

HEIDEGGER AND METAPHYSICS

THE LATER HEIDEGGER'S UNDERSTANDING  
AND CRITIQUE OF  
METAPHYSICS

By

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the later Heidegger's understanding and critique of metaphysics. Given the amount of work Heidegger published, it has been necessary to limit the focus of this thesis to two important texts. Each of these texts is examined twice: in PART I I garner Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics and in PART II I determine Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. The first text considered here is the 1949 Einleitung, subtitled "Der Rückgang in den Grund der Metaphysik", to the essay Was ist Metaphysik originally published in 1929. This essay has been translated by Walter Kaufmann as "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics" in the monograph Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre. The other text examined is Heidegger's Nietzsche. The first text was chosen for its succinct treatment of metaphysics and the second for its thoroughness.

It becomes clear throughout the thesis that Heidegger's understanding and critique of metaphysics can be summarized thus, "Metaphysics concerns itself only with beings (Seiende) as such". Although a traditional metaphysician may agree with this analysis, he or she may

not understand why it is a critique. According to Heidegger it is a critique, because by focusing on beings (Seiende) metaphysics neglects or forgets Being (Sein). Once Heidegger's position and criticisms have been elucidated, some obstacles that arise for metaphysically based theology are briefly considered. The major obstacle is whether or not theology can talk about God in a non-objectifying manner. Can theology avoid making God one being among others in the same way that metaphysics reduces Being to one being among others? Heidegger urges Christian thinkers to heed the advice of their own scripture and not to seek knowledge of God through the wisdom of this world.

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Diejenigen, die in solcher Weise von dem handeln, was das Seiende im Ganzen ist, sind >>Theologen<<. Ihre >>Philosophie<< ist nur dem Namen nach Philosophie, weil eine >>christliche Philosophie<< noch widersinniger bleibt als der Gedanke eines viereckigen. Viereck und Kreis kommen noch darin überein, daß sie räumliche Gebilde sind, während christlicher Glaube und Philosophie abgründig verschieden bleiben.

Those who treat of beings as a whole in this manner are "theologians." Their "philosophy" is philosophy in name only, because a "Christian philosophy" is even more contradictory than a square circle. Square and circle are at least compatible in that they are both geometrical figures, while Christian faith and philosophy remain fundamentally different.

Martin Heidegger,

Nietzsche: Zweiter Band, S.116 (volume four, p.88)



## Introduction

Martin Heidegger is widely recognized as an important thinker of the twentieth century who has had far-reaching influence in many disciplines. One of his most significant and controversial contributions has been his assertion that the "end of metaphysics" has occurred. Heidegger thought that metaphysics had developed according to its own logic, which resulted in its conclusion by Friedrich Nietzsche. Given this, Heidegger thought that metaphysics should be abandoned in order to allow for a kind of phenomenologically based philosophy to emerge which he eventually called "primal thinking" (Nachdenken). It is Heidegger's critique and consequent abandonment of metaphysics that has influenced such notable religious thinkers as Emmanuel Levinas, Karl Rahner, Paul Ricoeur, and Jean-Luc Marion.<sup>1</sup> Their writings attempt to engage in a kind of "theological discourse" that does not rely upon metaphysics.

Given the significance of metaphysics in the history of theology in Western thought, the abandoning of metaphysics would represent a very radical shift with rather dire consequences for all previous theology.

Those who succeed Heidegger often assume his critique of metaphysics in their writings. As a result a gulf has opened between those interested in traditional theology and those who accept Heidegger's critique. To determine the correctness of either one of these positions would far exceed the scope of a Master of Arts thesis, which is why this thesis seeks simply to come to an understanding of Heidegger's position. In order to do so, this thesis will answer a two part question: (1) What is the later Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics? and (2) What are his basic lines of criticism concerning metaphysics?

Interestingly, the answer to both parts of this question is the same: Heidegger understands and criticizes metaphysicians for thinking "about beings as beings" ("Sie denkt das Seiende als Seiende").<sup>2</sup> It is the meaning of this statement that, of course, requires and will receive further consideration. Briefly, metaphysics, according to Heidegger, concerns itself only with beings (Seiende) as such. That is, metaphysics just considers everything that has a particular type of existence, namely, as a being. This includes everything from the lowliest quark to the highest almighty creator.

The problem with this approach is that metaphysics forgets or neglects Being (Sein). What Heidegger means by Being (Sein) is never made clear in the texts examined in this thesis. What he does make

clear is that all metaphysics accepts the distinction between beings (Seiende) and Being (Sein). By making and accepting the distinction, but by concerning itself only with one side of the distinction, metaphysics is at its core nihilistic. Metaphysics arrives at its conception of Being (Sein) by abstracting from beings (Seiende), which, according to Heidegger, makes for the most abstract and therefore emptiest concept. Thus, metaphysics places an empty concept at its centre, although it claims that the concept of Being is of absolute and essential importance to its project. This is a concept about which nothing more can be predicated than its existence. Simply to predicate existence (and to do even this is contentious for some metaphysicians) does not indicate a meaningful understanding of Being (Sein). It is this lack of interest in Being (Sein) in favour of beings that leads metaphysics to a concept of Being (Sein) that is not derived from the consideration of Being (Sein), but rather beings (Seiende). This is how metaphysics neglects Being (Sein) and as a result, posits an empty and meaningless concept of it at its core.

In order to adequately answer the question of this thesis I will consider the 1949 Einleitung from Was ist Metaphysik which is subtitled "Der Rückgang in den Grund der Metaphysik". This introduction has been translated by Walter Kaufmann as "The Way Back to the

Ground of Metaphysics". Although the original essay was published in 1929 and is therefore representative of Heidegger's earlier thought, the introduction was not added until 1949. Thus, not only is it representative of Heidegger's later thought, the essay was written after he gave his lectures on Nietzsche. The essay will be considered first because it deals with many of the same problems that Heidegger addressed in his lectures on Nietzsche. The essay clearly and concisely defines his understanding and critique of metaphysics that he originally put forth in his Nietzsche lectures. This text, then, will serve not only as a good introduction to Heidegger's understanding and critique of metaphysics but also as introduction to many of the themes considered in Nietzsche.

