

Guest Preface

1. Why This Book?

We pay a dear price for letting Heidegger's abstruse style mislead us either about what he was trying to do or what he actually accomplished. That price is underestimating the value of what has been regarded by many as one of the most important achievements in twentieth-century philosophy. Clearly W. H. Werkmeister must have so regarded Heidegger's work. Why else would he, in the very last year of his life, have devoted priceless days to his manuscript *Martin Heidegger on the Way*?

2. Heidegger's "Revolution"

Heidegger, taking a strong hint from Søren Kierkegaard (whom he never adequately acknowledged), and following the regrettably convoluted methodology of his teacher Husserl, did nothing less than redefine the philosophical meaning of "existence" as *human* existence. In so doing, he set the tone for Existentialism, the single-most important movement of the twentieth century in continental European philosophy. The Anglo-American "linguistic revolution" is usually seen by its practitioners as drastically different from, if not downright opposed to, the existentialist one. But from a broader historical perspective, these may actually express concurrence in complementary ways. Both constitute "revolutions in ontology" which relativize the philosophical enterprise to *human* ways of being.

The "linguistic mode" does this by relativizing ontology (or metaphysics) to human language(s). The "existentialist mode" (as it is rightly called) relativizes ontology to human feelings, moods, and attitudes. Their common stem is an emphatic agreement that Kant's second "Copernican revolution" is irreversible. Henceforth there can be no return to the carefree days of all those metaphysicians who from the pre-Socratics to Kant's pre-critical philosophy thought they could tell us what Being (or existence) *objectively is*. The twentieth-century majority agreement seems to be that reality as it really is in itself, apart from being experienced or described by us, is indeed unknowable, if it exists at all.

We must not allow Heidegger's failure to answer his question, "What is Being in general?" to confuse us. Although I believe that this ultimately confused *him*. He had already given his own lengthy and profound answer to that in his *Daseinanalytik* but did not realize this because—misled by his version of the

Husserlian program—he was never able to admit that he had in fact identified *Being* with *Being for us* from the very start. At times he seems to acknowledge this: for he treats *Dasein*, after all, as *human* being. However, I believe that he was misled by the fact that Husserl had always insisted that his own enterprise was an “objective” one, one that did not fall into “the trap of psychologizing,” and one that was certainly not a form of *subjectivism*. Since, however, “a text belongs to its readers,”¹ we must judge both Husserl’s and Heidegger’s works in these respects by our own lights.

What was Heidegger doing when he asked about “the meaning of Being”?

3. Heidegger’s Contributions

Heidegger thought that the Western world needed a *philosophical* account of Being, in addition to the scientific one permeating the twentieth century. Considering himself conversant enough in mathematics and physics to discuss the nature of time with Einstein, Heidegger believed that what was missing from the scientific account was the human dimension. He thought that because of this absent “spiritual” perspective, most people today feel “lost” in their world. (It is important not to confuse the term “spiritual” [*geistlich*] as Heidegger used it with either “moral” or “religious.” He went out of his way to deny such connotations.)

Heidegger thus offered his “ontological” (philosophical) account of “Being” as opposed to the “ontic” or “factual” one posed by science and the unthinking ordinary mentality stemming from it in a technological era. He saw the “ontological” viewpoint as necessary for the possibility of living a genuinely *human life* as opposed to the mere biological and physical existence of a sapient humanoid among a world of things. Within this analysis of *human* existence (*Daseinanalytik*) Heidegger laid out in fascinating detail the possibilities for what he called “authentic” versus “inauthentic” existence. Here it was his genius to expand vastly some of Kierkegaard’s major insights regarding *Angst* and the strong tendency to deny the inescapable reality of one’s eventual death. Heidegger took what for Kierkegaard was deeply embedded in a nineteenth-century Christian context and transformed and elaborated it into the secular context of the twentieth century. The result included an exposition on the permutations of meaninglessness which contemporary Western people experience. This aspect of *Being and Time* can be breathtaking once the reader is able to sift through Heidegger’s off-putting “hermeneutical” apparatus and vocabulary.

