

Protocol, Graduate Seminar - Heidegger, *Being and Time***Class Session: 1 - Date: August 25, 2008****Minute taker: Christian Lotz****Topic: Introduction to the seminar and discussion of *Being and Time*, §§1-4**

Introduction

The class session began with general remarks about the seminar and introductory remarks on Heidegger. Lotz clarified that Heidegger's language and untypical use of language and German words can be justified if we take into account that Heidegger stands firmly within a tradition (mostly German) that connects philosophy and metaphysics to *where it originates* (geography, nation, people, tradition, etc.),¹ thereby taking language to be a decisive phenomenon. According to Heidegger, which becomes clear in *BT*, §35, language as a system is to be differentiated from *speaking* and, as Heidegger makes clear over and over again, the *logos* is primarily located in a pre-logical concept of language. Accordingly, the language *in which* philosophy is spoken plays a primary role and is (though only subtly) connected to a political-historical horizon. As an example, Lotz pointed to *BT*, 63 where Heidegger compares himself with Aristotle and Parmenides, both of whom "imposed" their own language on the Greeks (i.e. Heidegger "imposes" his language on the Germans).²

Literature

The lecture courses Heidegger gave at the University of Marburg between 1923 and 1928 (now published in his *Gesamtausgabe*), as well as some of the shorter writings before and after *BT*, are the most interesting in terms of their influence on and relationship to *BT*: [1] *before BT*: Wilhelm Dilthey's *Struggle for a Worldview* (1925), *The Concept of Time* (1925), *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle* (1922), *Phenomenology and Theology* (1927); [2] *after BT*: *The Essence of Ground* (1928), *What is Metaphysics* (1930), *The Essence of Truth* (1928); [3] *Lecture Courses*: on Aristotle (1924), on Kant's First Critique (1927), on Fichte (1928), *Introduction to Philosophy* (1928), *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1924), *History of the Concept of Time* (1925), *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1927, contains an important debate with E. Cassirer), *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (1928, partly on Leibniz).³ Secondary literature for this seminar: Dreyfus (ed.), *Heidegger. A Companion* (with essays by Sheehan, Lafont, Crowell, Brandom, Blattner, and others); in addition, Lotz mentioned Dreyfus' lectures on *Being and Time*, which can be downloaded here:

http://webcast.berkeley.edu/course_details.php?seriesid=1906978475 (Lotz offered to make a few copies on CD).

Lecture Courses

Lotz pointed out that the situation at German universities before WWII was very unique: only 100,000 students studied at that point in Germany, the consequences of which were [1] the competition under professors was extremely high; and [2] the overall educational level of both professors and students was excellent. This fact is indicated through a long list of philosophers who studied with Heidegger, such as Arendt, Gadamer, Marcuse, Tugendhat, Löwith, Jonas (and many others), all of whom underlined Heidegger's pedagogical excellence and fascination in the classroom, which was accompanied by a challenging and rigorous concept of reading and laying out historical texts. German professors were

¹ There are other aspects to this. To name a few: [1] Heidegger's later commentaries on "local" poets and regional languages (Hebel; for this see now GA16, 316-334, 530-533; 491-515); [2] his refusal to leave Freiburg (after the offer from the University of Berlin); [3] his writings on geographical origins (country path, peasants, etc.). Poetry is taken as the *eidōs* of speaking *in a* specific language (which leads to H.'s concept of historicity).

² In this vein, one might also think of Hegel. In his inaugural lecture in Berlin, Hegel points out that his metaphysics is developed *for* the Germans.

³ See <http://www.beyng.com/hb/gesamt.html>

appointed by universities and government, after a complicated selective mechanism. *BT* remained unfinished because Heidegger needed a publication for his application for a full chair. He later – in 1928 – became Husserl's successor (after having been his assistant between 1918 and 1923). Heidegger's philosophy is best understood as a development of questions that Heidegger increasingly radicalized throughout his lifetime. Accordingly, if one wants to grasp the full scope of H.'s philosophy, one must study his interpretations of other philosophers, especially Kant and Aristotle.

Heidegger and Politics

Lotz clarified that he does not intend to discuss Heidegger's involvement in Nazi-Germany, nor the philosophical aspects connected to Heidegger's decision to enter the Nazi-Party and to become *Rektor* of the University of Freiburg (which he gave up in 1934). Though a good case can be made for that, Heidegger was not a "standard" Nazi (e.g., no apparent biologism, racism, or anti-Semitism), and although it is clear that there are no signs of Heidegger's "leaning" towards the official Nazi-ideology before 1933, several main questions remain: [1] Heidegger's concept of the political – as it becomes visible in and after *BT* – needs further investigation; [2] his turn toward Hölderlin in this regard is important; [3] Heidegger's silence after WWII about his involvement remains an issue; [4] the absence of (explicitly) normative issues in Heidegger's thinking must be explained; and [5] his metaphysical interpretation of history and the world-historical situation before and after WWII need discussion.⁴ Lotz pointed out that more material can now be found in a new volume of *GA*.⁵ Moreover, the topic is so complex that a seminar on its own would be needed to deal with this issue.