The other text used to answer the question of this thesis is Heidegger's Nietzsche. This text is based upon a set of lectures Heidegger gave between 1936 and 1940 as well as some essays he wrote between 1936 and 1946. In the 1950's he decided to publish these lectures and they first appeared in 1961.<sup>3</sup> Not only is this text representative of Heidegger's later thought, it provides a very thorough and extensive treatment of Nietzsche's thought and his place within philosophy. It is here that Heidegger identifies Nietzsche as the last metaphysician and demonstrates why he thinks this to be the case.

While doing so, Heidegger reveals his understanding and critique of metaphysics, especially as he considers the positions of many major thinkers in the West since Plato.

Once Heidegger's understanding and critique of metaphysics is clear, the conclusion will consider a major obstacle that his critique may present to the discipline of theology. The one thing that must be avoided by the theologian, given Heidegger's critique, is not to reduce God to one being among many. In order not to do so, the theologian must avoid making God a concept in the same way metaphysics has made Being a concept, namely, by deriving the concept through an abstraction from beings. Although there have been several attempts to continue talking about God, as neither a concept nor just another being, the success of these projects has yet to be determined. Finally, I suggest that although Heidegger makes explicit reference to the problems associated with a "Christian philosophy" or theology, he is not asserting an atheistic position. Rather, he is cautioning Christian thinkers about the wisdom of this world, wisdom that God has made foolish.



## Introduction

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See for instance: Levinas, Emmanuel. Otherwise than Being: or, Beyond Essence. translated by Lingis, Alfonso. (Boston: Hingham, 1981).; Rahner, Karl. Spirit in the World. translated by Dych, William. (London, Sheed & Ward, 1968).; Marion, Jean-Luc. God Without Being. translated by Carlson, Thomas A. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991).; Ricoeur, Paul. The Symbolism of Evil. translated by Buchanan, Emerson. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Was ist Metaphysik. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1969) p.7. Translated Kaufmann, Walter. "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics" in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre. (New York: Penguin Books, 1975) p.265.

<sup>3</sup> Krell, David Farrell. p. XXIX of "Editor's Preface" to: Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche. (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

PART I:

THE LATER HEIDEGGER'S UNDERSTANDING OF METAPHYSICS

Chapter 1

This first section of the thesis will deal with the later Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics by examining his Nietzsche lectures and the essay "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics". To accomplish this task it will be necessary to distinguish two aspects of these texts that Heidegger does not himself distinguish: statements that indicate his understanding of metaphysics and statements indicating his critique of metaphysics. This first part of the thesis will concern itself solely with the first aspect of these texts.

The challenge of dividing Heidegger's statements for the purposes of this thesis is not an easy one and must be approached carefully. Although relatively early in his career Heidegger tried to distance himself from his teacher Edmund Husserl and his Phenomenology, a distinctive phenomenological approach remains in many of Heidegger's writings. The "epoché" or "phenomenological reduction" developed by Husserl remains an important tool employed by Heidegger, especially when he considers some of the most long standing topics, issues, and questions



of philosophy. The discipline of metaphysics is, of course, among these, although perhaps in a somewhat unique way. Unlike epistemology, ethics or aesthetics, which have relatively narrow fields of inquiry, metaphysics is interested in questioning the fundamental nature of existence and attempting to derive an answer. According to Heidegger, it is as much the answers given as how the question was originally asked by the Greek thinkers that has determined the discipline. That is, what and how the question of metaphysics is asked will, to a certain extent, determine the type and scope of the answers. It is Heidegger's contention that too much attention has been paid to answering rather than understanding the original question.

Before addressing this issue directly, however, it is important to consider the unique way in which Heidegger addresses the traditional problems of philosophy. As mentioned above, he continues to make use of a kind of "phenomenological reduction" when approaching these problems. What mainly distinguishes Heidegger's "epoché" from Husserl's is that Heidegger performs his when preparing to engage a text or philosophical problem instead of "phenomena" or the "things themselves" with which Husserl was concerned. In a way Heidegger is using a kind of "hermeneutics of suspicion" when he engages a philosophical issue insofar

as he is more interested in determining why the problem is a problem than he is in solving it. It is the combination of this suspicious hermeneutics with a phenomenological approach that distinguishes Heidegger from his teacher, who was more concerned with revising and solving some of the traditional philosophical problems.

Heidegger first introduces the "hermeneutical circle" in Being and Time<sup>1</sup>, which is the idea that we as people are already located (historically, linguistically, culturally, geographically, and so on) and that our understanding of ourselves, the world, and our philosophical problems are meaningful because we are already situated. Although Heidegger embraces the hermeneutical circle, others see it as a problem because parts of texts can be understood only with reference to the whole or historical events can be understood only from the standpoint of the present; thus, it becomes impossible to really "know" what happened or what the text really "meant" when it was written because we can never escape our present location.<sup>2</sup> What an "epoché" allows one to do is question and attempt to identify the "presuppositions" or "prejudices" that one brings to the phenomena. In Heidegger's case this is more of a "hermeneutical reduction" as Heidegger attempts to identify the presuppositions informing and shaping the

question or issue, rather than attempting to answer the question directly. This is particularly evident in his essay What is Metaphysics?, although it is not limited to it. The reason for introducing this essay, a representative of Heidegger's earlier thought, is to help elucidate Heidegger's approach to traditional topics.

The question with which the essay is concerned is Why is there something rather than nothing? or as Heidegger states it "Why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing?".<sup>3</sup> Notably, the reader is not told this until the last line of the essay. This is important because traditionally if one were to pose this question it would be at the beginning of the essay followed by an answer. Heidegger instead spends much of the essay exploring the question itself before attempting a reply. By doing so he is able to expose some of the presuppositions involved within the question itself. Before even investigating the question, Heidegger considers what it is to even ask this type of question: he states, "every metaphysical question always encompasses the whole range of metaphysical problems. Each question is itself always the whole. Therefore, second, every metaphysical question can be asked only in such a way that the questioner as such is present together with the question, that is, is placed in question."<sup>4</sup> Here the hermeneutical circle is evident,

because to engage in a metaphysical inquiry is to inquire into everything, even the inquirer.