An equally powerful element in Heidegger’s analysis of *human* being derives from Henri Bergson (although acknowledging his sources was not one of

Heidegger's strong suits). From Bergson, Heidegger learned that there is a fundamental ontological difference between scientific time and lived human time. Heidegger realized that most people live inauthentically because the quality of the moments making up their lives is not infused with an awareness of their "being-towards-death." Thus they lead empty lives frittered away in the meaningless pursuit of that "everydayness" that is dictated by the crowd. Killing time with "idle chatter" and the general refusal to see themselves as beings who can *choose* their lives are only two examples of what Karen Horney was later so aptly to call the "shallow living" of most people.² People refuse their own freedom and humanity in this way because they participate in the inauthenticity of their death-denying society. Heidegger is at his best, in my view, when he thus blends insights from Kierkegaard and Bergson into an original perspective on the spiritual bankruptcy of twentieth-century Western existence. *This* is his permanent contribution to philosophy. Whether it should be called "ontology," "phenomenology," or "existentialism" remains to be seen.

It is regrettable that Heidegger's penetrating observations about the meaning of *human being* (existence) are hidden behind the almost impenetrable thicket of words, arcane terminology, labyrinthine methodology, and unfulfilled expectations which make up *Being and Time*. The fact that his latter writings are also abstruse, although in somewhat different ways, is no help. Nor is the still steaming controversy over Heidegger's involvement with the Nazis and the extent to which this is relevant to history's assessment of his work. I think that all these factors, but especially the two problems to be discussed below, must have entered into Werkie's long delay in finishing *Martin Heidegger on the Way*. Only Heidegger's actual achievement despite these factors could account for the fact that Werkie chose the last days of his life to bring it to completion.

4. Was Heidegger an Existentialist?

The present manuscript, and E. F. Kaelin's "Guest Foreword," force us to address the question: Was Heidegger an existentialist? He himself adamantly rejected the label, insisting that he was an ontologist and not one of that ilk called "existentialist" (by then associated with Sartre). Werkmeister in *Martin Heidegger on the Way* defends this assessment by Heidegger of his own place in the history of philosophy. Kaelin, on the other hand, writes that, "according to one of the best of these readers [Thomas Langan],³ Heidegger produced an 'existential phenomenology' in writing *Being and Time*."⁴ The opposition between Kaelin and Werkie on this point produces our first philosophical problem.

5. Does Heidegger's Involvement with National Socialism Discredit His Philosophy?

The issue here does *not* concern whether, or to what extent, Heidegger was a Nazi. The answer to that is depressingly clear to anyone who has open-mindedly studied the history and literature. Kaelin's comments on this are entirely apt. The problem for philosophers concerns the question whether we should base our final evaluation of Heidegger's philosophy on its author's political thought and actions. A troublingly convincing case can be made for either side of this argument. We thus find ourselves with two problems which are reminiscent of an ancient rabbi story.

A rabbi was once consulted by two parties to a dispute. The first man presented his case, and the rabbi, nodding gravely, said, "You're right." The second man presented *his* case, which was in complete opposition to the first man's. Again the rabbi nodded gravely, saying "You're right." An exasperated observer then said to the rabbi, "But they both can't be right." The Rabbi answered, more gravely than ever, "You're RIGHT."

Do we find ourselves in the position of this rabbi with respect to our two Heidegger questions? To consider this, let us first reflect on the topics of ambiguity, gestalt shifts, and Kant's treatment of antinomies.

6. Ambiguity, Gestalt Shifts, and Antinomies

Spy and counterspy war movies are full of intriguing ambiguities and gestalt shifts. At first we think we know who our enemies and allies are. But as the story unfolds it is harder and harder to be sure. Friends turn out to be traitors, and enemies are suddenly on our side. The more shifts, the more fascinating the story. There is a difference, though, between such dramas and the ambiguities we are considering here. In most counter-espionage stories there is a final resolution of the plot, and we end with the satisfaction of knowing who was who and what was what. The difference in the Heidegger case is that we may be dealing with some genuine antinomies, concerning which—despite our most earnest efforts—it would be presumptuous to insist that we have achieved an indisputable resolution.

Nicolai Hartmann—Heidegger's contemporary on whose philosophy Werkie also wrote⁵—believed that some antinomies, especially those concerning value, are inherently irresolvable. Only these, he said, are genuine antinomies; "antinomies

which can be resolved are not genuine.”⁶ We must examine the Heideggerian antinomies to see whether they are ultimately irresolvable because, as Hartmann believed regarding certain of our deepest value oppositions, the values themselves conflict. Or can they be resolved by following a hint from Kant?

