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Heidegger's Quest for Being

PAUL EDWARDS

An almost unbelievable amount of false philosophy has arisen through not realizing what 'existence' means. . . . [It] rests upon the notion that existence is, so to speak, a property that you can attribute to things, and that the things that exist have the property of existence and the things that do not exist do not. That is rubbish (Bertrand Russell).

I have dared to puncture several metaphysical balloons and nothing came out of them but hot air (Voltaire).

Neural Kinks and the Greatest Seeker of this Century

Martin Heidegger died in 1976. At his funeral, Bernhard Welte, a Catholic priest and Professor of Christian Philosophy of Religion at the University of Freiburg, delivered a short speech in which he described Heidegger's 'path' as that of 'perhaps the greatest seeker of this century'. Heidegger's thought, Welte also remarked, 'has shaken the world and the century'.¹ If a philosopher's importance is measured by the number of commentaries on his work and of the translations of his books, Father Welte's remark is quite accurate. More books and articles, mostly of a devotional nature, have been written about Heidegger than about any other philosopher of the twentieth century and his books have been translated not only into French, English, Italian and Spanish, but also Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Romanian, and several other languages. I get this information from the huge compilation, *Martin Heidegger, Bibliography and Glossary*, a work of over 500 pages which was edited by Hans-Martin Sass and published in 1982 by the Philosophy Documentation Center at Bowling Green. Sass does not list any Hebrew translations. This is perhaps just as well—the Jews have surely suffered enough already.

Father Welte is hardly a philosopher or theologian of international standing, but similarly enthusiastic tributes have been paid by numer-

¹ 'Seeking and Finding: The Speech at Heidegger's Burial', in T. Sheehan (ed.), *Heidegger, the Man and Thinker* (Chicago: Precedent Publishers, 1981), 73.

ous influential figures. Thus, in his autobiography, Hans-Georg Gadamer describes Heidegger as a 'seeker after the gold of speech and thought'² who 'radiated an incomparable aura'³ and whose lectures displayed 'the brilliant energy of a revolutionary thinker'.⁴ 'Why should we deny', Gadamer asks, that 'it is an advantage to have a genius as a teacher?'⁵ In a talk given in honour of Heidegger's seventy-fifth birthday and published in 1972 in his *Kleine Schriften*, Gadamer tells us that Heidegger's genius was detectable simply by looking at him. 'The very first encounter with the glance in his eyes showed me what he was', Gadamer writes, 'a visionary—a thinker who sees.'⁶ Not only his eyes but also Heidegger's voice greatly impressed Gadamer. He notes that when, in his lectures, Heidegger reached the 'extreme frontiers of thought', his voice, usually resonant, became peculiarly constricted in the upper register. Eventually, at the climax of wrestling with the ultimate the tension became almost unbearable and Heidegger's voice gave out altogether. Heidegger's language made an equally deep impression on Gadamer. It seemed in fact so magical that it made Gadamer think of the occult. Heidegger's words and phrases had 'a picturesque power unequalled by any philosophical contemporaries'. They made what is mental so 'tangible' that one could not help recalling the materialization phenomena reported in the literature of the occult.⁷ It might be of interest to note that Karl Löwith who was close to Heidegger for a number of years left us a somewhat different description. 'Heidegger could never look at anyone openly for an extended period of time', Löwith writes. His forehead was agitated, his face veiled and his eyes downcast. If in the course of a conversation, Löwith continues, 'one forced him to look at one directly, his expression became impenetrable and insecure, for candour in relations with others was denied to him'.⁸

In 1969 German television celebrated Heidegger's eightieth birthday with a number of talks in praise of his momentous achievements. One of the speakers was the well-known Catholic theologian Karl Rahner. Addressing Heidegger as his 'master', he told the viewers that although he had many good 'schoolmasters', he had only 'one whom he could

² *Philosophical Apprenticeships* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), 52.

³ P. 45.

⁴ P. 48.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Kleine Schriften* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1972), 204.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach 1933* (Stuttgart: Metzlersche, 1986), 43. Löwith's book which was written in 1940 in his Japanese exile is one of the most moving accounts of the degradation of German academic life before and during the Nazi years. His portrait of Heidegger is devastating.

revere as his *teacher*'. He gratefully acknowledged that Heidegger 'taught us to be able to look in anything and everything for that *ineffable secret* which *disposes* (*verflügt*) over us'.⁹ The 'ineffable secret' which 'disposes over us', it needs hardly saying, is Heidegger's Being.

Unlike Rahner, the late Hannah Arendt was not a theologian and not even a believer in God. She also did not, as far as I know, believe that there is an 'ineffable secret' in anything and everything, but she gave us a similarly ecstatic evaluation of Heidegger's philosophical achievement. 'The wind that blows through Heidegger's thinking, like that which still sweeps towards us after thousands of years from the work of Plato', she wrote in an uncharacteristically lyrical vein, 'does not spring from the century he happens to live in. It comes from the primeval, and what it leaves behind is something perfect, something which, like everything perfect (in Rilke's words), falls back to where it came from'.¹⁰ No further information is available about this remarkable wind and its equally remarkable deposit.

Not so long ago it was almost impossible to find a champion of Heidegger among respectable Anglo-Saxon philosophers. This situation has significantly changed during the last ten or fifteen years. Ecstatic raptures like those of Gadamer, Rahner or Arendt are still very rare, but a number of philosophers of some prominence have hailed Heidegger as one of the great thinkers of the twentieth century. Foremost among these is undoubtedly Richard Rorty who has been heaping praise on Heidegger's work ever since his article 'Overcoming the Tradition: Heidegger and Dewey', originally published in 1974 in the *Review of Metaphysics* and reprinted in his *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982).¹¹ In his well-known book, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty includes Heidegger, along with Hegel, Marx, Frege, Freud and Wittgenstein in a list of 'individual men of genius who think of something new'.¹² Earlier in the same book Heidegger is called 'one of

⁹ R. Wisser (ed.), *Martin Heidegger im Gespräch* (Freiburg and Munich: K. Alber, 1970), 48–49, Rahner's italics throughout.

¹⁰ 'Martin Heidegger at Eighty', *The New York Review*, 21 October 1971, reprinted in M. Murray (ed.), *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 303.

¹¹ Rorty was one of the signatories of a letter published in the *New York Review of Books* on 2 April 1981, defending the Harper and Row translations of Heidegger's works against certain criticisms by Thomas Sheehan. The letter which was also signed by Stanley Cavell, Hubert Dreyfus, Karsten Harries, John Haugeland and David Hoy expressed gratitude to the publisher and to the late Glenn Gray for making available to English readers the works of 'this immensely important and difficult philosopher'.

¹² *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton University Press, 1979), 264.

the three most important philosophers of our century',¹³ the others being Dewey and Wittgenstein. This echoes a statement in the earlier article where these three are described as 'the richest and most original philosophers of our time'.¹⁴ This article contains some critical remarks which are regretted in the Preface of *Consequences of Pragmatism*. Rorty's view of Heidegger in the concluding pages of his earlier piece he now judges to have been 'unduly unsympathetic',¹⁵ but he is planning to make amends in a book on Heidegger which he is 'now' writing. No such book has been published and there is no indication that one is on the way. This is most unfortunate. For in such a book Rorty might have given some reason for his dismissal of those who do not find any great merit in Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida as 'blimpish Know-Nothings'.¹⁶

Although Rorty's promised book about Heidegger has not appeared, the publication of Victor Farias' *Heidegger et le Nazisme* afforded him another opportunity for expressing himself at some length on this subject. Farias is a Chilean who studied with Heidegger and now teaches at the Free University in Berlin. He could not find a German publisher, but a French translation appeared late in 1987 and it was reviewed by Rorty in the *New Republic* of 11 April 1988.¹⁷ It has been customary for Heidegger's followers to excuse his support of the Nazi regime on the ground that he was an uncritical German nationalist and that he had no grasp of practical realities. It was also emphasized that his involvement with the Nazis lasted for only a year.¹⁸ Rorty had never tried to excuse Heidegger's conduct along these lines and he correctly points out that such an apology flies in the face of many facts that were common knowledge long before the recent revelations. He cannot find words strong enough to condemn Heidegger, the man. He was a 'rather

¹³ P. 5.

¹⁴ *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 51.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, ix.

¹⁶ *The London Review of Books* (3 September 1987).

¹⁷ *The New York Review of Books* (16 June 1988), contains an excellent article by Thomas Sheehan giving the highlights of Farias' book and the similar but more careful research by the German historian Hugo Otto who has published numerous articles about Heidegger's activities during the Nazi period and whose book on the subject is scheduled for publication in the near future.