The passage quoted above demonstrates that the inquirer is already located within a certain context and that, although calling into question everything, the inquirer can do so only from a certain point of view. This is why Heidegger concludes "that metaphysical inquiry must be posed as a whole and from the essential position of the existence [Dasein] that questions".<sup>5</sup> That is, all inquiry, especially metaphysical, can be done only by those who question and ask such questions and thus must be done from the perspective of those who question. This may at first seem to be a statement so obvious that it should not even be stated. What Heidegger is implicitly criticizing, however, is the approach to inquiry, whether it be scientific or philosophical, that assumes a stance of completely unrelated objectivity. The method of inquiry that assumes an objective observer developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe during the scientific revolution. It is a method that greatly influenced the philosophers of the period and continued to hold sway into the twentieth century. One of the most significant works that questioned the assumption of an objective observer in this method is Thomas Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. This is a relatively radical

shift, both in science and some philosophy, because it is the shift to the hermeneutic circle, insofar as it is recognized that one cannot "step outside oneself" to have a look at how things really are. It is the recognition of a historical, geographical, cultural, linguistic location from which one cannot help but interpret the data in the case of science or the problems and texts in the case of philosophy.

This technique is particularly evident in Heidegger's lectures on Nietzsche, where he seeks a confrontation with Nietzsche, but in order to achieve this, proposes a thinking through of Nietzsche's "most difficult thought".<sup>6</sup> Again, Heidegger is not proposing a simple examination of the facts that can then be judged. He is acutely aware of the problems of interpretation and understanding and advocates an approach that he thinks will yield the best results. One must be able to "step inside" the writings of Nietzsche and attempt to think his thoughts alongside him, in order to be able to profoundly understand him. Only by doing this will Heidegger and the reader be able to understand and appreciate the significance of Nietzsche's writings and his position within philosophy.

## PART I: Chapter One

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Sein und Zeit. (Tübingen: Neomarius Verlag, 1953) p.153. Translated by Macquarrie, John and Robinson Edward as Being and Time. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1962) p. 195. All references in this thesis will be to the original German with a cross-listing to the English translation relied upon for the writing of this thesis. Where "ibid" and other abbreviations are use the German pagination will be stated first followed by the English translation pagination in brackets.

<sup>2</sup> The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy states that the hermeneutic circle is "The problems in the process of interpretation that arise when one element, for instance in a text, can only be understood in terms of the meanings of others or of the whole text, yet understanding these other elements, or the whole text, in turn presupposes [an] understanding of the original element. Each can only be understood in the light of others. Similarly, we may hold that the past can only be understood in the light of the present, and the present only understood in light of the past." (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Was ist Metaphysik. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1969) p. 42. Translated as Krell, David Farrell ed. "What is Metaphysics" in Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.24. (p. 93)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.24. (p. 94)

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Erster Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996) p. 16. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume one (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics is the English translation by Walter Kaufmann in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (New York: Penguin Books, 1975) of the Einleitung subtitled Der Rückgang in den Grund der Metaphysik that was added to the 1969 edition of Heidegger's Was ist Metaphysik (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1969).

<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche. Erster Band, p.8 (volume one, p. 10)



## Chapter 2

The first work of Heidegger's to be considered is "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics". As previously noted, this essay was written as a preface to the 1949 reprinting of the essay What is Metaphysics, but it also stands in its own right as a work representative of the later Heidegger's thought, especially given its proximity to his Nietzsche lectures. Heidegger addresses many of the same issues in this essay as he did in the Nietzsche lectures, but this essay presents these issues much more concisely and clearly.

"The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics" begins with a quote from Descartes, who states, "Thus the whole of philosophy is like a tree: the roots are metaphysics, and the branches that issue from the trunk are all the other sciences...."<sup>1</sup> It is this metaphor that Heidegger would like the reader to keep in mind during his investigation of the ground of metaphysics. Immediately after the Descartes quote Heidegger asks "In what soil do the roots of the tree of philosophy have their hold?"<sup>2</sup> In this question it is quite clear that Heidegger is not concerned with metaphysics, or quite possibly philosophy in any way, but with that which



allows for philosophy to be anchored through the roots of metaphysics. Heidegger's soil metaphor is rather striking in contrast to that of Descartes'.

It is obvious that for Descartes metaphysics is "first philosophy"; it is that without which nothing else could be achieved. Heidegger is not concerned even with this "fundamental" discipline, rather, it is that which surrounds and to some extent permeates this discipline upon which he has chosen to focus. This is a departure from traditional philosophy, which, like Descartes, and until the twentieth century, assumed the primacy of metaphysics. As mentioned in the introduction, Heidegger very often employs a type of "hermeneutical reduction" when addressing the traditional problems of philosophy. Some, such as Paul Ricoeur, have termed this the "hermeneutics of suspicion" (begun by Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche), which seeks to look beyond or under the issue in order to determine why it is an issue.<sup>3</sup> Here, Heidegger provides an excellent example of an investigation not into metaphysics, but that from which metaphysics is derived--the ground.

This investigation also allows Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics to stand in relief. The clearest and most concise statement he provides about metaphysics is, "Metaphysics thinks about beings as beings."<sup>4</sup> The expression "beings as beings" (Seiende als

Seiende) is a phrase that is contrasted with "Being as Being" (Sein als Sein).<sup>5</sup> This difference will become evident as both Heidegger's understanding and critique of metaphysics are further elucidated. Metaphysics as a discipline is not concerned with its ground, i.e., that which allows for its possibility. Instead, it focuses solely upon understanding the nature of beings. As Heidegger cryptically states,

Within this perspective, metaphysical thinking does, of course, inquire about the being [der seienden] which is the source and originator of this light. But the light itself is considered sufficiently illuminated as soon as we recognize that we look through it whenever we look at beings.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to note that when metaphysics considers the source of the light that illuminates beings it regards it too as a being (Seiende), rather than as Being (Sein). The problem with metaphysics is that it assumes the light and never bothers to inquire into that which makes the investigation possible in the first place. According to Heidegger, this is one of the first missteps made by metaphysics that results in it neglecting many aspects of reality, most notably Being itself.