7. Kant’s Antinomies

Kant used two different approaches to resolving the antinomies of the transcendental dialectic in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. He said that in the case of the first two (“the mathematical”), both empiricists and rationalists were right in denying the dogmatic assertions of their opponents, but wrong in trying to prove their own counter-claims. In short, the theses of both parties to the dispute were false. In the case of the other two antinomies (“the dynamical”), however, Kant argued that the thesis of each might be true as soon as you made a critical distinction, that between “satisfying” the Understanding as regards the phenomena and Reason as regards the noumena.⁷

8. Existentialism Antinomy Outlined: Both Theses Are False

The resolution of our first Heideggerian antinomy will follow Kant’s mathematical model. Each claim is true in what it denies but false in what it asserts.

Thesis: Heidegger was an existentialist, not a metaphysician.

The thesis is false. The thesis does contain some truth insofar as it agrees with Kaelin who rejects Heidegger’s own insistence that he is not an “existentialist.” But it need not follow from this that Heidegger was not also a metaphysician (“meditative thinker”). Thus, although the thesis is true when we examine the most important characteristics of “existentialism,” it goes too far in claiming that Heidegger was an existentialist *only*, that is, an existentialist as distinct from a metaphysician. The thesis is therefore ultimately false.

Antithesis: Heidegger was a metaphysician, not an existentialist.

The antithesis is false. It is true insofar as Werkmeister is right in endorsing Heidegger’s insistence that he was not an existentialist—given Heidegger’s own understanding of the term. But the antithesis goes too far in claiming that Heidegger was not a part of the (secular) existentialist movement; he was perhaps

its single most important founder. The thesis is thus ultimately false.

9. Nazism Antinomy Outlined: Both Theses Are True

Thesis: Heidegger was a Nazi, and this discredits his philosophy.

The thesis is true. A philosopher who teaches us about “the call of conscience to authenticity” and then commits such blatantly inauthentic acts as Heidegger’s involvement with Nazism cancels out the validity of his writing by pragmatic inconsistency—incongruity of word and deed.

Antithesis: Heidegger was a Nazi, but this is irrelevant to the evaluation of his philosophy.

The antithesis is true. To evaluate Heidegger’s work on the basis of his life is to commit “the genetic fallacy.”

10. Existentialism Antinomy Discussed

Thesis discussed: Heidegger was an existentialist. The thesis is false. Support for the view that Heidegger should not be regarded as an existentialist consists of three main arguments. First, as is well known, Heidegger himself vehemently rejected that label. Second, Werkie endorsed Heidegger’s disposition in this regard:

When I visited Heidegger in 1937, knowing that Jean-Paul Sartre had been his student, I asked Heidegger about his relation to existentialism. His reply was an emphatic “My God, that I have never intended.”⁸

We can only speculate on the full implications of Heidegger’s rejection of the appellation “existentialist” insofar as it had become associated with Sartre, who was, among other things, a leftist activist. Be that as it may, as Kaelin points out, Heidegger did not want to be known as “the philosopher of nothingness” or as “the champion of meaninglessness.”⁹ Heidegger’s indignation here can be understood if the term “existentialist” was taken by him to mean “nihilist” in the usual, purely destructive sense of the term. But, as Kaelin makes clear, even the author of *Sein und Zeit* would have been understandably angered at this term if hurled by critics in their failure to understand the *context* of his discussion of

nothingness and meaninglessness and his *constructive purpose* in doing so.

