientific first person of the scientist and the meta-scientific third person perspective of a trans-temporal spectator. But when we consider the object of these two enterprises we find that while phenomenology has its proper object in the present, archaeology has its proper object in the past. Seen in this manner they can be seen as providing complementary rather than mutually exclusive accounts of the historicity of the sciences. Let me recapitulate my argument.

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<sup>152</sup> “What it [mathematics] possesses at a given moment (its domain, its methods, the objects that it defines, the language that it employs) is never thrown back into the external field of non-scientificity, but is constantly undergoing redefinition (if only as an area that has fallen into disuse or temporary sterility) in the formal structure that mathematics constitutes; this past is revealed as a particular case, a naïve model, a partial and insufficiently generalized sketch, of a more abstract, or more powerful theory, or one existing at a higher level; mathematics retranscribes its real historical trajectory into the vocabulary of vicinities, dependences, subordinations, progressive formalizations, and self-enveloping generalities.” (AK: 189)

Archaeology aims to understand the historicity of the sciences by analysing disciplines at their statement level and putting out of play the dimension of meaning and validity. It seems that this exercise is a lot easier for the distant past and becomes increasingly difficult as we approach the present.<sup>153</sup>

Phenomenology does not have this problem. It tries to understand historicity as traditionalization by analysing the development of a science as an intentional object that can be given to consciousness. Phenomenology therefore starts out with the present because it is only the present that is directly given to consciousness. The past can then only give itself indirectly to consciousness by way of the present.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> See Michel Foucault, "On the Ways of Writing History," *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, 293 (New York: The New Press, 1998) where Foucault himself acknowledges this in the following long remark:

"I can, in fact, define the Classical age in its particular configuration by the twofold difference that contrasts it with the sixteenth century, on the one hand, with the nineteenth century, on the other. But I can define the modern age in its singularity only by contrasting it with the seventeenth century, on the one hand, and with us, on the other hand; so, in order to effect this transition, it is necessary to bring out in all our statements the difference that separates us from it. It is a matter of pulling oneself free of that modern age which begins around 1790 to 1810 and goes up to about 1950, whereas for the Classical age it's only a matter of describing it... Through gentle digging one can uncover the old latent configurations, but when it comes to determining the system of discourse on the basis of which we still live, as soon as we are obliged to question the words that still resonate in our ears, that are mingled with those we are trying to speak, then archaeology, like Nietzschean philosophy, is forced to work with hammer blows."

<sup>154</sup> "What is historically primary in itself is our present. We always already know of our present world and that we live in it, always surrounded by an openly endless horizon of unknown actualities. This knowing, as horizon-certainty, is not something learned, not knowledge which was once actual and has merely sunk back to become part of the background; the horizon-certainty had to be already there in order to be capable of being laid out thematically; it is already presupposed in order that we can seek to know what we do not know. All not-knowing concerns the unknown world, which yet exists in advance for us as world, as the horizon of all questions of the present and thus also all questions which are specifically historical. Do we not know further... that this historical present has its historical pasts behind it, that it has developed out of them, that historical past is a continuity of pasts which proceed from one another, each, as a past present, being a tradition producing tradition out of itself?" (OG: 373-74)

We can thus say that phenomenology is incapable of understanding the past in its own terms and archaeology is incapable of understanding the present in its own terms. This is because, as we have already seen, phenomenology tries to understand the past only in terms of the present by showing the similarities in the way the past and the present are structured. And archaeology tries to understand the present only in terms of the past by distinguishing it from the past. Since the phenomenologist gives precedence to the present he is able to illuminate what is available to the practitioner of a scientific discipline taken as a historical subject. The archaeologist, on the other hand, since he gives precedence to the past is able to illuminate what eludes the practitioner of a scientific discipline by taking the latter as a historical object.

And so without taking any sides on the question of whether it is archaeology or phenomenology that provides a better account of the historicity of the sciences, we can take the time to appreciate the difficult nature of the problem posed by this issue, namely, accounting for the objects of scientific knowledge in their transmission through time. In trying to provide an answer to this question, both Husserl and Foucault are compelled to answer the question concerning the nature of idealities and their role in the constitution and transmission of scientific knowledge. Indeed, we can see Husserl's notion of ideal object and Foucault's notion of the statement as a repeatable materiality as sophisticated responses to the question of the nature of idealities. It is clear that neither Husserl nor Foucault would be content with a Platonic account of idealities because both of them take the historical aspect of the sciences and thereby scientific knowledge seriously. Now, Husserl's phenomenological approach sees mathematics as the exemplar of all the sciences and scientific knowledge as a conscious act on the part of the scientist.