¹⁸ Typical examples of this type of apology are found in William Barrett's introduction to the section on 'Phenomenology and Existentialism' in Barrett and Aiken (eds.), *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1962), 163, and in Hannah Arendt's above-mentioned article, 302–303.

nasty piece of work—a coward and a liar, pretty much from first to last'. He was an 'egomaniacal, anti-Semitic redneck'. He had in fact a great deal in common with Hitler himself: 'blood-and-soil rhetoric, anti-Semitism, self-deception . . . and the desire to found a cult'. None of this, however, should make the slightest difference to our judgment of Heidegger's philosophy, and Rorty reaffirms his view that Heidegger 'was as original a philosopher as we have had in this century'. We simply have to realize that, whether we like it or not, greatness in philosophy can no more be correlated with decency and kindness than greatness in mathematics or microbiology. It is 'the result of some neural kink that occurs independently of other kinks'.¹⁹

Heidegger's Leap on to the Shores of Being

Neural kinks are not my department. Here I unreservedly defer to Rorty's expertise. However, kinks or no kinks, I think I can give some fairly strong reasons for not joining the chorus of adulation. The dominating theme of Heidegger's philosophy is his so-called 'quest' for Being. 'As Kierkegaard leapt from the religious stage towards an awareness of the "holy other",' to quote Werner Marx, one of Heidegger's most devoted followers and his successor at Freiburg, so Heidegger leapt 'on to the shores of Being'. After the leap Heidegger became 'imbued with a strong conviction', shared by Marx, that 'he is the voice and instrument of Being'. In his capacity as the hierophant of Being he is trying to 'attain a "second beginning" for mankind'.²⁰ 'What is the meaning of Being?' Heidegger himself asks at the opening of *Being and Time* (1927), his most famous book, and two years later he concluded *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* with the remark that 'the question of the concept of Being' is 'the basic question of philosophy'.²¹ Simi-

¹⁹ Rorty exaggerates Heidegger's anti-Semitism. It is true that he did not express one word of regret about the holocaust and that he did nothing to help any of his many Jewish students, but he did not actively harass or persecute Jews. Sheehan (op. cit., 39–40) offers a judicious assessment of Heidegger's attitude toward the Jews. Löwith (op. cit., 40) absolves him on this score, pointing out that some party officials were suspicious of Heidegger because of his apparent *lack* of anti-Semitism.

²⁰ 'Heidegger's New Conception of Philosophy—The Second Phase of "Existentialism"', *Social Research* (Winter 1955), 474.

²¹ *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* transl. J. S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), 255. Throughout this article I quote from available English translations where these seemed to me accurate. Where the existing translations seemed unsatisfactory or when none exist I supplied my own.

larly, in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, written in 1935 but not published until 1953, he explains his task as ‘that of unfolding the truth of the essence of Being’.²² All of Heidegger’s other discussions, everything for example he says about ‘Dasein’ or the nature of man in *Being and Time*, are no more than preparatory studies for the exploration of Being. The present article is devoted to an examination of this exploration. Such an examination will help us determine whether the claims made on behalf of Heidegger’s genius as a philosopher are warranted.

The starting point of Heidegger’s quest is almost invariably a set of reflections about the puzzling status of ‘is-ness’ or ‘Being’ or ‘being-ness’, of what we normally call ‘existence’. We say that dogs and cats exist and that unicorns and centaurs do not exist, but no matter how carefully we examine dogs or cats or anything else, we can never observe existence in any of the things which exist. Although we cannot observe it, existence must be in these objects or belong to them or else they would not exist. It should be observed that Heidegger usually reserves the word ‘exists’, which is obviously used in a special sense by him, for certain characteristics possessed by human beings but not by animals, plants or inanimate objects. In his terminology the problem is to discover the meaning or nature of is-ness or Being. The question is discussed at some length in the first lecture of *Introduction to Metaphysics* where he distinguishes two senses of the word ‘being’. In the first and unproblematic sense it simply stands for a thing such as a piece of chalk or a school building. However, it also means ‘that which, so to speak, “brings it about” that this thing is a being rather than a non-being—it means that which constitutes its Being, if it is’.²³ In the first sense, Heidegger emphasizes, ‘being’ signifies ‘particular beings in respect to themselves and not their is-ness’. In the second sense the word signifies ‘not individual beings, but is-ness, beingness, Being’.²⁴ Heidegger then formulates his ‘problematic of Being’ in connection with a piece of chalk. He lists its various attributes: it is greyish-white, light, brittle, has a certain shape and occupies a certain position. But where in the chalk is its Being? ‘What then is Being in distinction to what can stand in Being or fall back into non-Being?’ The same problem of course arises in connection with all other things or beings:

Over there, across the street, stands the high school building. A being. We can look over the building from all sides, we can go in and

²² *Introduction to Metaphysics*, transl. R. Mannheim (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 81. This book to which I will refer from now on as *IM* contains the fullest discussion of Heidegger’s ‘problematic’ of Being. In a short Preface appearing in all editions of *Being and Time* after 1953 Heidegger specially refers his readers to *IM* for an ‘elucidation of the question of Being’.

²³ *IM*, 25.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

explore it from cellar to attic, and note everything we encounter in that building: corridors, staircases, schoolrooms, and their equipment. Everywhere we find beings and we find them in a very definite arrangement.²⁵

At this stage the 'problematic' breaks out again:

Where is the Being of this high school? For after all it *is*. The building *is*. If anything belongs to this being, it is its Being; yet we do not find the Being inside it.²⁶

The question recurs repeatedly in Heidegger's writings after 1935. Thus in '*Kants These über das Sein*' (1962) he writes:

We say about a stone lying in front of us . . . that it *is*. The 'is' here, i.e. Being, is the predicate of our judgment in which the stone is the subject . . . what is the meaning of this 'is'?²⁷

In one of his last publications, *Zur Sache des Denkens* (1969, translated as 'On Time and Being'), his example is the hall in which he is delivering a lecture:

The lecture hall *is*. It *is* illuminated. We recognize the illuminated lecture hall at once . . . as something that is. But where in the whole lecture hall do we find the 'is'? Nowhere among things do we find Being.²⁸

We have a serious problem on our hands and, from the outset, Heidegger is convinced that the question is of the greatest importance:

We run (or stand) around in the world with our silly subtleties and conceits. But where in all this is Being?²⁹

In addition to '*Sein*' ('Being') and '*das seiende*' ('beings') Heidegger also occasionally uses the term '*Seiendheit*'. To Medard Boss, Heidegger suggested that '*Seiendheit*' be translated as 'beingness' (lower case). As Boss explains it, 'beingness' refers to the characteristics which members of a class have in common, 'the particular kind of "beingness" which is common to all horses in the world'.³⁰ According to Boss the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt: Klosterman, 1967), 279. *Wegmarken* will from now on be abbreviated as *W*.

²⁸ *On Time and Being*, transl. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 2.

²⁹ *IM*, 29.

³⁰ *Psychoanalysis and Daseinsanalysis*, English transl. L. B. Lefebvre (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 36.

chapter of his *Psychoanalysis and Daseinsanalysis* from which these remarks are quoted was compiled with 'Martin Heidegger's untiring help'.³¹ Heidegger's 'problematic' and 'quest' are concerned with Being and not beingness; and it is for Being that he reserves his raptures.

Of one thing we may be sure: Being is not just another being. Is 'being', he asks in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 'a thing like watches, houses or any being whatsoever?' The answer is in the negative. 'The Being of the building over there', he writes, is not just 'another' thing of the same kind as the roof or the cellar'.³² In *Was Heisst Denken?* (1954) he inquires into the Being of mountains, houses and trees and he insists that 'Being is not attached to the mountain somewhere or stuck to the house, or hanging from the tree'.³³ In *Unterwegs Zur Sprache* (1959) he once again asks his question: 'How does it stand with the "is"?' Is the "is" itself another thing placed on top of things like a cap?'³⁴ Of course not. We can at least reach the following negative conclusion: 'We cannot immediately grasp the Being of the beings, either through the beings or in the beings—or anywhere else'.³⁵ There is no doubt that when we look for Being in the things around us it 'remains unfindable'. It is all very puzzling:

All the things we have named *are* and yet—when we wish to apprehend Being, it is always as though we were reaching into the void.³⁶

'Are we not seized with vertigo', Heidegger had written a few years earlier in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 'when we try to determine Being or even consider it as it is in itself?'³⁷ Some philosophers have been tempted to conclude that 'being' is an empty word and its meaning 'an unreal vapour'. We must resist this temptation. For clearly things are and they could not be without Being. In the Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics?' (1943), Heidegger is particularly emphatic on this point. 'Without Being', he there writes, 'all beings would remain in Beinglessness'.³⁸ 'What would become of our stay in the world', he asks in *What is Called Thinking?* if 'this little inconspicuous "is" could not be thought, . . . if this firm and constantly affirmed "is" were denied us?'³⁹ The beings that would remain in Beinglessness include of

³¹ Op. cit., 49.

³² *IM*, 73, Heidegger's italics.

³³ *What is Called Thinking?*, transl. J. Glenn Gray and F. Wieck (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 225–226.

³⁴ *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), 193.

³⁵ *IM*, 27.

³⁶ *IM*, 29, Heidegger's italics.

³⁷ *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, op. cit., 233.

³⁸ *W*, 102.

³⁹ Op. cit., 225.

course all those studied in the natural sciences. Atomic scientists in particular are reminded of their dependence on Being. 'If the Being of beings were not manifest', then 'the electrical energy of the atom would never have made its appearance'.⁴⁰ No, the words 'being' and 'is' are not empty or vaporous. Quite the opposite. We mean 'something definite' by these words and the definiteness of 'being' is so 'definite and unique' that we must insist on its being 'more unique than all else'.⁴¹ The uniqueness of Being is in fact colossal. 'Over against any being' there is always another being, but 'Being has no counterpart'. It is simply 'that which is most unique, whose uniqueness cannot be attained by any being whatsoever'. Its only counterpart is the Nothing, but 'perhaps even the Nothing is subject to Being and only to Being'.⁴² So far from being empty and pointless, the question 'How does it stand with Being?' is 'the worthiest of all questions'.⁴³

It follows from its unique uniqueness that Being is 'wholly other' than beings, and altogether *sui generis*. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to describe Being. Since Being is a '*transcendens*' and wholly unlike beings, we cannot describe it with any of our ordinary vocabulary. For our ordinary terms have meaning only as applied to the beings which make up the world of ordinary experience. And what other terms are available to us? At times Heidegger takes the view that we can only say what Being is not and in '*Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*' he calls it the '*Ungreifbare*' ('the ungraspable'), the '*Unbestimmbare*' ('the indeterminable') and '*das sich verbergende Einzige*' ('the unique which conceals itself').⁴⁴ Heidegger always speaks of Being as 'self-disclosing' and at the same time as 'self-concealing', i.e. as withdrawing itself from our gaze. This 'paradoxical' nature of Being seems obvious to him. When we look for Being in beings we cannot detect it there; and yet, as we saw, the fact that they *are* and are not non-entities shows that Being belongs to and is in them. In the 'Letter on Humanism' (1947), one of his most widely quoted post-war pieces, Heidegger enumerates some of the things that Being is not:

Being—it is not God and not the ground of the world. Being is more than all that exists and is yet nearer to man than all existing things, be it a rock, an animal, a work of art, a machine, an angel or God. Being

⁴⁰ *What is Called Thinking?*, op. cit., 234.