The first two arguments against regarding Heidegger as an existentialist are historical and personal. The third is philosophically far more important. It involves identifying “the real” Heidegger as “Heidegger II” (Heidegger the meditative thinker) as opposed to “Heidegger I” (Heidegger “the existential phenomenologist”). This is Werkie’s main philosophical argument. As Kaelin points out in the present Guest Foreword, Werkie thinks Heidegger should not be categorized as an existentialist because he has metamorphosed from “the fundamental ontologist” in *Being and Time* to “metaphysician” in later works.¹⁰

In order for Werkie to maintain that Heidegger should not be classified as an existentialist it appears that he might think that being an existentialist is fundamentally incompatible with being a metaphysician (meditative thinker). Whether or not even Heidegger I was an existentialist, in Werkie’s view Heidegger II certainly was not. Heidegger II seems to be Werkie’s “real Heidegger,” a thinker who is an onto-theological believer in truth as *alethia*, in beauty as a form of truth, in language (rather than time) as the ultimate grounding of human Being, and in poetry not only as “original speech” (*Ursprache*) but as the supporting ground of history.^{11. 12. 13} Heidegger II is so much further away from being a nihilist than Heidegger I that calling the latter “an existentialist”—if that is taken to imply nihilism in the popular sense—is ludicrous.

Since these three arguments lead plausibly to the conclusion that Heidegger was NOT an existentialist, the thesis has been shown false.

Antithesis discussed: Heidegger was not an existentialist. The antithesis is false, for it flies in the face of most informed opinion. For example, Thomas Langan writes, “Existentialist? Yes, but he develops a conception of existence that bursts through the bonds of what is often thought of in these terms.”¹⁴ Testimonials are not, however, arguments. We shall examine some of the most important arguments which can be made in support of the thesis. Each of these refers to what is generally regarded as a salient feature (if not defining characteristic) of existentialism and claims that Heidegger’s work, at least as found in his magnum opus, *Sein und Zeit*, exhibits that feature. We shall then argue that Heidegger’s *Being and Time* bears so many outstanding features associated with the “family resemblances” which other existentialists exhibit, that not regarding Heidegger as an existentialist is odd.

These features include: subjectivity; the correlativity of self and world; temporality; consciousness; freedom; the self as awareness of possibilities and projects; facticity; meaninglessness; focus on moods and feelings such as forlornness, loneliness, despair, alienation, angst, dread, guilt; the call of

conscience to authenticity; responsibility for endowing your personal world with meaning and values; and resoluteness. True, Heidegger had little to say about that concept, “absurdity,” which is popularly associated with existentialism as made famous by Sartre and Camus. But can we not earnestly wonder whether Sartre and Camus could have or would have written what they did without Heidegger’s first having shown them the way? The reader is challenged to subtract from Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, whose very title echoes *Being and Time*, all that was derived from the latter and see how much is left. No, to refuse to categorize Heidegger as an existentialist, probably as Ur-existentialist, is nothing less than—well, absurd. The antithesis has been shown false.

11. Resolution of the Existentialism Antinomy

An antinomy, or paradox, may be defined as consisting of a pair of theses, one of which is the direct denial of the other, such that each is the conclusion of an equally compelling argument. This is exactly what we seem to have here. However, if the thesis and antithesis are contraries rather than contradictories, both may be false. Thus this antinomy has been resolved by noticing that, although the assertion may be true in what it denies, it is false in what it *claims*. The crucial distinction making this possible is that between Heidegger I, who is indeed an existentialist, and Heidegger II, who, in having become a meditative thinker (metaphysician), is no longer such.

Let us now take a closer look at the second Heideggerian antinomy. Since no such tidy resolution will be possible there, it shall have to be dealt with in a different manner.

12. Nazism Antinomy Discussed

To repeat, the issue here is not whether or not Heidegger was a Nazi. I agree with Kaelin’s remarks on this subject, and I can only try to understand why Werkie apparently felt moved to excuse Heidegger. Perhaps it was simply a fellow-feeling for a countryman of his own cohort. It is hard to imagine Werkie, the author of that marvelous logic text¹⁵ on which I cut my logician’s baby teeth, and from whom forty years of textbook writers have “borrowed,” could have overlooked the simple point of logic to be discussed below.

Thesis discussed: Heidegger was a Nazi, and this discredits his philosophy. The thesis argues that Heidegger’s actions invalidate his philosophy. Its advocates might include a long line of heroes who had the courage of their convictions,

from Socrates to the present. Their final standard of evaluation would always be pragmatic consistency.