However, Foucault's archaeological approach sees mathematics as the exception among the sciences and provides us a fascinating account of knowledge as a discursive formation that is independent of the sciences but on which the sciences depend for their very existence. Moreover, in Foucault, knowledge is, contra Husserl, not a conscious act. His account of knowledge shows no reliance on the structures of human subjectivity. According to his account, there is in knowledge a stratum that cannot be explained solely on the basis of individual human consciousness. What this contrast between Foucault and Husserl shows us is that any attempt to take seriously the historicity of the sciences has radical implications for our understanding of the very objects of knowledge. These attempts, as is evident in Foucault's archaeological analyses have the potential to shake the very foundations of epistemology by allowing for questions that exceed the traditional framework for discussing epistemological matters.



## Conclusion

Epistemology starts out with the separation between subject and object and then tries to ask how the subject can know the object. In order to answer this question it investigates conditions that must be fulfilled in order for the subject to be able to have true beliefs or true ideas about the object. The whole debate sparked by Edmund Gettier's problem is an attempt to specify the conditions that must be fulfilled in order to warrant a claim to knowledge. So we see that epistemology, on the one hand, has concerned itself with formal questions such as the formulation of beliefs into propositions, the validity of these propositional forms and the types of necessary relationships between these propositional forms. It has, on the other hand, concerned itself with material questions encompassing both factual and normative concerns that range from the psychological and other causal mechanisms that give rise to beliefs or ideas about things and the nature of memory to the criteria necessary for justifying a certain belief or idea in order for it to yield knowledge and other related issues. We have also seen constant attempts to augment the shortcomings of a purely causal theory of knowledge by complementing it with accounts of a priori knowledge and also the acknowledgement of other kinds of knowledge which are not strictly speaking propositional such as practical knowledge (knowing how) and knowledge by acquaintance.<sup>155</sup> Epistemology in this systematic guise thus situates itself within the advances in formal logic, psychology, biology, anthropology and more broadly the physical and mathematical sciences. Despite questions concerning the causal account of

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<sup>155</sup> See Sven Bernecker, Fred Dretske, Introduction to *Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

knowledge, knowledge is in the final analysis a specific kind of idea or a belief in the mind of the knower. It is simply a question of understanding how this idea or belief is formed, what distinguishes it from other ideas and beliefs and what is included in this idea or belief. Ideas or beliefs become the fundamental medium of thought and knowledge is a continuous process of arriving at true ideas or true beliefs of the object. This history of knowledge thus exhibits a fundamental continuity in the way it progresses smoothly towards true beliefs about objects. In the words of Wilfred Sellars:

For empirical knowledge, like its sophisticated extension, science, is rational, not because it has a *foundation* but because it is a self-correcting enterprise which can put *any* claim in jeopardy, though not all at once.<sup>156</sup>

To elaborate upon this even further, the conditions for the acquisition of knowledge are of the normative type or the naturalistic type. The normative factors concern the criteria or norms according to which the individual subject is able to discriminate between true and false beliefs. These criteria cannot vary from individual to individual and they must be specified universally. On the one hand, attempts have been made to understand these criteria in terms of certain capacities or virtues that the subject possesses to make it capable of acquiring knowledge as we see in virtue epistemology. On the other hand, we have naturalistic criteria that concern the physical processes that allow the subject to know the object. These factors ultimately concern the object's capacity to affect the sensory apparatus of the subject in very specific ways. But given the immense difficulty involved in specifying universal criteria for distinguishing true from false belief there have also been attempts to naturalize epistemology doing away with the normative factors altogether and reducing them to naturalistic factors. But all the various problems

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<sup>156</sup> Wilfred Sellars, "Does Empirical Knowledge have a Foundation" in Bernecker, Dretske *Knowledge*, 265

associated with these approaches can be said to stem from the fact that they start unquestioningly with what appears intuitively obvious, the subject-object distinction and try to specify how this gap can be bridged.

Different from this approach, Heidegger and Foucault do not start with this separation between subject and object. They investigate the conditions that give rise to this distinction in the first place. They are not merely concerned with how knowledge can be validated on the part of the subject but more importantly how subjects and objects can come to exist. In so doing they show how the subject and the object are parameters of a more dynamic process. In Heidegger this dynamic process is the history of Being (*Seynsgeschichte*) and in Foucault it is the archaeological history of discursive formations. Far from rejecting the distinction between subject and object, what they set out to do is to show the complex nature of this relationship. Both thinkers argue in their own way that to focus on the relation between subject and object at the level of ideas alone is not enough and provides a misleading picture of the rather complex and messy relationship between thought and being. Their respective philosophical projects can be interpreted among other things as an attempt to uncover and describe as faithfully as possible this complex and messy relationship between subject and object. In both thinkers ideation is displaced from its pedestal as the fundamental way of understanding the relationship between thought and being. With the very relationship between thought and being becoming so complex and so messy, one cannot take consolation in a smooth linear progression towards the most comprehensive knowledge of reality. The history of thought exhibits ruptures with one system of thought giving way to another or one beginning making place for another beginning.