The statement "beings as beings", although succinct, needs further consideration. Metaphysics, according to Heidegger, is interested in determining the

universal characteristics of all beings as well as the greatest of these beings. Heidegger states,

But metaphysics represents the beingness of beings [die Seiendheit des Seienden] in a twofold manner: in the first place, the totality of beings as such with an eye to their most universal traits... but at the same time also the totality of beings as such in the sense of the highest and therefore divine being....<sup>7</sup>

Although this definition of metaphysics is not conventional it is also not very controversial and, I think, would be acceptable to many metaphysicians. Most good metaphysics deals consciously with the issue of the One and the Many. Here Heidegger clearly states that metaphysics has attempted to total or sum up the Many as the One, i.e. the total of the Many equals the One. This may seem to be somewhat of a paradox, and perhaps an oversimplification, of metaphysics at first; however, Heidegger says metaphysics does this in two ways: (i) by finding universal traits, and (ii) determining the highest being among beings.<sup>8</sup> Arguably, it is how well any given metaphysics has been able to harmonize these two aspects of "totality" that determines how successful it is.

The first aspect of the traditional metaphysical project is to elucidate that which is common amongst all beings. The idea of "substance" is one such attempt that

dominated the discipline from at least the time of Aristotle. Although there were other universal traits suggested, it was not until the nineteenth century that, in Germany, the idea of "will" began to replace "substance". Here the influences of Hegel, Fichte, Schopenhauer, and to a certain extent Feuerbach, culminated in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. It is no accident that Nietzsche is identified as the last metaphysician by Heidegger in his lectures on Nietzsche. Nietzsche identifies the "will to power" as that characteristic common to all beings.<sup>9</sup> Why Heidegger considers Nietzsche the last metaphysician will be explored further in the section dealing with Nietzsche.

The second aspect of metaphysics attempts to determine the highest being among beings. This has taken many forms, from "the Good" to the "Unmoved Mover" to "God" to "Geist". This being epitomizes the most valued characteristics common to all beings. I would suggest that this is particularly evident in Thomas Aquinas' conception of God, which includes: omnipotence, omniscience, necessity, simplicity, pure actuality (Actus purus), immutability and impassability, and eternity.<sup>10</sup> A quick glance at these characteristics may lead one to conclude that God is everything that all other beings are not. This is true, but at the same time God is everything all other beings are.

As mentioned above it is how well the metaphysician is able to "totalize" the Many and the One that determines his success. For instance, in many metaphysics, including Aquinas', all beings except the divine are considered contingent. In order to be logically coherent the metaphysician will introduce a non-contingent, i.e. necessary, being that accounts for all the other contingencies. Although this could be understood as a type of division between all contingent beings and the one necessary being, it is important to notice that God remains a being and that the characteristic of necessity, something of high value in many metaphysics, is placed within the divine. Since we value such things as power and knowledge, when conceiving of a perfect being not only are these characteristics attributed to it, but in an ultimate sense, as omnipotence and omniscience. Thus, it is not only those characteristics common to all beings that are exemplified in the divine, it is also those characteristics that are lacking in the rest of existence that the highest being embodies.

Once all beings (Seiende) are elucidated, metaphysics claims to have elucidated Being (Sein). As noted above, the examination of the many beings will not garner every aspect, but with the addition of the highest being all aspects of existence are covered. That is,

everything that "is" has been examined and tallied up to the One. The many beings added to the highest being make the One. The many beings are understood to have certain characteristics that are common throughout all and exemplified in the highest being. The highest being not only exemplifies these universal traits, it also embodies those traits not found in the other beings. Thus, when one examines any given metaphysics one will find that all conceivable and experienced aspects of existence are contained in them. To name just a few: the eternal and temporal, potential and actual, static and flux.

To total every being (Seiende), as metaphysics does, is certainly no small task, but Heidegger thinks that by doing so it has missed something fundamental, namely Being (Sein). Recalling Heidegger's metaphor, the source of the light is considered as a being, but the light itself is never investigated. Metaphysics has mistaken the totality of beings for Being, or stated differently, the sum of the Many as equalling the One. Why the Many do not equal the One, or all beings (Seiende) do not equal Being (Sein), is part of Heidegger's critique that will be considered in the second half of this essay.



## Chapter Two

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Was ist Metaphysik (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1969) p.7. Translated Kaufmann, Walter. "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics" in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (New York: Penguin Books, 1975) p.265.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.7 (p.265).

<sup>3</sup> Ricoeur, Paul. Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences. Thompson John B. editor and translator. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.34.

<sup>4</sup> op. cit. p.7 (p.265).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.8 (p.266). These phrases introduce a distinction that Heidegger makes between Sein (usually translated as "Being") and Seiendes (usually translated as "beings"). This is the "ontological difference" that Heidegger introduced in Being and Time.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.7 (p.265), my brackets.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.19 (p.275).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.19 (p.275).

<sup>9</sup> Although Nietzsche makes many references to the "will to power" throughout his writings, he states "There is absolutely no other kind of causality than that of will upon will." in Kaufmann, Walter ed. The Will to Power (New York: Random House, 1968) p.347 fragment 658. This quote demonstrates that for Nietzsche everything works upon the will to power, i.e. that the will to power is that characteristic which is common among all beings. The reason for choosing a passage from The Will to Power is because of the amount of attention Heidegger gives the work in his Nietzsche, which will be considered in the rest of the thesis.

<sup>10</sup> Griffin, David Ray. God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976) p. 73-76.





### Chapter 3

This chapter will consider the first part of Heidegger's Nietzsche entitled "Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst", which corresponds to the first volume of the English translation. These lectures represent not only Heidegger's later thought on Nietzsche, but also Heidegger's thought on Nietzsche's place within metaphysics, and in this respect metaphysics itself. This is important because Heidegger sees Nietzsche as the culmination of the metaphysical tradition. The goal of this chapter as well as the other three that deal with Nietzsche is to further elucidate Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics through his treatment of Nietzsche's works.