⁴¹ *IM*, 66.

⁴² *Nietzsche* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), Vol. 2, 251. An English translation in four volumes was published by Harper and Row between 1979 and 1982. The general editor of this translation is D. F. Krell and the translators, in addition to Krell, include Joan Stambaugh and F. A. Capuzzi.

⁴³ *IM*, 168.

⁴⁴ *W*, 88 and 96.

is the nearest thing. But this nearness remains furthest away from man.⁴⁵

In the end all we can say is that 'Being is It itself'. This is not an idle or trivial statement. On the contrary:

To experience and to say this—this is what the thinking of the future will have to learn.⁴⁶

In his later writings Heidegger insists that we should not even say that Being is because this suggests that its reality is of the same order as that of beings and he uses the word '*wes*' as a more appropriate way of talking about Being. I do not know why Heidegger did not follow his usual practice of making up a verb to 'harmonize' with his noun as in the 'World worlds', the 'Nothing nothings', the 'Presence presences', the 'thing things', the 'pitcher pitchers', and others. As things stand, translators have not felt free to say that Being beings. '*Wes*' is derived from the German word '*das Wesen*' which means 'essence' and at least one writer has translated '*wes*' as 'essences'.⁴⁷ This translation has not found favour with Heidegger experts because it does not do justice to Heidegger's 'composing anew the significance of the notion *Wesen*'. These are the words of Werner Marx who proceeds as follows: 'Heidegger began in his second phase to use this notion with new connotations, without telling his readers his radical departure from the traditional meaning of Essence. This fact has not been recognized, and has led to many misinterpretations.' What some readers have not realized is that Heidegger's new notion of *Wesen* comprises not only the 'what' of a particular phenomenon but at the same time its 'that', traditionally called its existence. Being *wes* in and through the 'particular beings', and thereby it constitutes their 'what' and 'that' at the same time.⁴⁸ It should be added that not only Being but also the Nothing '*wes*', presumably because it is not a being and occupies a far more elevated place in Heidegger's scheme than any mere being. The same also holds for 'The Fourfold', one of Heidegger's latest 'compositions', which will be briefly discussed in a later section.

Heidegger refers to the distinction between Being and beings as 'the ontological difference' and he portentously declares that it 'is the *one* basic differentiation whose intensity and fundamental cleavage sustains history'.⁴⁹ The natural sciences are for ever confined to one side of this

⁴⁵ W, 162.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ T. A. Fay, *Heidegger: the Critique of Logic* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 52.

⁴⁸ 'Heidegger's New Conception of Philosophy—The Second Phase of "Existentialism"', op. cit., 472.

⁴⁹ *IM*, 170, Heidegger's italics.

cleavage, the side of beings. 'No matter where or how far scientific research extends its investigations', we read in the Postscript to *What is Metaphysics?*, 'it will never find Being. All it ever encounters are beings because from the start its explanatory goal is restricted to the realm of beings'.⁵⁰ Modern man and philosophers ever since the Pre-Socratics have failed to observe this distinction and as a result they have 'forgotten' Being. Being is in fact 'the most forgotten, so immeasurably forgotten that this forgottenness is sucked into its own vortex'.⁵¹ 'From a metaphysical point of view', Heidegger writes, 'we are *staggering*. We move about in all directions amid beings, and no longer know how it stands with Being. Least of all do we know that we no longer know'.⁵² The situation is altogether deplorable. Five years after the complaint just quoted Heidegger repeats that 'everybody constantly runs after beings, but hardly anybody remembers Being'.⁵³ What is more, when occasionally a person thinks of Being and for a brief moment considers a commitment ('*Bindung*') to it, the apparent emptiness of the notion puts him off and 'no attachment is established'.⁵⁴ I have often wondered how Heidegger knew of the existence of such people. Did they write letters to him? Or did he, in Gadamer-like fashion, look at their eyes and notice first that such a person had suddenly been dazzled by Being and then with another glance that he had decided against a commitment?

It should be noted that metaphysicians no less than positivists and naturalists are charged with forgetfulness of Being. In identifying their basic entity—God, the Absolute, the Will or whatever occupies centre stage in their systems—with Being, the metaphysicians commit the cardinal sin of making Being into a being. They are thus really no better than the naturalists who identify Being with nature or the materialists who identify it with matter. This is a strange reading of metaphysical and other pre-Heideggerian philosophies, but it helps to show what a lonely journey Heidegger has undertaken. Philosophers and philosophy aside, both Heidegger and his followers constantly hint that the misery of modern life is due to the forgetfulness of Being. Leroy F. Troutner, an American educational philosopher who is also a gushing Heidegger worshipper, has described the forgetfulness of Being as 'the most monumental loss in all history'.⁵⁵ It is clear that we are faced with a

⁵⁰ W, 101.

⁵¹ *Nietzsche*, Vol. 2, op. cit., 252.

⁵² *IM*, 169, Heidegger's italics.

⁵³ *Nietzsche*, Vol. 2, 252.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ 'The Confrontation Between Experimentalism and Existentialism', in A. K. Bierman and J. A. Gould (eds), *Philosophy for a New Generation*, 1st edn (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 79.

catastrophe of overwhelming proportions. Fortunately, not all is lost. For in the twentieth century a man by the name of Martin Heidegger appeared on the scene who devoted his life to the 'remembrance' of Being. People who 'remember' Being thereby become 'shepherds' of Being and in this way their life acquires a new dignity. Since Heidegger's demise Being continues to be remembered by several hundred shepherds and shepherdesses in different parts of the world, but it appears that the great majority of the human race continue to be unaware of what ails them. In the words of the aforementioned American shepherd Leroy Troutner, they are like 'sinners who do not know they have sinned before God and so do not feel the need for salvation'.⁵⁶

The 'Da'

That man is the 'shepherd' of Being is due to (or perhaps identical with) the fact that man is the '*Da*' of Being. '*Da*' is the German for 'here', but in the present context it has usually been translated as 'there' so that Heidegger's assertion comes to the claim that man is the 'there' of Being. The only explanations Heidegger ever offers employ such words as 'clearing', 'site', and 'openness' which are of course used metaphorically in this context. 'Within the question of Being', he writes in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 'man should be understood as *the* site of openness, the there'.⁵⁷ 'Man does not create Being', in the words of the late J. Glenn Gray, one of the earliest champions of Heidegger in the United States and the first general editor of the English language edition of Heidegger's works, 'but he is responsible for it since, without his thinking and remembering, Being has no illumination, no voice, no word'.⁵⁸ Glenn Gray, I should observe parenthetically, was one of the more sober shepherds. He was not given to flamboyant images or ecstatic raptures and even before the recent revelations he criticized Heidegger's failure to express the slightest regret over Nazi infamies.

Heidegger's teaching that man is the '*Da*' of Being, 'the site of openness' and 'the clearing of Being' is supposed to constitute a great discovery. I do not see that it is anything of the kind. When the metaphors are eliminated his assertion comes to no more than that of all known entities human beings are the only ones who are reflectively conscious of the world, who not only see, hear, touch, and taste objects, but also think about them and ask questions about their meaning and value. The 'world' is here used broadly so as to include human beings

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *IM*, 171, Heidegger's italics.

⁵⁸ 'Heidegger's "Being"', *Journal of Philosophy* (1952), 415.

themselves. Calling this a platitude is not quite right, but it hardly qualifies as a discovery. The same thought has occurred to many people and we do not need Heidegger's obfuscating jargon to express it.

It may be of some interest to look at the formulations of this idea by two of Heidegger's most ardent devotees who, unlike Glenn Gray, *are* given to flamboyant pictures and who have obviously persuaded themselves that we are in the presence of a great original insight. According to Werner Marx, the shepherd whom I quoted earlier in connection with Heidegger's leap on to the shores of Being and the 'recomposition' of the notion of '*Wesen*', Heidegger's teaching about the '*Da*' gives us a wholly new idea about the significance of human life. From the fact that the '*Da* of man is nothing but the *Da* of Being it follows that man is not only an occurrence of Being but also the open spot' and, what is more, a 'chosen spot where Being in its character and meaning comes to light'. We are confronted with a veritable 'miracle' here. For without the '*Da*', 'the sense, the meaning, and the nature' of the world and also of particular phenomena could never be 'realized'.⁵⁹

Werner Marx seems to be a somewhat innocent shepherd who does not realize that he is using highly metaphorical language which stands in need of translation. Medard Boss, an equally enthusiastic disciple, realizes that he will be accused of using metaphors and flatly denies the charge. I should explain that Boss, a Swiss psychiatrist, is the creator of '*Daseinsanalysis*', a synthesis of certain of Heidegger's basic ideas with some of the ideas of psychoanalysis. He also seems to have been one of Heidegger's closest associates. Boss uses several of the same metaphors as the writers previously quoted, but he adds some of his own. Man, he writes, is a 'unique, primordial, luminating openness', he is a 'spiritual brightness' in whom Being 'lights up'.⁶⁰ He is 'a light which illuminates whatever particular being comes into the realm of its rays'.⁶¹ Boss admits that this 'ontological insight' does not give the psychotherapist any new methods of treatment, but it will do something far more important for him. As a result of this insight he will gain a new, and 'all-embracing', attitude towards his patients and the therapeutic process. Once the therapist 'really understands' that in man, 'as the bright sphere of Being, comparable to a glade in a forest', all things, including of course his fellow men, 'show and reveal themselves directly and

⁵⁹ Op. cit., 465.