What is the main aspect of *BT*?

Three main responses can be given to the question of what *BT* is all about: [1] Being, [2] Dasein, and [3] time. Though "Being" and "Time" are announced in the title, it seems as if *BT* does not fully develop [1] and [3], especially since Heidegger moves, in the introduction, from the question of Being in general to what he calls the "Analytic of *Dasein*" and, in addition, the part that should deal with time "itself" was not published (though H. deals with time as *Dasein*'s temporality in the later sections of *BT*). Accordingly, [2] is the most promising answer, but it needs further clarification. Lotz claimed that the main problem of *BT* (and the surrounding writings, such as the Kant-courses and the short writings between 1928 and 1930) is not *Dasein* as such; rather, it is the problem of *transcendence* or *openness*, which not only allows us to connect [1] - [3], but also makes a synthetic view of *BT* possible, insofar as all central concepts, such as world, care, guilt, death, and temporality are based on transcendence as the *ground* of existence. Heidegger himself repeatedly points out after *BT* that transcendence is the major issue of *BT*.⁶ Transcendence is finally laid out in terms of time.⁷ For example, in *The Essence of Ground* he writes:

⁴ See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger and the Politics of Poetry* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Miguel de Beistegui, *Heidegger and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Victor Farias, *Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus*. Mit einem Vorwort von Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1989; Lagrasse: Ed. Verdier, 1987); Alfred Denker, Holger Zaborowski (Hrsg.), *Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus, Dokumente*. Heidegger-Jahrbuch Band 4 (Alber: Freiburg/München, 2008); Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: L'introduction du nazisme dans la philosophie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2005); James Phillips, *Heidegger's Volk: Between National Socialism and Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); Richard Wolin. *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, translated by Allen Blunden (Basic Books, 1993); Johannes Fritsche, *Historical Destiny and National Socialism in Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 16 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2000).

⁶ The best overview of these issues can be found in Thomas Sheehan, "Dasein," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, edited by Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), [pages].

⁷ Heidegger edited and published Husserl's lecture on internal time consciousness when he was writing *BT*, which we won't address in this seminar.

“Human Dasein – a being that finds itself situated *in the midst* of beings, comporting itself *towards* beings – in so doing exists in such a way that beings are always manifest as a whole.”⁸

The absolute ground, we might say, according to Heidegger, is the fact that beings “are,” i.e. are accessible, transparent, open, meaningful, etc (as a whole). In other words, the *difference* between Being/Beings, Being/phenomenon, Beings/World, Being/Meaningfulness is the core problem of *BT* and is, as Heidegger additionally claims, also *the* problem of the former history of metaphysics (which is especially visible in Heidegger’s attempt to find a foundation for Husserl’s concept of intentionality and Kant’s concept of object relation [*Gegenstandsbeziehung*]). On the one hand, accordingly, we must think of transcendence as an *ontological* concept (ont. Difference, Being as *veritas transcendentalis*; for this see *BT*, 62), on the other hand, we must think of it as a transcendental concept (i.e. *transcending*, overstepping).⁹ We (*Dasein*) are beings who are “opened up” to the “is” of what is: we are *amidst* beings (receptivity) and we overstep beings as beings because the “is” as such is *revealed*, “light up” and *intelligible* (GA16, 424) to us – although it remains unclear at this point whether we *produce* the openness (which H. rejects), somehow *are* the openness, or find ourselves in it:

“The entity which bears the title *Dasein* is one that has been *cleared* [gelichtet] [...] in other words, that which makes it both ‘open’ for itself and ‘bright’ for itself – is what we have defined as ‘care’ in advance of any ‘temporal Interpretation” (*BT*, 401-02; see also H. comments on the *lumen naturale* and the clearing; *BT*, 171).

With Heidegger’s analysis of the problem of transcendence, which is an especially modern problem, Heidegger shows us that a proper ontology can only be carried out phenomenologically. In short, transcendence does not simply mean that we are opened up towards beings; rather, we are opened up toward the *Being* of beings – or towards *world/meaningfulness/significance*. Heidegger’s main thought is accordingly the following: the condition of the possibility of any object-relation whatsoever is transcendence (=world as the condition of object-relations):

“in its essence of its Being, is is world-forming, ‘forming’ in the multiple sense that it lets world occur, and through the world gives itself an original view [*Anblick*] (form [*Bild*]) that is not explicitly grasped, yet functions precisely as a paradigmatic form [*Vorblick*] for all manifest beings, among which each respective [*jeweilige*] *Dasein* itself belongs.”¹⁰

“World as a wholeness ‘is’ not a being, but that from out which *Dasein* gives itself the signification of whatever beings it is able to comport itself toward in whatever way.”¹¹

During this seminar, we will come back to transcendence and world as the central concepts of *BT*. For now, we should keep in mind that both concepts indicate Heidegger’s attempt to make the “wonder of all wonders” – that being is – transparent through a phenomenological analysis of the Being of ourselves: for us our existence is, *while* existing an issue.