Heidegger characterizes Nietzsche as the last metaphysician. As one reads the Nietzsche lectures it becomes apparent that Heidegger is operating with an understanding of the history of philosophy as something that has unfolded according to its own logic. That is, from the beginnings of Western thought, because of the way it phrased its question, philosophy had to follow a certain course of thinking. For Heidegger, it was the Greeks who provided the first answers and, because of the

nature of these answers, the rest of philosophy followed in like manner ending with Nietzsche. He was not the last metaphysician because he finally successfully answered the original question, rather it was Nietzsche who provided an answer such that he was able to overcome the previous framework of philosophy's answers and simultaneously point the way to a different question that, according to Heidegger, is a more fundamental question to which philosophers should turn their attention.

What is the question that philosophy has attempted to answer? Heidegger says that it has been "What is the being?" ("Was ist das Seiende?").<sup>1</sup> Heidegger calls this question the "guiding question" of philosophy. He also introduces another question that he calls the "grounding question" which is, "What is Being?" ("Was ist das Sein?").<sup>2</sup> Although both are very important questions, the first one will be concentrated upon in this section, because it succinctly summarizes Heidegger's thought about the traditional philosophical project, which he understands to be metaphysics. The second question will be dealt with in Part II, because it succinctly summarizes Heidegger's critique of metaphysics.

To confront Nietzsche's thought is, for Heidegger, to also confront the entire metaphysical

tradition. This is because Heidegger sees Nietzsche as the last metaphysician as he "'only' thinks to its [metaphysic's] end."<sup>3</sup> It is, of course, one thing to claim that someone "ends" metaphysics and quite another to demonstrate it. It is in his demonstration that Heidegger also allows his own understanding of metaphysics to emerge.

In many respects Heidegger follows Nietzsche's understanding of the history of philosophy. Plato is identified as the main source of how the guiding question was answered. It is the further developments in the history of philosophy that modify Plato's original answer into Platonism. Nietzsche sees this Platonism, especially, as that which originates nihilism not only in Western philosophy but also throughout all of Western society.

It is the original distinction made by Plato between the "true world" and the "apparent world" that began the nihilism, which became worse and worse because of the widening of an unnavigatable gulf between the two worlds. This gulf eventually widened so much, mainly due to Kant's philosophy, that from the "apparent world" the "true world" could no longer even be known to exist. In its most extreme form Heidegger quotes Nietzsche as saying that "the true world--unattainable?. In any case, unattained. And as unattained also unknown."

Consequently, also, not consolatory, redemptive, obligating: to what could something unknown obligate us?"<sup>5</sup> It is fairly easy to see how, if one is informed that one lives in an "apparent world" that really is not "real", which stands in contrast to a "true world" that really is real but cannot even be known to exist, one would become rather pessimistic and even nihilistic in one's view about existence.

This nihilism has been present throughout all of western philosophy and culture, according to Nietzsche, and it is his goal to overcome it. How is this possible? Both Heidegger and Nietzsche think the answer is the same: abandon Platonism. Nietzsche accomplishes this with an overturning of Platonism.<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, when elucidating Nietzsche's overturning of Platonism, is very careful to show that an overturning is not a simple inversion. When one simply inverts Platonism, that is, places the "apparent world" or sensuous world over and above all else as the "true world", one has only succeeded in a "mechanical exchange of one epistemological standpoint for another."<sup>7</sup> This is a shift from valuing the "supersensuous world" as the "true world", as Platonism does, to valuing the "sensuous world" as the "true world", which is the mark of positivism. Nietzsche rightly recognized, according to Heidegger, that a mere change of epistemology would not

overcome the nihilism inherent in western philosophy and culture.<sup>8</sup> It is not enough to simply overturn Platonism, rather it is something from which philosophy must "twist" free.

To "twist" free from Platonism is not the easiest of tasks. If it is not sufficient to usurp the "true (supersensuous) world" with the "apparent (sensuous) world", then how is Platonism to be overcome? Heidegger says that "if the true world collapses, so must the world of appearances. Only then is Platonism overcome, which is to say, inverted in such a way that philosophical thinking twists free of it."<sup>9</sup> So not only must the true world be abolished, its correlate, the apparent world, must also be understood as abolished. When this occurs Platonism has been truly overcome, in a way that a mere epistemological shift to positivism could not accomplish.

Although to twist free of Platonism requires the abolition of both the true and apparent worlds, by abolishing both a new and very pertinent dilemma arises for both Nietzsche and Heidegger. Heidegger states,

The "true world," the supersensuous, and the apparent world, the sensuous, together make out what stands opposed to pure nothingness; they constitute beings as a whole. When both are abolished everything collapses into the vacuous nothing. That cannot be what Nietzsche means. For he desires to overcome nihilism in all its forms.<sup>10</sup>

Here Heidegger's understanding of the traditional metaphysical project shows itself while he is making a point about Nietzsche's desire to overcome nihilism. This is no accident. By confronting Nietzsche, Heidegger thinks, he is confronting the entire tradition of metaphysics, and it makes sense that when considering the last metaphysician the traditional metaphysical project would also be evident. In his desire to overcome nihilism, Nietzsche is able to identify Platonism as its main source and thus must overcome it. When Platonism is overcome, not only is the most pervasive form of nihilism overcome, metaphysics is concluded. This concluding of metaphysics, however, certainly cannot entail the collapse of everything into "the vacuous nothing", since this would possibly be an even worse form of nihilism than Platonism.

The "vacuous nothing" is what exists in opposition to "beings as a whole". Metaphysics, according to Heidegger, only considers the totality of beings. That is, it only considers those things that have a particular type of ontological status, namely, those things that exist as something in a particular way. This type of existence includes all that "is", even the divine or highest possible conceivable being. If it "is" not, then it is nothing. When within the framework of the traditional metaphysical project, the abolition of

the true and apparent worlds, i.e. everything that is, would necessarily entail a collapse into the vacuous nothing. Nietzsche avoids this collapse into nothingness by reinterpreting the term "sensuous", since the old meanings fail with the overturning of Platonism. How is the sensuous to be understood now that there is neither a true nor apparent world? *Perspectively.*<sup>11</sup>

It is his radical perspectivalism that allows Nietzsche to overcome Platonism, because he is able to relocate all truth and falsity within this world. According to him everything that exists operates on the Will to Power. This constitutes a perspective from within which every creature must function. This perspective is, of course, "true" for that creature, but is not necessarily true for other creatures with different perspectives. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to evaluate Nietzsche's position.