⁶⁰ "Daseinsanalysis" and Psychotherapy' in H. M. Ruitenbeck (ed.), *Psychoanalysis and Existential Philosophy* (New York: Dutton, 1962), 84. Several paragraphs of this paper are taken over from Boss' 'Heidegger und die Ärzte', his contribution to *Martin Heidegger zum 70. Geburtstag* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959).

⁶¹ *Psychoanalysis and Daseinsanalysis*, 37.

immediately in all their significance and correlations', he will have 'an unceasing reverence for the proper value of each phenomenon he encounters'.⁶² I assume that sadistic and murderous impulses and any and every kind of perversion will be among the phenomena for which the therapist will have 'unceasing reverence'. We may agree that the therapist, *qua* therapist, should not engage in moralizing, but to regard all pathological phenomena with 'unceasing reverence' is a tall order and it is not evident that it would have any value whatsoever. It seems that when Boss tried to convert other therapists to Heidegger's ontological insight they complained that he was offering 'imaginative or poetic paraphrase without relevance for the investigations of psychologists and psychiatrists who want to deal only with real or so-called empirical facts'.⁶³ In reply to such contentions Boss is most emphatic that his description of man as a 'luminating brightness' is the literal truth and not merely a metaphor. It is 'a very sober and direct description of the most concrete condition of man'.⁶⁴

Boss writes like a possessed man who will brook no contradiction, but it is easy to see that he is mistaken. The crucial words—'lumination', 'openness' and 'clearing'—*are* used metaphorically. It should be remembered that the lumination Boss talks about supposedly takes place not only when we see an object but just as much when we touch it or hear it or smell it and also when we do not perceive it by the senses at all but merely remember it or think or dream about it. When a blind man is aware of an object he is just as much 'luminating' it as a man who has eyes. Thus even if one believed, ignorantly and perversely, that when we see an object it is we who are sending out rays to it and not the object that is reflecting rays to us, this would not avoid the conclusion that Boss's statements, if taken literally, are patently false. Objects are literally illuminated by rays of the sun or other light sources like lamps or candles or lit matches and not by the eyes of the perceiver and certainly not by the non-functioning eyes of the blind man or by other sense organs or, for that matter, by the thoughts and reflections of human beings.

Inside the Ultimate

In a number of his later writings Heidegger seems prepared to offer positive descriptions of Being. He always unhesitatingly calls it 'the Open'. Being is also said to be identical with 'the Holy'. In the

⁶² 'Daseinsanalysis and Psychotherapy', op. cit., 86.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ *Psychoanalysis and Daseinsanalysis*, op. cit., 37.

Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics?' we are informed that while the thinker 'says' Being, the poet 'names' the Holy;⁶⁵ and it is clearly implied that they are referring to the same reality. Although Heidegger never identified Being with God, it has been observed quite correctly that what he says about the relation between man and Being is quite similar to what certain theologians (e.g. Karl Barth) have said about the relation between man and God. Thus we are assured that human beings cannot force their way into Being. On the contrary, if Being comes at all, it reveals itself to them by its '*Zuspruch*', i.e. by 'speaking' to them. In this context Heidegger occasionally uses the theological terms '*Huld*' ('grace') and '*Gunst*' ('favour'). It should be added that although we cannot force our way into Being, we can engage in a special kind of thinking which Heidegger opposes to the representational or calculative thinking of mathematics, the natural sciences and most philosophy. By engaging in this special kind of thinking we can greatly increase our chances that Being will approach us and allow us to stand in its midst.

In the passage quoted earlier from 'The Letter on Humanism', Heidegger emphatically denied that Being is the ground of the world. Without explaining the reason for the reversal Heidegger did not hesitate in several of his later writings to speak of Being as the ground of *all* beings. 'Being and ground', he writes in *Der Satz vom Grund* (1957), 'they are identical.' Nothing 'is without ground, but Being as that which grounds has no ground'.⁶⁶ A little later in the same book it is emphasized that 'only beings have and, necessarily so, a ground'. Being, 'which is itself the ground, grounds and in doing so, it lets beings be as beings'.⁶⁷ It is clear that by 'ground' Heidegger does not mean what medieval philosophers meant by '*causa in fieri*'. This term is usually translated as 'productive cause' and it refers to the relation typified by parent organisms and their offspring in which the cause or causes bring about the effect. Several commentators have interpreted 'ground' to mean '*causa in esse*' or 'sustaining cause'. A sustaining cause need not have produced the effect, but it keeps it in existence. The air and the food which sustain living beings are part of their *causae in esse*. Numerous remarks in Heidegger's works support this reading, but in a passage in *Gelassenheit* (translated as *Discourse on Thinking*) which contains his fullest discussion of this topic he disavows such an interpretation. He is here talking about the relations between the '*Gegnet*' (the Region)—the word substituted for 'Being' in this 'conversation'—and things. After remarking that 'the regioning of that-which-regions is

⁶⁵ W, 107.

⁶⁶ *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), 188.

⁶⁷ Op. cit., 205.

neither a cause nor an effect of things', Heidegger asks the question of what we are to call the relation between the Region and the things which it 'lets be'.⁶⁸ The answer is that the Region 'determines the thing, as thing', but Heidegger emphatically adds that 'determining is not making and effecting'.⁶⁹ In Volume 2 of *Nietzsche* we are told that it is Being which in its 'abundance' gives to all beings . . . 'the particular mode of their Being'.⁷⁰ There is also a puzzling and much-quoted remark in the Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics?' in which Heidegger declares that Being 'gives every being its warrant to be'.⁷¹ Unfortunately, this is not further explained. As if all this were not puzzling enough we occasionally get straightforward causal language which seems inconsistent with much else that Heidegger says about the relation between Being and beings. Thus in the Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics?' in which we had been told that Being gives every being its 'warrant to be', Heidegger also asserts that 'beings stem from Being',⁷² a statement which is echoed by Boss who, in the chapter of *Psychoanalysis and Daseinsanalysis*, which was supervised by Heidegger himself, asserts that 'Being is of such immeasurable abundance that it alone is capable of releasing into its being all that is going to be'.⁷³ These statements sound more like attributing to Being the role of a cosmic *causa in fieri*, but in fairness it should be pointed out that they were made some years before Heidegger's conversion to the view that Being is the ground of beings.

It is clear that beings cannot exist without Being which is their ground. Even before Heidegger came to identify Being with ground he would have unhesitatingly said the same thing since, as we saw earlier, without Being beings would sink into beinglessness. What about the relation in the opposite direction: could Being be without beings? One would expect Heidegger to answer this question in the affirmative and prior to 1949 he did so. Thus in the Postscript to the fourth edition of

⁶⁸ In the course of a review of Ernst Tugendhat's *Traditional and Analytical Philosophy*, Rorty writes in the *Journal of Philosophy* (1985), 278: 'Heidegger himself moved from the fervidly programmatic and quasi-Husserlian "fundamental ontology" of *Being and Time* to the ironic affectation of "letting go" (*Gelassenheit*) which characterizes his later work—an ironism carried further by Jacques Derrida'. Rorty has a wild imagination. There is not the slightest evidence of any such 'ironic affectation' either in *Gelassenheit* or in any of Heidegger's later works.

⁶⁹ *Discourse on Thinking*, transl. J. A. Anderson and E. H. Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 76–77. This translation is frequently inaccurate. As indicated most of the quotations are in my own translation.

⁷⁰ Op. cit., 250.

⁷¹ W, 102.

⁷² W, 100.

⁷³ P. 36.

'What is Metaphysics?' (1943) he maintains that beings can never be without Being but that Being can 'well' be without beings. In the fifth edition (1949) no more than three words of the sentence in question are changed, but they assert precisely the opposite, namely, that Being cannot be without beings any more than beings without Being. The Postscript in its later version was reprinted in 1967 in the collection *Wegmarken*. At the end of this book under the heading of '*Nachweise*' ('Sources of Publication') the following information is supplied: 'Postscript to "What is Metaphysics?" was added in 1943 to the fourth edition of the lecture. For the fifth edition the text of the Postscript was worked over in a few places.'⁷⁴ No further explanation is offered. To this day we do not know Heidegger's reason for this switch on what would seem a rather fundamental question for him.⁷⁵ In later years Heidegger stuck by the more 'this-worldly' position of the fifth edition Postscript. In '*Zur Seinsfrage*' ('The Question of Being'), an essay first published in 1955 and also reprinted in *Wegmarken*, '*Sein*' ('Being') is printed with lines diagonally across the word. This is meant to indicate that it does not exist in total independence of beings.