Existentialism, the argument goes, is not just any philosophy, and Heidegger is not just any philosopher. Existentialism is the movement which sought to bring about a *revolution* in Western philosophy. This revolution seeks to heal the disastrous split between mind and body introduced by Descartes, which led to a further split between thought and action, especially as this culminated in the Pyrrhonian skepticism of Hume. Heidegger is not just one swallow (that does not a summer make), but is rather like the dove sighted by Noah: unique, the harbinger of a whole new promising era. A would-be philosophy of authenticity collapses from within when inauthenticity is uncovered in its harbinger's personal and historical life. (An interesting case of the personal being political.) The argument leading to the thesis thus seems sound.

Antithesis discussed: Heidegger was a Nazi, but this is irrelevant to an evaluation of his philosophy. The argument that you commit the genetic fallacy (or at least a circumstantial *ad hominem*) in condemning Heidegger's work on the basis of his actions carries great force. After all, should Bertrand Russell's philanderings and marital history, Nietzsche's final madness, Schopenhauer's extreme misogyny, or innumerable other examples of human failings keep us from appreciating the philosophical works of their authors? The antithesis argues that they should not. For an intellectual product should always be evaluated on its own merits, never on the basis of its "originator," that is, its producer's character, actions, or life. The argument leading to the antithesis thus also seems sound.

Do we then have a genuine antinomy? Or is there, as before, a crucial distinction which resolves the issue? Now the suggestion might be made that what has been overlooked here is the difference between evaluating the man and his work. Thus the thesis and antithesis might both be true, with the former focussing on the man and the latter on his work. But unfortunately for this suggestion, this distinction has already been appealed to in the antithesis. Ignoring that distinction is the logical foundation of the genetic fallacy. Yet, it is still open to those siding with the thesis that, although in general we should not commit "the genetic fallacy," we must not here commit "the fallacy of accident" either. That fallacy consists of applying a rule which is a perfectly good rule "on the whole and for the most part" (as Aristotle would have said) to a particular case, where, because of unusual or even unique circumstances it should not be applied. Now it can be argued that the Heidegger case is just such a case. Philosophical works should in general be assessed on the basis of their own merits, not their author's actions. But in the case of a philosopher who makes authenticity one of his central themes,

a gross inconsistency between that author's deeds and words is relevant to the evaluation of his work.

Must we not now admit that with this twist in the dialectic there can be no end to this discussion? We find only an endless loop of potential gestalt shifts—not unlike a Möbius strip. And this is because, in the end (which has no end), “the text belongs to the readers.”

13. Peering into the Future

When the history of Western philosophy is written in the twenty-second century what will it say about Heidegger? Perhaps this is what Werkie was wondering when he decided to spend his last days completing *Martin Heidegger on the Way*.

My guess is he would have predicted that Heidegger's involvement with Nazism will be disposed of in a few sentences, or a footnote at most. The article might mention that in the twentieth century some thought the Nazi issue discredited Heidegger's philosophy, but that many more thought it irrelevant. It might even say that Heidegger had probably distinguished between the horrific political realities of National Socialism and some sort of *ideal* ideology he thought this expressed. That would leave each reader to decide to what extent Heidegger's attitudes and actions were naive, culpable, or “inauthentic.”

I think that Werkie would have expected the question as to whether there were “two Heideggers” to have been settled long ago. Heidegger I was obviously the person who is widely regarded as the most important figure in the twentieth-century movement called “Existentialism.” Although Heidegger himself had strongly rejected this appellation, the label seems accurate at least with respect to the “existential phenomenology” found in his magnum opus, *Being and Time*. Heidegger II was the man whose thinking is expressed in the essays after *Being and Time*, and who apparently changed his mind about the ultimate grounding of *human existence* from *time* to *language*. Thus Heidegger I was “the existentialist” without whose most famous work Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* could never have been written; and Heidegger II was “the meditative thinker” who wrote so abstrusely about “Being in General,” the nature of truth as *aletheia*, and “Why is there something rather than nothing?”

Martin Heidegger on the Way implicitly raises the question: Which of these “Heideggers” is historically more important? Werkie's answer to this central question constitutes much of his special contribution to the Heidegger literature.