Heidegger’s Transcendental Move

This “double move” of transcendence and transcending explains Heidegger’s main strategy in the introduction of *BT*, namely the move from the question of Being in general to the question of the being of *Dasein*, which some commentators have taken as reason to speak of Heidegger as a transcendental

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, edited by W. McNeill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 121. Further explanation: “Amidst:” in *BT* based on *fallenness* and *disposedness*; “towards:” in *BT* based on *understanding*, both of which are based on *care*, which is based on *time*. Accordingly, time will be revealed in *BT* as the horizon to understand transcendence.

⁹ See especially Heidegger’s concept of *world formation* [*Weltbildung*] in *The Essence of Ground* (1928) and *The Basic Concepts of Metaphysics* (1929/30).

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, edited by W. McNeill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 123.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

philosopher in the Kantian tradition.¹² Establishing *Dasein* as the primary object of investigation establishes the thesis that the Being of *Dasein* is the condition of the possibility for addressing or referring to Beings at all. Lotz remarked that in a general sense he agrees with this take on Heidegger, but that we should be careful not to overlook the uniqueness of H.'s position, which is most visible in his claim that the tradition has misconstrued the *Being* of the one who *not only raises but also whose Being is itself characterized by raising the question of Being and by having and understanding of our Being* (*BT*, 32), i.e. the Being of the questioner is the absolute condition and must be clarified before we can go on to the general question of Being (*BT*, §1) or to specific ontologies (*BT*, §3). In this vein, as Lotz underlined, it is important to understand why Heidegger does not equate “Dasein” with “human beings” in *BT* and to understand why most of the commentators, including Sartre, fail to see this important point.

Why “Dasein” and not “Human Being?”

The question of Being, i.e., the question of what it means to be [a] for beings other than *Dasein*, [b] for beings in general, and [c] for *Dasein* is, according to Heidegger, *an issue for Dasein* (*BT*, 32; with [c] being the primacy focus). This is to say that the question of what it means to be is not something that philosophy or theory brings into the world; rather, philosophy can only pick this question up and make it transparent, for our Being is itself characterized by a certain *being troubled* with Being.¹³ We respond to the question with everything we do and think because the question of what it means to be in our case (in the case of the questioner) is answered *in terms of our existence* (*BT*, 33). Consequently, Heidegger radically opens up the field of investigation in section 4 of *BT*, in declaring that he will give us a totally new interpretation of who we (i.e. the ones who raise and understand the question) are. Moreover, his interpretation will be phenomenologically appropriate, i.e., *Heidegger will be speaking about us in a way that shows us as we are from ourselves* (see §7). Because for Heidegger the *Being of us* is unclear and distorted by traditional answers, we should not identify “Dasein” with “human being.” That we *take our Being* to “mean” human beings is the *result* and answer to the question of what it means *to be* for us. Taking ourselves as a “thinking thing” (Descartes), as a “*zoon logon echon*” (Aristotle) or as “self-consciousness” (Hegel) are implicit answers to the question raised in *BT* and, according to Heidegger’s claim, distorted views (see *BT*, 43). The tradition did not realize that they all give implicit answers to the ontological questions of both Being in general and the Being of *Dasein*.

In sum, Lotz made clear that commentators who identify *Dasein* with human reality or being human as such, precisely miss Heidegger’s point in *BT*, namely, that the *Being of the one who raises the question of Being remains unclear and has to be worked out* (=task of the analytic of existence). Identifying ourselves as human beings is already a *specific* answer to the question of what it means to be in our case and is in danger of taking over historically handed down prejudices and traditional interpretations (e.g., animal rationale, thinking thing, mind/body, etc.). Instead of starting with conceptual structures that we take over from someone else, we start, as Heidegger underlines, with an interpretation of the *averageness* and *everydayness* of ourselves (*BT*, 69).

Questions

Nope. Brilliant class by our honorable teacher, Prof. Lotz.

¹² See the important essays in Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas (eds.), *Transcendental Heidegger*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2007.

¹³ Heidegger takes this important point from Augustine. For Augustine, *cura* means that one is either dispersed in the world or recollected in oneself. The burden of *cura* leads to Augustine’s characterization of human existence as being troubled over oneself (*Confessions*, 10.28). In *cura* the self encounters itself as a questioner: “In your eyes I have become a problem to myself, and that is my sickness” (*in cuius oculis mihi quaestio factus sum, et ipse est languor meus*) (*Confessions*, 10.33). See esp. Heidegger’s interpretation of this issue and of book 10 of Augustine’s *Confessions* in his *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, Translated by Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).