During the last decades of his life Heidegger engaged in various exercises that would allow him (and us) a more direct access to Being. Such access is obtained by reflecting on 'the hidden meaning' in the world of technology, by analysing a passage from Parmenides of whom Heidegger always spoke in terms of boundless admiration, by working out the etymology of certain Greek or German words or by reflecting on what would happen if we attained a certain mood. Of these later writings perhaps the best known is *Gelassenheit* to which I already referred. '*Gelassenheit*' ('releasement') is the name of a special mood and it is in effect the 'meditative' thinking which Heidegger had for many years been opposing to the 'calculative' thinking that can never rise above the world of beings. It is not a species of 'passivity', but *Gelassenheit* presupposes a 'renunciation of willing'. To make sure that Heidegger is not misunderstood Joan Stambaugh, a leading American shepherdess, emphasizes that in *Gelassenheit* we cannot simply sit back and expect 'to drop into the lap of Being'.⁷⁶ This would indeed be too

⁷⁴ P. 297.

⁷⁵ Karl Löwith was as far as I know the first to call attention to this flipflop in the first edition of his *Heidegger—Denker in dürftiger Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1953). In a later edition Löwith quotes and demolishes an attempt by W. Schultz, a German shepherd, to show that Heidegger's earlier and later statements are not mutually contradictory but constitute a 'dialectical unity' (3rd edn, 1965, 40–41).

⁷⁶ 'Heidegger, Taoism and the Question of Metaphysics', in G. Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 87.

much to expect. However, no very arduous labour is required. We have to engage in a special kind of waiting. Heidegger distinguishes between ordinary waiting (which he calls '*erwarten*') where we are waiting *for something* and which thus involves representational thinking, and the authentic waiting ('*warten*') of *Gelassenheit* which *has no object*. In *Gelassenheit* 'we leave it open what we are waiting for'.⁷⁷ Since Being is 'the Open' we will be able to let ourselves into it if we achieve the openness of authentic waiting. We then get the following remarkable exchange:

- Teacher: In waiting we leave it open what we are waiting for.
Scholar: Why?
Teacher: Because waiting lets itself into the Open itself. . . .
Scholar: The Open-itself is that for which alone we were waiting.
Inquirer: But the Open is the Region.
Teacher: Into which we are admitted by way of waiting.
. . .
Inquirer I tried to get away from all representational thinking because waiting moves into the Open without representational thinking. The Opening of the Open is the Region. This is why, released from all representational thinking, I tried to give myself over to the Region.⁷⁸

Heidegger repeatedly remarks that the Region regions. By this he seems to mean that Being in some fashion comes to meet us and allows us to enter it. However, only a very highly developed form of *Gelassenheit* is the appropriate state for consummating our quest. It is only 'composed, steadfast *Gelassenheit*' which is capable of 'receiving the regioning of the Region.' Heidegger now seems to have reached a vantage point from which he possesses a clear and unobstructed view of Being. Professor John M. Anderson, the co-translator and editor of the American edition of *Gelassenheit*, is convinced that Heidegger here 'speaks directly about Being' and 'gives an account of its nature'. He stands now 'in the midst of the ultimate' and, not surprisingly, Professor Anderson finds this an 'intoxicating moment'⁷⁹—far more intoxicating I suppose than the moment when Neal Armstrong set foot on the moon. What after all is the moon, a mere being, compared with the 'ultimate', with Being, the Region of regions? What information does Heidegger relay back to earth? The following are a few samples:

The Region gathers, just as if nothing were happening, each to each and each to all into an abiding, while resting in itself. Regioning is a

⁷⁷ *Gelassenheit* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), 44, my translation.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁷⁹ *Discourse on Thinking*, 39.

gathering and re-sheltering for an expanded resting in an abiding. . . . The Region is an abiding expanse which, gathering all, opens itself, so that in it openness is halted and held, letting everything merge in its own rest. . . . That-which-regions regions all, gathering everything together and letting everything return to itself, to rest in its own identity. Then that-which-regions itself is the nearness of distance, and the distance of nearness.⁸⁰

To people who are not as easily intoxicated as Heidegger's translator, these results will not seem overwhelmingly impressive.

So far from being exceptional, passages like those in which *Gelassenheit* culminates are entirely typical of the late Heidegger. I will here quote three specimens. The first I take from an essay written in 1946 entitled 'The Anaximander Fragment' in the English translation:

Here we think of the preserve in the sense of that gathering which clears and shelters; it suggests itself as a long-hidden fundamental trait of presencing, i.e. of Being. One day we shall learn to think our exhausted word for truth (*Wahrheit*) in terms of the preserve; to experience truth as the preservation (*Wahrnis*) of Being; and to understand that, as presencing, Being belongs to this preservation. As protection of Being, preservation belongs to the herdsman, who has so little to do with bucolic idylls and Nature mysticism that he can be the herdsman of Being only if he continues to hold the place of nothingness. Both are the same. Man can do both only within the openness of *Da-sein*.⁸¹

My next passage comes from a piece entitled 'Logos' (Heraclitus, Fragment B50). It appears on the dedication page of Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, a volume edited by David F. Krell, one of the most enthusiastic of all shepherds who would undoubtedly qualify for the post of secretary-treasurer of the Association of Shepherds and Shepherdesses if such an organization existed:

It is proper to every gathering that the gatherers assemble to co-ordinate their efforts to the sheltering, only when they have gathered together with that end in view do they begin to gather.⁸²

I do not know what Krell expects readers to make of such a passage. He seems to proceed on the assumption that everything Heidegger says is

⁸⁰ Ibid., 66 and 86.

⁸¹ *Early Greek Thinking*, transl. D. F. Krell and F. A. Capuzzi (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 36.

⁸² *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

not only entirely intelligible but so obviously true that disagreement is scarcely conceivable.⁸³

My third passage deals with the 'four-fold' (*'das Geviert'*)—the four 'regions of human dwelling'. These are earth and heaven, gods and mortals. Herbert Spiegelberg, not a shepherd but a sympathetic commentator, has called the 'four-fold' a 'puzzling conception';⁸⁴ but, puzzling or not, it constantly recurs in Heidegger's later works. Spiegelberg refers to an essay called *'Das Ding'* for an 'adumbration' of this notion. Here is a fairly representative sample from *'Das Ding'*:

Earth and sky, divinities and mortals—being at one with one another of their own accord—belong together by way of the simpleness of the united fourfold. Each of the four mirrors in its own way the presence of the others. Each therewith reflects itself in its own way into its own, within the simpleness of the four. This mirroring does not portray a likeness. The mirroring, lightening each of the four, appropriates their own presencing into simple belonging to one another. Mirroring in this appropriating—lightening way, each of the four plays to each of the others. The appropriate mirroring sets each of the four free into its own, but it binds these free ones into the simplicity of their essential being toward one another.⁸⁵

Passages like those just quoted are perhaps best described in the words of the unjustly forgotten Austrian philosopher, Adolf Stöhr (1855–1921), as a form of 'glossogonous' metaphysics. Stöhr distinguished several varieties of metaphysical systems and statements. Those for which he had the lowest regard he called 'pathogonous' and 'glossogonous' respectively. A 'pathogonous' metaphysician does not succeed in making true statements about the world. His goal is to soothe the 'suffering heart'; and if, as theists, deists, pantheists, absolute idealists, and reincarnationists have occasionally done, he manages to bring some comfort to physically and mentally ailing human beings, what he does is not without value. A glossogonous metaphysician

⁸³ In fairness it should be mentioned that Krell is a good translator and his 'Analysis' at the end of Vol. IV of the English language edition of *Nietzsche* shows him to be one of the less parochial shepherds. The editing of *Basic Writings* on the other hand can only be described as autistic: no attempt is made to break out of the obscure language of the original and there is not the slightest awareness of objections of the kind urged in the present article.

⁸⁴ *The Phenomenological Movement*, 2nd edn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), Vol. 2, 747.

⁸⁵ *Poetry, Language and Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 179. This book is a collection of miscellaneous essays by Heidegger translated by A. Hofstadter. The original passages can be found in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), 51ff.

resembles his pathogonous colleague in not making true statements about the world, but in his case there is also no intention of bringing relief to suffering mankind. All he does is 'roll words'. Such rolling of words may not bring comfort to anybody, but, if it is done skilfully, it can nevertheless produce ecstatic raptures, as the cases of Professors Anderson, Krell, and numerous other Heidegger enthusiasts show.

Warranting and Letting Be

Statements of the kind in which Heidegger's quest culminates—'the Region gathers, just as if nothing were happening, each to each and each to all into an abiding, while resting in itself'—are not further discussable. They either say nothing at all or, if they have any content, that content remains to be spelled out. However, the earlier moves in Heidegger's quest are discussable and there is a great deal about them that is objectionable. The main objection concerns of course Heidegger's belief that 'isness' or existence is a mysterious characteristic of things. To Heidegger this seems obvious but it can be shown to be mistaken and as a result Heidegger's entire quest does not get off the ground. I will discuss this issue in detail in a later section. There are also other objections which are by no means negligible. We are never told, for example, what is meant by saying that 'Being is the Open' or what evidence supports this assertion. Much the same applies to the claim that Being is 'the Holy'. Again, why do all things need one and the same 'ground' (if indeed all things need a ground) and why does the ground have to be a reality that is not a being? My dog needs food and air in order to subsist. They are essential components of his 'ground'. However, the food and the air which sustain my dog are not the same as the food and the air that sustained the dog of Julius Caesar if he had one; and they are 'ontic' or natural realities—they are beings. What is the need for Being here? Incidentally, when Heidegger speaks of Being as the ground of beings he seems to be committing the cardinal sin of making Being into a being. These criticisms assume that Heidegger means 'sustaining cause' and many of his statements suggest that he does.