Werkie's unique contribution also consists in that illuminating assessment found in Chapter Three, which is from an ontologist's viewpoint the most valuable

chapter in the book. Here Werkie provides a critique of *Being and Time* from an original standpoint, one which should retain its significance when the history of twentieth-century European philosophy is written two hundred years from now. Werkie, whose lifetime so nearly coincided with our century, was perhaps in an especially privileged position to write this critique. Having during his long career demonstrated both mastery of and sympathy for German philosophy, together with a decidedly empirical way of thinking more consonant with American modes of thought, he applies it *all* to his superlative critique of *Sein und Zeit*.

Who else but Werkie could have taken Heidegger to task for:

- (1) having neglected the analysis of space along with time;
- (2) having dodged scores upon scores of the most important ontological issues;
- (3) having refused to admit that his ontology was, after all, a pragmatic one—as Peirce, James, or Dewey could have told him;
- (4) having failed to acknowledge that his ontology was at its very core a process ontology, as any discerning student of Whitehead can tell;
- (5) having deplorably failed to clarify “the value problem . . . essential to *Dasein*’s decision in resolving the problem of its own-most-possibility-to-be”;¹⁶
- (6) perhaps most significantly of all, having ignored the insights of his contemporary, Nicolai Hartmann, whose ontology supplies exactly the kind of analysis concerning both fact and value that Heidegger so blatantly neglected?

In the course of all this, Werkie continually clarifies not only what Heidegger actually said (or in some cases, what he meant to say) but also the many deeper and more far-reaching implications of those texts.

14. Martin Heidegger and Nicolai Hartmann

The last book Werkie published during his lifetime was *Nicolai Hartmann’s New Ontology*. Werkie told me when we first met in 1968 that he was planning this book, the completion of which he postponed for twenty years. Upon learning that I was in the process of writing *Searchlight on Values: Nicolai Hartmann’s Twentieth-Century Value Platonism*, which is a study of Hartmann’s *Ethics*, Werkie told me that this delighted him. For it would enable him to omit that aspect of Hartmann’s work from his own projected book.¹⁷ About 1990 I asked him why he thought Nicolai Hartmann, who had so much to offer in ethics and ethical theory, is virtually unknown today. He answered that it was undoubtedly because of Heidegger; the sensation that Heidegger caused had completely eclipsed Hartmann. Werkie expressed deep regret at that.

It seems clear that Werkie considered Martin Heidegger and Nicolai Hartmann the two most important metaphysicians of twentieth-century continental philosophy. He had given some thought to comparing and contrasting them. They shared a common starting point from Husserl early in their careers. The two had turned away from classical metaphysics in the Hegelian mode, and both had turned their backs on “the old ontology.” Werkie writes that what is wrong with the “old ontology” in Hartmann’s case is that it “becomes essentially teleological and deductive.”¹⁸ Hartmann also disliked “the Kantian subjectivism” of his teachers Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp and moved away from it by claiming a position “this side of idealism and realism.”¹⁹ Heidegger also had thought of his own work as non-subjectivist and “non-psychologicistic.” This seems inexplicable except in terms of its historical origin in Husserl’s assessment of his own position (which assessment is challenged by critics).

Heidegger intended *Sein und Zeit* to be an introduction to *ontology*, but Werkie writes that “although Heidegger thus turns away from Husserl’s phenomenological reductionism, the method of ontological investigation which he means to employ is still ‘a phenomenological construction’ and is not concerned with the manifold forms of the *Seienden* but with the abstract understanding of Being(30).”²⁰

Werkie’s preference for Hartmann over Heidegger thus gradually emerges. For one thing, he writes that Hartmann “took the first real step beyond Hegel” in his new ontology.²¹ Then, too, Werkie clearly prefers Hartmann to Heidegger because Hartmann was more empirical than Heidegger; Hartmann did the hard work of articulating the specific details of the numerous “strata” of Being which Heidegger neglected. But, most importantly, Werkie observes that Hartmann rejected phenomenology because “. . . it provides no criterion for distinguishing between appearance and reality.”²²

Might it not be an interesting challenge, after a careful reading of Werkie’s last two books in close succession, to consider first, whether Werkie thought Heidegger or Hartmann had produced the more enduring philosophy, and then, more importantly, which man’s work is *in fact* the more significant? The present posthumous publication provides the means for us to decide. As Kaelin so ably reminds us, the texts, after all, belong to each of us, the readers.

Eva Huel Cadwallader
Westminster College
New Wilmington, Pennsylvania