Nietzsche's radical perspectivalism is his overcoming of Platonism and hence nihilism; however, he still is interested in the guiding question of philosophy, because he then asks "What is the being?", or phrased differently, what is that upon which all beings exist? His answer to this is the Will to Power.<sup>12</sup> Although Nietzsche has escaped Platonism, he has not escaped metaphysics. By placing all truth and falsity within in this world, Nietzsche then has the difficult



task of addressing some of the long standing questions of philosophy. The issue that he meditated upon the most was the classical opposition between Becoming and Being. Heidegger says that Nietzsche is able to reconcile this tension because he understands that "Being, as permanence, is to let Becoming be a Becoming."<sup>13</sup> In order to fully understand this statement it is necessary to consider Heidegger's corresponding critique of metaphysics in this volume, which will be done in Part II, Chapter Three of this thesis.

Therefore Nietzsche is the last metaphysician, according to Heidegger, because he is able think Becoming and Being as a unity, without having to revert to the traditional Platonic device of separating Being and Becoming into the "true" and the "apparent". Although, Nietzsche is no longer seeking the divine or greatest being amongst all beings, i.e. the "true", he is still engaged in the first aspect of the metaphysical project, namely, the attempt to determine the universal characteristics of all beings. In his attempt, Nietzsche identifies the Will to Power. Heidegger finds this interesting because it allows for a perspectivalism that hitherto did not exist in philosophy. This perspectivalism, according to Heidegger, is an important first step in being able to address the grounding rather than the guiding question of philosophy, i.e. What is

Being? For Heidegger the answer to this question can emerge only through a perspective. Thus, Nietzsche stands at the end of metaphysics in two ways: (i) by overturning Platonism in such a radical sense that there is a fundamental shift in the focus of philosophy, not just an exchange of epistemologies, and (ii) by opening the possibility for philosophy of answering the grounding rather than guiding question with his introduction of perspectivalism.

How it is that the grounding question of philosophy can be answered through perspectivalism will be considered in Heidegger's critique of metaphysics in Part II, Chapter Three. Because of his overturning of Platonism, Nietzsche is now understood as positioned at the end of metaphysics. The second part of Nietzsche entitled "Die Ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen", which corresponds to part one of the second volume entitled "the Eternal Recurrence of the Same" of the English translation, will be considered next in order to further elucidate Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics through Nietzsche.



## Chapter 3

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Erster Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996) p.64. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume one (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.68. Elsewhere in Nietzsche this question is simply stated as "What is being?". The odd phrasing of the quote seems to originate from the German which requires an article, in this case a definitive article, in front of the noun, whereas there is no such requirement in English.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.64 (p.68).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.17 (p.20), my brackets.

<sup>4</sup> Here I am paraphrasing many sections found in Nietzsche volume I and would also like to refer the reader to a passage from Nietzsche's Twilight of the Idols entitled "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable: the History of an Error", in which he summarizes the history of philosophy in six rather succinct and somewhat cryptic passages.

<sup>5</sup> op. cit. p.209 (p.206).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.202-203 (p.200).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.162 (p.160).

<sup>8</sup> Kaufmann, Walter ed. The Portable Nietzsche (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) p. 450. One of Nietzsche's most striking statements about this issue can be found in The Gay Science, Book V, section 344, where he states, "But one will have gathered what I am driving at, namely, that it always remains a metaphysical faith upon which our faith in science rests--that even we devotees of knowledge today, we godless ones and anti-metaphysicians, still take our fire too from the flame which a faith thousands of years old has kindled: that Christian faith, which was also Plato's faith, that God is truth, that truth is divine...."

<sup>9</sup> Heidegger. Nietzsche. p.204 (p.201). Up until now this thesis has been discussing the "overturning" of Platonism. The German word that is translated as "overturning" is "Umdrehung" which is derived from the verb "umdrehen" meaning to turn; turn around in a physical sense; to rotate or a revolution. The word "twist" used in this quotation in German is "herausgedreht" (this is the present participle form, the infinitive would be "herausdrehen") which is a compound verb of "heraus" meaning out; out here; "her" having the connotation of "away from" in German, and

"drehen" meaning to twist. Thus the English translation of "herausgedreht" is "twists free of". The "twisting free of" and the "overturning" of Platonism are derived from the verb "drehen" to twist. So, although the introduction of "twist" may seem a peculiarity, an examination of the German shows the etymological association with "overturning" and it is quite likely that Heidegger chose these words because of their association. It should also be noted that in the sentence prior to the "twist free of" Heidegger says "only then is Platonism overcome". The German for "overcome" is "überwinden". Although Heidegger does not use "umdrehen" and "überwinden" interchangeably, he does not explicitly distinguish between the two terms and very often uses them in proximity to each other and to mean the escape or breaking free from Platonism.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.212 (p.209).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.213-217 (p.211-214).

<sup>12</sup> Again, I am paraphrasing from most of Nietzsche volume I, and also drawing upon my past studies of Nietzsche's works.

<sup>13</sup> op. cit. p.221 (p.218).

## Chapter 4

This chapter will examine part two entitled "Die Ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen", which corresponds to part one of volume two of the English translation entitled "The Eternal Recurrence of the Same", of Heidegger's Nietzsche. The first two chapters have already defined Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics as the tallying of all beings. This understanding persists in this part; however, Heidegger elucidates his understanding further by considering the domain and function of metaphysics. According to Heidegger, since its beginnings philosophy has posed its guiding question (What is being [Seiende]?), and attempted to answer it. It is the answers, rather than the development or unfolding of the question, that have pervaded metaphysics.