As we saw, however, Heidegger also disavows the view that the relation between Being and beings is of a causal nature. We are repeatedly told that the relation is best described by the phrase 'letting be'; and this is taken to refer to a non-causal relation. As usual Heidegger does not offer anything that can be called an explanation but shepherdess Joan Stambaugh addressed herself to this question in the article from which I quoted earlier. She asks us to consider the statement 'I am growing carrots and peas'. This statement, she observes, is

false as it stands: there is no way on earth that she can grow carrots and peas or anything else. All she can do, Stambaugh writes, 'is *let* them grow by providing the proper conditions of water, good soil, and so on'.⁸⁶ The shepherdess is the only one among the devout who appears to have seen that, as used in this context, 'letting be' requires analysis; but her efforts must be judged to be a failure. For what she has given us is an example of a causal relation. The fact that the planter's actions are not the *sufficient* cause of the growth of the vegetables does not mean that they are not causally related to the end product. We have not been provided with an example of a non-causal relation that could serve as a model for a relation between Being and beings. Until this is done we must conclude either that Heidegger is committed to a causal relation in which case our earlier objections apply or else that no coherent position has been advanced.

As for the warranting of things by Being, the obvious question is why beings need to be warranted. Cars, refrigerators and appliances of various kinds need warranties, but why trees and mountains? Why animals and human beings? Surely the assertion that beings require a warranter needs some justification. I am here completely ignoring the question of how one can intelligibly speak of something as strange as Being or the Region as 'warranting' something. We understand this word only in contexts in which the warranter is an observable or 'ontic' reality like a human being. What can it possibly mean when applied to the 'ungraspable', 'indeterminate' and 'unique which conceals itself'?

Something also needs to be said about Heidegger's flipflop on the question of whether Being can be without beings. I will not here dwell on the surreptitious way in which it was introduced. What I wish to emphasize is that there is no way of deciding which of the two conflicting positions is correct. Suppose for the sake of illustration that Heidegger's followers were to split into a 'right wing' faction which supports the earlier view that Being *can* be without beings and a 'left wing' whose members maintain that Being *cannot* be without beings. How could this dispute be resolved? Surely not by any observational tests. By 'logical' arguments or conceptual analyses? Hardly. Perhaps an appeal to *Gelassenheit* would do the trick. Clearly not. Suppose that both left and right wing Heideggerians achieved *Gelassenheit* and each group maintained that it confirmed its opinion. What then? It seems clear that there cannot be any reason either way and that Heidegger's option for what I have called the left wing view is totally arbitrary and illustrates the 'anything goes' character of his philosophy. In one of his tirades against 'intellectualism' he opposes the replacement of the old calcu-

⁸⁶ *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, op. cit., 88.

lative thinking of 'traditional logic' by 'sheer feeling',⁸⁷ but what except emotional (or possibly political) considerations could have motivated his decision in favour of this-worldliness?

The Being of the Building and the Possible Heart Attack

Let us now turn to Heidegger's starting point: his search for the is-ness of Beingness of things—the is-ness of the chalk, the school building, the lecture hall and all the other things which make up the world. Ordinary people to whom one reads the passages in which Heidegger states his 'problematic' at once sense something very odd; and they are right. His search for the is-ness or Beingness of things is based on a false assumption and the ordinary person vaguely realizes this. I will now show what this assumption is and why it is false—why, in other words, Heidegger's problematic is a pseudo-inquiry and his quest a non-starter. In doing this I shall very largely base myself on the work of philosophers to whom Heidegger in several places contemptuously refers as practitioners of 'logistics' and whose ideas he did not understand or care to understand.

To begin with, Heidegger totally fails to distinguish between the 'is' of predication ('the sky is blue'), the 'is' of identity ('a triangle is a plane figure bounded by three straight lines') and the 'is' of existence ('there is a God'). Thus he mistakenly believes that 'the lecture hall is illuminated' is an existential statement of the same form as 'the lecture hall is, that is, exists'. It might be pointed out in passing that while in everyday English 'is' is sometimes used to assert existence, this is not true of *'ist'* in German. It is only in the artificial language of some philosophers that *'ist'* comes to be used as an equivalent of 'exists' (*'existiert'*). Although serious, this confusion is not the main trouble here. The main trouble is Heidegger's totally uncritical assumption that is-ness or Being must belong to or be 'in' things. At first sight this may indeed appear to be a plausible assumption. We say for example that tigers are fierce and this presupposes that tigers exist. It is not unnatural to construe this as showing that existence is a more basic characteristic than fierceness: tigers must exist in order to be fierce, but they need not be fierce in order to exist. Similar remarks would apply to other statements in which we ascribe characteristics to objects—'opera singers are vain', 'dogs are loyal', 'politicians are ambitious'. In all such statements the basic characteristic of existence is assumed before the non-basic characteristic—vanity, loyalty, ambitiousness—can be ascribed to the various subjects.

⁸⁷ *IM*, 103.

The assumption that existence is the most basic characteristic of existing things—one which is presupposed in all their other characteristics—may at first seem plausible because of the grammatical form of existence-statements. However, a little reflection shows it to be false. Existence is not the most basic characteristic of existing things because it is not a characteristic at all; and it is not an ingredient or ground or source of things either. The following illustration will help us see what the word ‘exists’ does and does not mean. I complain to a friend that I am dissatisfied with all the secretaries I have had and that I am looking for a ‘supersecretary’. I then explain that by a ‘supersecretary’ I mean a person whose spelling is perfect (characteristic S_1), whose typing speed is 120 words per minute (S_2), who is fluent in English, Hindustani and Chinese (S_3), who has an expert knowledge of quantum mechanics and physical cosmology (S_4), a PhD in clinical psychology (S_5), and who can make excellent coffee (S_6). To this my friend replies, ‘Such people do not exist’. I disagree and say ‘They may be difficult to find, but I am sure that such people do exist’. Now, clearly, when I say ‘supersecretaries exist’ I do *not* mean ‘there are people possessing characteristics S_1 – S_6 and they exist’; and when my friend says ‘supersecretaries do not exist’ he does *not* mean ‘there are people possessing characteristics S_1 – S_6 and they do not exist’. What I mean is that somebody in the world (one or more individuals) possesses the characteristics S_1 – S_6 , i.e. that somebody is a supersecretary and what my friend means is that not one of the entities in the world possesses all these six characteristics. The same of course applies to the statements ‘cats exist’ and ‘dogs exist’ and all the rest. When I say that cats exist I am not ascribing a characteristic to cats; I am asserting that something or some things possess the characteristics connoted by the word ‘cat’, that these characteristics apply to something. Similarly when I say that unicorns do not exist I am denying that anything possesses the characteristics connoted by the word ‘unicorn’, i.e. that these characteristics do not (jointly) apply to anything. More generally, when we say ‘ x exists’ we assert that the characteristics which make up the content of the concept x have application.⁸⁸ It will be convenient from now on to use less cumbersome language and speak simply of ‘descriptions’ or ‘concepts’ having application or being exemplified or instantiated.

Bertrand Russell provided an elegant formulation of the account just given, using terminology which has become familiar to students of

⁸⁸ There is an excellent concise summary of this analysis in Ernst Tugendhat, *Traditional and Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), 300: ‘To establish whether unicorns exist we do not examine the possible unicorns with regard to whether the predicate of “existence” applies to them; rather we examine the objects of the spatiotemporal world with regard to whether the predicate “unicorn” applies to some of them’.

modern logic but which is easily understood even without lengthy explanations. When we make an existential statement we are asserting that a certain propositional function results in a true proposition upon the replacement of the variable by a suitable constant. Thus 'cats exist' is equivalent to 'the propositional function " x is a cat" is true for some value of x ' (e.g. my neighbour's cat Miranda). Similarly, 'unicorns do not exist' is equivalent to 'the propositional function " x is a unicorn" is false for all values of x '.

It is evident that the grammatical form of 'cats exist' is highly misleading. It suggests that what we are talking about, our subject, is cats and that we are ascribing the characteristic of existence to them. In fact, 'cat' is the predicate and the subject is ' x ' or 'something'. 'Cats exist' means 'something is a cat'. For a comprehension of this analysis it is necessary to possess a certain intellectual flexibility and to be able to look beyond grammatical appearances: we have to be able to engage in the mental 'twist' of transferring the ostensible subject ('cats') to its proper position of predicate. The intellectual aptitude required for carrying out this twist is not of a high order, but it is evident that neither Heidegger nor his disciples, who look for the is-ness in the chalk, the building, and the lecture hall, possess it. Let us return for a moment to Heidegger's example of the school building's existence. If anything belongs to the school building, Heidegger wrote, it is its existence. This is *not* so if 'belongs' is meant to indicate that the school building's existence is its most basic characteristic. The school building does indeed exist, but this does not mean that it has the characteristic of existence. It means that the thing Heidegger was talking about and looking at is a school building, or, in other words, that the description or concept 'school building' is exemplified in it.