What we find in Heidegger and Foucault are thus new avenues of description and they uncover factors that are neither completely normative nor completely naturalistic but which are necessary for the existence of something like knowledge. These factors that are pre-subjective and pre-objective describe the space in which subject and object emerge and acquire their distinctive identities. In chapters one and two we saw precisely Heidegger's attempt to give us a pre-subjective account of thought. Pre-subjectively speaking thought is active and not merely a passive reception of representations to form ideas and beliefs and it is directed towards Being which is not merely an individual object but a whole out of which individual objects and subjects emerge. Thought does not relate first and foremost to an individual but to a whole. What are primary for Heidegger are thus not the subject and its individual beliefs and the individual object but thought understood pre-subjectively and the whole, what Heidegger calls being, to which thought directs itself. Similarly, knowledge does not start with the familiarity with an individual object. But knowledge pre-supposes a familiarity with a whole and it is only on the basis of this familiarity with the whole that knowledge of individual objects which is what empirical knowledge consists of is possible. This relationship between pre-subjective thought and being cannot be understood using a causal model and cannot be understood psychologically. It is a complex relationship and very dynamic and the whole of the *Beiträge* and the later essays are devoted to understanding this relationship. Knowledge is thus not acquired in a vacuum. It is, according to Heidegger, always already conditioned by this relationship between thought understood in this pre-subjective sense and being understood as whole. This relationship defines a metaphysical field which makes possible any knowledge of individual objects. Depending upon the

transformations in this relationship, there are transformations in the very character of knowledge as we saw Heidegger illustrate when he distinguished the Greek, medieval and modern sciences from each other. These transformations are not smooth transitions towards a more perfect knowledge of reality but rather radical shifts in which knowledge acquires a wholly different character. Thus the conclusion of chapter three that knowledge has to be understood not just as an act but also as a metaphysical event in the history of being.

In Foucault we find a similar attempt to understand the conditions under which the subject and the object emerge as distinct entities. Foucault resorts to an analysis of discursive formations in order to accomplish his goal. Thought is not analyzed as the mental act of an individual such as a scientist. As we saw in chapter four, Foucault is rather concerned with what he calls thought understood as a discursive formation. This thought is again pre-subjective because it is this discursive formation that makes possible the manifold relationships between the individual subject and the individual object. Foucault's analysis cuts across the distinction between the individual subject and object and tries to describe precisely what is involved in the formation of subjectivity, objectivity and the relationship between subject and object. The relationship between the subject and object is thus no longer just psychological or causal. It is also discursive. These discursive relationships are again very complex and dynamic and cannot be exhausted by analyzing the relationship between the subject and object solely at the level of ideas or beliefs. Knowledge thus cannot be understood simply as a solitary mental act on the part of the individual subject. As we saw in chapter five, knowledge has to be understood as a field within which the sciences can emerge, that is to say, within which

relationships between a scientist and his object can emerge. And this as we saw had serious implications for the question of the ideality of scientific knowledge.

We must be clear that neither Heidegger nor Foucault considers himself to be an epistemologist and both thinkers are suspicious of traditional epistemology. However, what their respective frameworks allow us to do is to broaden our conception of knowledge and the knowing subject by attempting to articulate a broader conception of thinking that goes beyond conceptual thinking. We are, as a result, able to do greater justice, it seems, to an aspect of thought and knowledge that has been traditionally ignored in any discussions concerning epistemology. This is the historical dimension of thought and knowledge. Both Heidegger and Foucault make the historicity of thought and knowledge a part of their very essence allowing for the establishment of a theory of knowledge which is broader than epistemology and so not confined solely to the advances of logic, psychology and anthropology.

If traditional epistemology that takes its beginnings from the empirical tradition can be characterized as an epistemology of continuities what we find in these philosophers is a move towards a new epistemology of ruptures. On the surface these two approaches to epistemology appear irreconcilable in every way. But one must also realize that ruptures presuppose some kind of continuity otherwise it would be impossible to recognize them in the first place. But what Heidegger and Foucault have shown is that it is not possible to understand continuity as smooth teleological progression of ideas. In so doing, they challenge some of our most fundamental claims regarding the acquisition and progress of knowledge. Instead of seeing their efforts simply as an attempt to dissolve and destroy traditional epistemology, we should see it as an attempt to deepen

and broaden the scope of its inquiry to include those aspects that epistemology has traditionally overlooked. This dissertation is thus part of a bigger project of developing a theoretical framework different from that out which the contemporary theories of knowledge emerge. For, the latter simply overlooks the historicity of knowledge and reduces knowledge to the acts of an individual subject. This dissertation has established the first step of showing how the philosophical programs of Heidegger and Foucault have very serious implications for a theory of knowledge. The second step would then be to systematize these implications and provide a coherent alternative framework for a theory of knowledge that harmonizes the deepest insights of traditional epistemology and those of Heidegger and Foucault.

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