To ask a question, according to Heidegger, is already in some sense to provide an answer insofar as that which is questioned is delineated and defined by the question.<sup>1</sup> Because the guiding question asks about being (Seiende), it circumscribes its field of investigation as everything that "is" or has "being". "The question 'What is being (Was ist das Seiende)?' inquires so universally and so encompassingly that all efforts incited by it at

first and for quite sometime afterwards strive after this one thing--to find an answer to the question and to secure that answer."<sup>2</sup> The guiding question is of such scope, although it defines a certain area for investigation, that those who are faced with the question understand it as something to be answered rather than itself investigated. The investigation of the guiding question itself will be considered in Part II, Chapter Four as part of Heidegger's criticisms.

In the last chapter it became apparent that Heidegger agreed with Nietzsche about the history of western philosophy as a development of Platonism. It is Plato's answer to the guiding question that sets the "standard" for the rest of philosophy. "That standard remains determinative inasmuch as philosophy posits specific conditions for the possibility of being as a whole and for man within this whole."<sup>3</sup> This passage indicates an aspect of Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics that was not present in the first two texts. Not only is metaphysics the answer to the guiding question, it is also necessarily an investigation of the "specific conditions" that allow for being (Seiende) to be taken as a whole.

Heidegger says that to ask the question "What is being?" is an inquiry of the archē, a Greek term that he translates as "principle" (L. principium). It is the

condition (the archē) that allows for being to be understood as a whole.<sup>4</sup> The contrast between the scientific method of investigation and metaphysics helps to clarify this point. Science only examines the physical world as it is given and attempts to explain the phenomena as perceived. Metaphysics, conversely, asks why those things (beings [Seiende]) are the way they are. That is, upon what principle do they function? The answers to this question are as numerous as philosophers in the western philosophical tradition. They range from substance, to monad, to spirit, to will. All try to explain why beings are the way they are. Heidegger states,

Such knowledge of the physika is not merely post physicam (as in the case of science) but trans physicam. Metaphysics, meta ta physika, is knowledge and inquiry that posit being as physis. Metaphysics does so in such a way that in and through the positing it inquires out beyond being, asking about being as being. To inquire into the archē--to ask the question ti to on? (What is being?)--is metaphysics.<sup>5</sup>

To ask about the principle is to investigate beyond beings proper and to ask about the whole of being or beings as such. It is from this starting point that metaphysics proceeds. Once the principle, whatever it may be, is defined, all of being is defined by it. For instance, if the Will to Power is understood as the



principle upon which all being operates, then when investigating beings they will necessarily be explained in terms of the will to power.<sup>6</sup> Metaphysics, having identified the principle, then continues to make further distinctions. Usually between being as a whole and beings as well as the different types of beings, e.g. "beings that rise and come to presence under their own power and those that derive from the arts and crafts (technēi), or are set down in words (thesei), or are proclaimed in laws (nomōi)."<sup>7</sup> A good example of how a metaphysics proceeds in this manner is found with the originator himself--Plato--when in the Republic<sup>8</sup> he discusses the relationship of art to truth.

It becomes very clear that there are different "levels" of reality that occur in a descending order. The "Form" itself (e.g. table) is that which determines all other specific instantiations of the object and is therefore the highest and best. Then there is the deity who first makes the table from materials in accordance with the form. This is a step down, where there is now a particular occurrence, albeit one of divine creation, involving the Form. Next are all the artisans who spend their lives making tables, of course, better and worse as judged against the Form, depending upon their skills. Finally the artist replicates or mimics the actual object in a painting or by describing it in poem. This is as

far as possible from the Form, because it does not even attempt a reproduction in three dimensions. The painting can only show one particular aspect of one particular table.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in the example, there is the Form which is something in and of itself that we can know but is not generated by us. Then all the distancing levels follow as the Form becomes particular and the particulars are further removed from the original. All this is dependent upon Plato's metaphysics, i.e. the answer he gives to the guiding question. When confronted with "What is being?" his reply is "the Good" and it is from this principle that all else follows and in light of which everything is to be understood. Although exactly what Plato meant by "the Good" remains ambiguous, it can be thought of as the Form of the Forms. So, even the Forms can be understood vis à vis the Good. Everything can be judged by how well beings embody or are lacking in the Good and this holds true for the Forms as well. Using the example, the Form "Table" would be relatively further from the Good, then, for example, the Form "Justice". Not only is there a descending from the Forms, there is also a hierarchical ascension to the Good. The Forms that better approximate the Good are closer to it than ones that do not. The point of this discussion is to demonstrate Heidegger's point about how metaphysics functions. For Plato, the Good is that from which everything emanates and against

which everything is to be judged. It is this starting point, the identification of the Good, that determines how all other beings are understood.

There is one other aspect of metaphysics that Heidegger elucidates in this part. Thus far, the principle, that upon which all beings are, has been discussed and shown to be that into which the guiding question of philosophy inquires. In this inquiry, the question no longer deals with beings per se, but with being as a whole. Heidegger says that in this sense, "the question ti to on? (What is being?) inquires out beyond being as a whole, although the question always and everywhere relates precisely back to it."<sup>10</sup> Thus the question enables being as a whole to be understood as a whole and at the same time also seeks to understand being as specific beings. The other aspect that needs to be considered is the stance the inquirer takes to this inquiry. Heidegger refers to this stance as "the fundamental metaphysical position".<sup>11</sup>

This is the position that has been taken throughout the history of western philosophy. It occurs because the focus of philosophy is on answering the guiding question rather than unfolding or inquiring into the subject matter about which the guiding question is actually asking. Heidegger says that,

The fundamental metaphysical position expresses the way in which the one who poses the guiding question remains enmeshed in the structures of that question, which is not explicitly unfolded; thus enmeshed, the questioner comes to stand within being as a whole, adopting a stance toward it, and in that helping to determine the location of humanity as such in the whole of beings.<sup>12</sup>

The fundamental metaphysical position is not a fundamental metaphysical position. That is, a fundamental metaphysical position is not to be identified for each philosopher. According to Heidegger, all philosophers who attempt to answer the guiding question (What is being [Seiende]?) have the fundamental metaphysical position.