Not only Heidegger but almost anybody coming to the subject for the first time is liable to interpret existence as a characteristic. Both cats and dogs exist: what could be more obvious than that they share the common characteristic of existence just as they share the characteristics of being animals, pets, and protective of their young! We can now see that this is quite wrong. It is true that both cats and dogs exist, but this means that both the concept 'cat' and the concept 'dog' apply to something, that these descriptions are instantiated. Using Russell's terminology it means that both of the propositional functions ' x is a cat' and ' x is a dog' yield true propositions for some value of x . Similarly both unicorns and centaurs do not exist. This does not mean that they share the characteristic of non-existence; it means that neither the concept 'unicorn' nor the concept 'centaur' applies to anything in the world, or, using Russell's terminology, that neither the propositional function ' x is a unicorn' nor ' x is a centaur' yields a true proposition for any value of x . As for Heidegger's assumption that existence is the most basic

characteristic presupposed by all others, we can now see what real facts it misdescribes. It is quite true, to take our earlier example, that the fierceness of tigers presupposes their existence, but this does not mean that tigers must possess the basic characteristic of existence in order to possess the less basic characteristic of fierceness. It means that the predicative statement 'tigers are fierce' logically presupposes the existential statement 'tigers exist'; and the latter statement does not of course ascribe the characteristic of existence to tigers but asserts that the description 'tiger' applies to something.

It is evident that grammatical form is not a dependable guide to the meaning or content of statements. People who do not see this in connection with existential statements usually have no difficulty in grasping the point when we deal with statements whose grammatical subject is the word 'nothing'. In 'nothing is both red and blue all over' we are obviously not referring to a remarkable entity, 'the nothing', which is affirmed to be both red and blue all over. What we mean is that there is not *anything* which is both red and blue all over. Our real or 'logical' subject is 'anything' and the word 'nothing' indicates that we are *denying* of anything that it is both blue and red all over. In Russell's terminology: the propositional function '*x* is red and blue all over' is false for all values *x*.

Some of the clarifications of existential statements explained above are due to Kant, but, aside from some backsliding, Kant did not succeed in providing an adequate positive account of existence. He realized that the word 'exists' is not the name of a characteristic, but he did not succeed in spelling out its meaning or function. This is best explained by saying that 'existence' belongs to a class of what Russell and other pioneers of modern logic call 'logical constants'—words like 'or', 'and', 'not', 'possible' and 'all'. All these words have a clear meaning and play an important role in our language, but they are not the names of characteristics, natural or supernatural, or of things or any kind of reality, familiar or mysterious. If I say 'at the reception I shall wear a black or a blue tie (but definitely not a red or a green one)' everybody understands this statement although I cannot point to any thing or characteristic which is designated by 'or'. The use of the word 'or' indicates that I am engaging in the operation of disjunction rather than for example in the operation of conjunction or negation; and the fact that I cannot anywhere in the world detect 'or-ness' does not deprive the word 'or' of its meaning or usefulness. Similar remarks apply to all the other logical constants. That 'exists' is a logical constant and, more specifically, what logicians mean by a quantifier, can easily be seen when one reflects that in any existential statement we can remove the word 'exists' from the content-part and insert 'there is' or 'there are' into what we might call the 'logical machinery' part without in any way

changing the meaning of the original statement. 'Cats exist' can be rewritten as 'there is something, x , which is a cat' or more simply 'there are cats', or 'there is a cat'; and quite clearly 'there is' or 'there are' are not expressions which designate a characteristic.

As a parallel it will be instructive to consider the use of the word 'possible' in such a statement as 'the foreign secretary was admitted to the hospital with a possible heart attack'. Grammatically, 'possible' functions here as an adjective, as if it qualified 'heart attack' in the way in which 'mild' or 'serious' might do so. However, neither the most careful examination of the foreign secretary's heart nor of anything else will show us the characteristics designated by the word 'possible'. A Heideggerian might then construct a 'problematic of possibility' and argue that since a heart attack on the foreign secretary's part was certainly a possibility, it must somehow 'belong to' him or to his heart. However, since we cannot perceive this possibility it must be a '*transcendens*', 'wholly other', 'ungraspable', 'indeterminable' and all the rest. Human beings talk and think a great deal about specific possibilities—a possible salary raise, a possible election victory, a possible heart attack, a possible plane crash, but who among them remembers *die Möglichkeit als solche*, possibility-as-such, the Possibility of possibilities, the Possibleness? Human beings have forgotten the Possibleness. If one of them perchance does remember it for a moment, he is so overwhelmed by its magnificence that he at once returns to some mundane and vulgar possibility like a possible cure for cancer or a possible killing on the stock market. As a result the Possibleness is so totally and pitifully forgotten that not even the forgottenness of Being remotely compares with it in forgottenness. There is evidently a field-day here for shepherds and shepherdesses to rescue the human race from disaster. The 'problematic of possibleness' as well as its mystical resolution are avoided once we see that, although, grammatically, 'possible' occupies the place of an adjective, its real function is that of a logical operator. 'The foreign secretary suffered a possible heart attack' is equivalent to 'it is possible that the foreign secretary suffered a heart attack'; and there is now clearly no need for a Heideggerian search or quest.

It should be remarked that what Heidegger says about the 'ontological difference' is *in a sense* quite true. He is right to maintain that Being is not a being, but the truth behind this is nothing more than that the word 'exists' is a logical constant and not the name of a thing or characteristic. Furthermore, the word 'exists' does have a unique function—its function as a logical constant is significantly different from that of other logical constants—but this does not mean that it designates a unique and mysterious reality. Things may well have mysterious

characteristics and mysterious ingredients, mysterious sources and grounds, but existence cannot be one of them.

A few words are also in order concerning Heidegger's 'discovery' of the 'paradoxical nature of Being', its 'mysterious tendency' to reveal as well as to conceal itself in beings—a kind of cosmic and eternal strip-tease. This theme is endlessly repeated in Heidegger's later works. We can now see that there is no 'mystery' at all here and that Heidegger has not discovered anything. The 'concealment' of Being is a way of referring to the fact that when we look for existence in things we cannot find it; the 'revelation' of Being is a needlessly mystical way of saying that things nevertheless exist. We may fairly characterize Heidegger's discovery of the 'paradoxical nature of Being' as a bombastic redescription of these facts; and, unlike the analysis of existential statements outlined above, it does nothing to explain them.

It may be of some interest to consider a criticism of Kant offered by William Barrett who, unlike most other shepherds, is aware that what Kant and Russell have said about existence constitutes a grave menace to Heidegger's quest. In connection with his illustration of the concept of a hundred dollars Kant remarked that there is not one cent more or less in a hundred merely possible dollars than in a hundred real ones. Kant, according to Barrett, was also 'candid enough' to admit that unlike the merely possible hundred dollars, the real ones make a difference to his financial position. Why, asks Barrett, 'this grudging concession to the earthy fact of one's financial position, almost by way of accidental footnote?' The ordinary citizen 'knows very well the difference between a hundred merely possible dollars (of which he may dream) and a hundred real dollars'. Barrett regards this as a powerful commonsense argument against Kant's denial that existence is a characteristic. The ordinary citizen 'might be provoked . . . to exclaim that if the concepts of philosophers allow no difference between a hundred real dollars and a hundred merely possible dollars, then so much the worse for the concepts of philosophers'.⁸⁹

This superficially plausible argument is seen to be invalid if we keep in mind what alone is the point at issue. It is whether existence is a characteristic of existing objects. Heidegger assumes this. Kant and Russell deny it. Let us suppose that A needs money to pay his rent but does not have a cent in his possession. He dreams of having a hundred dollars which would enable him to pay his rent. This is a mere dream of possessing a hundred dollars. The afternoon after his dream a rich uncle visits A and gives him a hundred dollars. Barrett believes that the merely dreamt hundred dollars lack the characteristic of existence which the physical hundred dollars donated by the uncle possess. This

⁸⁹ *Irrational Man* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 263.

is not so. It is perfectly true that there are significant differences here. The 'real' hundred dollars have *physical* existence. They possess certain characteristics—those referred to by the words 'physical' or 'material'—which the dream dollars lack. They have mass, they occupy space and they are publicly observable. This is why they enable A to pay the rent. There is not the slightest reason to suppose that they possess the further characteristic of existence. It should be remembered that the dream which A had existed no less than the physical hundred dollars. The word 'exists' means exactly the same when we assert the existence of the dream as it does when we assert the existence of the physical hundred dollars, although of course *what* we assert is very different. In the one case we assert that there is something which is a dream of a hundred dollars; in the other that there is something which is an instance of a physical hundred dollars. Barrett confuses physicality with existence. They are not the same as is evident from the fact that 'physical objects exist' is not a tautology. In Kant's terminology 'physical' is a real predicate, but this does not mean that 'exists' is one also. We could of course *decide* to make 'exists' mean the same as 'physical'. This would not help Heidegger's cause and it would also lead to nothing but confusion. For we would still need a word to do the job which 'exists' now does, i.e. that of enabling us to assert that a given characteristic or set of characteristics applies to something.

Following Barrett's own suggestion I conducted this discussion in terms of the difference between the dream of a hundred dollars and its physical counterpart, but it could have been done in terms of Kant's terminology of concept and object. It is clear that Kant's 'grudging concession' about the improvement in his financial position by the physical hundred dollars but not by the corresponding concept is not in any way an admission of defeat; and it is not of course a grudging concession at all. Kant's thesis is not that objects corresponding to a given concept *are* these concepts. His thesis is that the existence of an object corresponding to a given concept is not a characteristic of the object. The concept of a hundred dollars is certainly not identical with a hundred physical dollars, but for that matter neither is the concept of a dream of a hundred dollars identical with such a dream. We can eat tomatoes and pears but not the corresponding concepts. None of this has the slightest tendency to show that the existence of any of these things—tomatoes, pears, hundred dollar bills or dreams of hundred dollar bills—is one of their characteristics, which is the only point at issue.

Existentialist writers are fond of remarking that in order to 'logicize' or do any kind of philosophy a person must 'first exist'.⁹⁰ More gener-

⁹⁰ Barrett, op. cit., 271.

ally, it is suggested that since 'exists' sometimes means 'alive' and since 'alive' is obviously the name of certain characteristics, existence must at least in these cases be a characteristic. This is an interesting objection, but it is invalid. We have to distinguish two very different situations in which we say that somebody or something is alive. In the first we contrast living with dead bodies or animate with inanimate objects. Let us suppose that I am an assistant roach exterminator working in the kitchen of an apartment while the chief exterminator is spreading boric acid on the floor of the living room. 'How are you doing?' he calls out, to which I reply, 'Most of the beasts are dead but a few are still alive'. Here 'alive' designates certain characteristics but here it does *not* mean 'exists'. After all, the dead roaches exist as much as those that are still alive. In the second kind of situation we do use 'alive' interchangeably with 'exists'. A conservationist concerned with the future of the mountain gorilla might say 'right now several hundred of these animals are still alive, but if nothing is done to stop the poachers, they will be extinct in another twenty-five years'. Instead of saying that several hundred mountain gorillas are still alive he could have said that they still exist and instead of saying that in another twenty-five years the gorillas will be extinct he could have said that they will no longer exist. A little reflection will show that here 'alive' is *not* the name of any characteristics. As asserted in *this* context, 'mountain gorillas are still alive' or, more naturally, 'mountain gorillas still exist' is entirely susceptible of the kind of analysis explained earlier. We are asserting that something is a mountain gorilla, i.e. that the description 'mountain gorilla' applies to something.

The Immeasurable Forgottenness of Being

The preceding discussion will shed some light on why Heideggerian expressions such as 'forgetfulness of Being', 'remembrance of Being', 'commitment to Being', 'openness to Being' and many more appear so puzzling and incomprehensible. In Volume 7 of his *History of Philosophy*, Father Frederick Copleston, who is a sensible man, a superb scholar and a gentle critic, briefly discusses Heidegger's assertions about the world's forgetfulness of Being. Copleston comments that Heidegger seems 'unable to explain clearly what they have forgotten or why this forgetfulness should be as disastrous as he says it is'.⁹¹ Similarly, when one mentions Heidegger's pronouncements to students who are initially quite uncommitted one way or the other, they simply draw a blank. We can now see that such reactions are perfectly justified

⁹¹ *A History of Philosophy* (London: Burns and Oates, 1963), Vol. VIII, 438.

for the simple reason that all the expressions in question are nonsensical. I will show this in some detail in connection with 'forgetfulness of Being', but much the same applies to the others.

If 'exists' were the name of a thing or if it designated a characteristic or perhaps an activity it might make sense to say that somebody has forgotten it. As we saw, however, 'exists' is a logical constant and it does not make sense to say that one has forgotten that which a logical constant designates because it does not designate anything. A person may conceivably forget who George Washington was, he may forget an appointment with the dentist or how to ride a bicycle; he may forget what a cruel ruler Stalin was and he may even forget that there is such a character trait as cruelty. In the case of the putative designata of logical constants, on the other hand, there is nothing to forget. This, incidentally, is the reason why Heidegger at the outset of his quest felt that he was reaching into a void. He was looking for the referent of 'exists' and even he half-realized that it has none.

There is a sense in which somebody might forget what a logical constant means, but it is not the sense required by Heidegger. A person with a serious brain lesion might forget the meaning of 'or' or 'not' and also of 'exists'. What this means is that he would no longer understand disjunctive and negative and existential statements. It is clear that this is not what Heidegger needs. The alleged forgetters of Being—mankind in general and most philosophers—are perfectly capable of making and understanding existential statements. More than that: some of them, for example, Kant, Frege and Russell, have a very good understanding of the logical grammar of 'exists'.

There is a tendency, especially on the part of those who feel that Heidegger must mean something, to read certain things into 'forgetting' and 'remembering Being' which would give these phrases some content but which are ruled out by Heidegger's initial stipulations. Thus some readers may think of the estrangement of many city dwellers from 'nature' and others may associate the phrase 'forgetfulness of Being' with the loss of contact with one's deeper emotions which is or is at least asserted to be very common in the modern world. Perhaps Heidegger did have some such things in mind, but he cannot mean anything like this if he is true to what he says concerning the ontological difference. 'Nature', i.e. such objects as animals and plants and forests and mountains and lakes, no less than human emotions, are beings and not Being. Moreover, if all that Heidegger meant was that modern men are estranged from nature or from their deeper feelings, this could surely have been said much more clearly without talking about the forgetfulness of Being.

Conclusion

Heidegger's writings, especially those after *Being and Time*, are much worse than anything the above discussion is likely to convey. In reviewing *Introduction to Metaphysics* many years ago,⁹² Anthony Quinton spoke of 'its ponderous and rubbishy woolgathering' and he observed that the book appears much better in summary than it really is. *Introduction to Metaphysics* was written in 1935 and compared to what was to follow it is a model of lucidity and concision. I have given a few samples of Heidegger word-torrents, but for the most part I have extracted the more or less discussable conclusions. No matter what the starting point of a discussion is in the later works, whether it is a passage from Parmenides, a poem by Hölderlin or a quotation from Nietzsche, the end is always the same: Being '*west*', the Presence presences, Being conceals itself but reveals itself in its very concealment or the other way around, the Appropriation appropriates (I skipped this one out of mercy for my readers), and of course the basic fact that beings are not Being. In between we get bogus Greek and German etymologies which would prove nothing even if they were not bogus and all kinds of gimmicks including the constant breaking up of German words (what Sheehan had aptly dubbed 'hyphenitis') and the coinage of new words which remain totally unexplained. As a result we are given huge masses of hideous gibberish which must be unique in the history of philosophy. All of this is presented in an oracular style with the suggestion, sometimes made explicit, that the various pronouncements emanate from a higher power.

Being and Time too contains large doses of impenetrable jargon and in my monograph *Heidegger and Death*⁹³ I have tried to show that its 'celebrated' section on death consists very largely of pretentiously expressed platitudes. However, the book does contain a number of interesting and potentially valuable ideas. Unfortunately these are usually presented so cryptically that they cry out for expansion and explanation, which are not to be found in the writings of shepherds and shepherdesses whose outpourings are largely paraphrases of Heidegger texts accompanied by ringing and often lyrical endorsements. Fortunately the very able German philosopher, Ernst Tugendhat, an ex-shepherd who is steeped in analytic philosophy, has made a serious and, I think, successful attempt to elucidate Heidegger's dark saying that '*Dasein* is an entity . . . [for which] in its very being that being is an *issue* for it'. Tugendhat's analysis translates Heidegger's assertion into the claim that human beings possess second-order desires concerning

⁹² *Philosophical Books*, 1960, 11–13.

⁹³ La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1979.

their first-order desires, i.e. concerning what kind of persons they are to be.⁹⁴ This is a good beginning and I hope that others who have the patience will follow in Tugendhat's steps.

In his article in the *New Republic*, Rorty predicted that philosophers 'for centuries to come' will benefit from Heidegger's 'original and powerful narrative' of the history of philosophy from the Greeks to Nietzsche. I doubt this very much. What is more likely, I believe, is that Heidegger will continue to fascinate those hungry for mysticism of the anaemic and purely verbal variety, the 'glossogonous metaphysics' of which his philosophy is such an outstanding example. The odds are that people afflicted in this way will exist for a long time; and if this is so, Heidegger will indeed be read and admired in future centuries. More sober and rational persons will continue to regard the whole Heidegger phenomenon as a grotesque aberration of the human mind.

Note

The account of existential statements offered in this article is largely based on Bertrand Russell's discussions in Chapters 15 and 16 of *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1919) and 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism' originally published in *The Monist* in 1918 and reprinted in *Logic and Knowledge* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1956). The following works contain excellent non-technical presentations of Russell's theory: L. S. Stebbing, *A Modern Introduction to Logic*, Chapter IX (London: Methuen, 1930), Gilbert Ryle, 'Systematically Misleading Expressions', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1931/32), W. Kneale, 'Is Existence a Predicate?' *Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume 15* (1936), and Alan Donagan, 'Recent Criticisms of Russell's Analysis of Existence', *Analysis* (1952). A popular summary by Russell himself is contained in an essay entitled 'My Own Philosophy' published posthumously by the Bertrand Russell Archives in 1972 (Hamilton, Ont.: McMaster University Library Press). It should be mentioned that a number of analytic philosophers and logicians are not satisfied that Russell's account successfully captures all meanings of 'exists'. One well-known objection, due to G. E. Moore, maintains that 'this exists' said by somebody who is pointing at an object is not meaningless, as Russell's theory seems to imply, and that we have here a second sense of 'exists'. Russell is defended against all major criticisms by C. J. F. Williams in *What is Existence?* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

⁹⁴ *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988), Lectures 8–10.

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It would be presumptuous for me to express an opinion on what have become highly technical issues. Fortunately this is not necessary since none of the writers who are in varying degrees critical of Russell's account would go along with the starting point of Heidegger's quest—that 'is-ness' is a mysterious and 'unfindable' characteristic shared by pieces of chalk, school buildings, lecture halls, stones and all the other things whose existence we are entitled to assert. It should be added that the great majority of Russell's critics would agree that even if his theory fails to capture *all* the meanings of 'exists' it does succeed in offering a correct and highly illuminating account of one main use of the word.⁹⁵

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