To explain this further, at the beginning of this chapter it was noted that to ask a question is to necessarily define in some way that which is being questioned. Here Heidegger is explicating the corresponding aspect to this notion, namely, that in order to ask a question one must do so from a particular position or vantage point. The guiding question is of such scope that one cannot help be within it. When being is asked about, the questioner as a being along with the rest of humanity, will necessarily be included as part of the answer. Heidegger says that this position is taken "because knowledge and thought themselves stand under the dominion of the guiding question from the very

beginning."<sup>13</sup> The guiding question asks about everything that is, which includes the inquirer, as well as knowledge and thought. Thus the fundamental metaphysical position is unavoidable as long as there is an attempt to answer the guiding question.

In this part it has become clear that Heidegger finds metaphysics to be an all encompassing project that permeates Western thought. It has to be, because of the way it defines itself. The guiding question defines for itself a field so vast that everything that "is" (has a particular existence) has to be included. Metaphysics is no longer just an accounting of all the beings, although this is one important aspect of it, it is also an investigation beyond all these beings to being as a whole. That is, an investigation into that which allows for these beings to be the way that they are existing. Heidegger calls this the inquiry into the archē or principle.<sup>14</sup> By considering the archē, being as a whole can be considered as such; however, this also includes the one positing the archē and even the considering itself. Thus, as Heidegger says, one is thoroughly "enmeshed" in the guiding question of philosophy. As long as this state of affairs persists, metaphysics will persist; there is no other option. This does not imply that the guiding question should not be asked, for it has to be. It is the attempt to give an answer that leads to

metaphysics as the all encompassing and permeating mode of understanding everything that is. Why this is not satisfactory to Heidegger is the topic of the second part of this thesis.



## Chapter 4

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This is a rather hermeneutical point of Heidegger's, but not unknown to philosophy, since Socrates very often argues in Plato's dialogues that one has to have some idea of what one is seeking in order to recognize it when one comes across it.

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Erster Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996) p.408. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume two (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.190. My brackets.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.388 (p.171).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.405 (p.187).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.407-408 (p.189), my brackets.

Heidegger translates "ti to on?" as "Was ist das Seiende?", which is translated in English as "What is being?".

<sup>6</sup> Kaufmann, Walter ed. The Will to Power (New York: Random House, 1967) p.346. For example Nietzsche in The Will to Power section 656, describing how protoplasm function concludes with the remark "'Hunger' is only a narrower adaptation after the basic drive for power has won a more spiritual form."

<sup>7</sup> Krell, David Farrell trans. Nietzsche: volume two (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.189. His footnote.

<sup>8</sup> Plato. The Republic. Cornford, Francis MacDonald trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945) Book X. 595A--602B. p.321-341.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.321-336. I have also relied upon Heidegger's treatment of this topic in Nietzsche: Erster Band pages 164-190 (p. 162-187).

<sup>10</sup> Heidegger. Nietzsche. p.407 (p.189).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.409 (p.190-191).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.409 (p.191).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.409 (p.191).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.405 (p.187).





## Chapter 5

This chapter will deal with part three, entitled "Der Wille zur Macht als Erkenntnis", and part six, entitled "Nietzsches Metaphysik", of Heidegger's Nietzsche. These two sections correspond to parts one and three, respectively entitled "The Will to Power as Knowledge" and "Nietzsche's Metaphysics", of volume three of the English translation. These sections are being considered because they contain important observations about the metaphysical project. These observations mainly occur within the context of Heidegger's analysis of how metaphysics has influenced traditional epistemology. Thus, many of the points considered in this text are more accurately epistemological than metaphysical.

Although Heidegger does not use the term "epistemology", the discussion in "Der Wille zur Macht als Erkenntnis" ("The Will to Power as Knowledge") focuses upon how the distinction between the "true" and "apparent" worlds in metaphysics has influenced how humanity understands itself, our relationship to other beings, and the world or "worlds". It makes sense that Heidegger would consider Nietzsche's "Will to Power",

because it is the principle upon which Nietzsche bases his metaphysics. This is due to his overturning of Platonism, which entails abolishing both the "true" and "apparent" worlds. Throughout Western thought epistemology has been heavily reliant upon metaphysics, because it is metaphysics that first defines what can and cannot be known and what amongst that which can be known can be known to be true. This is also the case for Nietzsche's "Will to Power", since he is still engaged in metaphysics. The difference between Nietzsche and the other metaphysicians is that he has overturned Platonism and no longer subscribes to the two world doctrine. This, of course, has serious consequences for knowledge and how we know things, especially how we can know them to be true. Given the metaphysical underpinnings of epistemology that Heidegger identifies, his understanding of metaphysics will become apparent as this volume is considered.

Before beginning what I would suggest is his epistemological analysis of the history of western philosophy, Heidegger does position the discussion within the context of metaphysics. He considers the original Greek meaning of the word metaphysics, in which "physics" means "the physical" in the original Greek sense of ta physei onta, "beings that as such subsist and come to presence of themselves."<sup>1</sup> Meta is defined as "'over and

away from, beyond.' In the present instance, over and away from beings."<sup>2</sup> Heidegger asks, "to where" is the "over and away from beings" going? To Being. More specifically to Being as understood in a metaphysical sense. "Being is that which is thought from beings as their most universal definition and to beings as their ground and cause."<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, this metaphysical way of moving from beings to Being means that how Being is conceived of is dependent upon beings. This is not self-evident, especially since in traditional metaphysics one of the most important roles Being plays is as the "first cause" and hence appears to be prior to beings. Although beings in this sense are subject to Being, according to Heidegger, when Being is considered as the ideal it is indeed subservient to beings because Being is conceived and understood as an abstraction from beings, that is, without beings there could never be any understanding of Being. In this sense Heidegger says, "Metaphysics thinks beings as a whole according to their priority over Being."<sup>4</sup> The important point that Heidegger is making when describing the metaphysical project is that traditionally Being is derived from beings, this is the modus operandi of metaphysics. This is the understanding Heidegger has of metaphysics' procedure, and is contrary to how metaphysics has traditionally understood itself,

namely, as deriving, defining, conceiving and understanding beings from and in light of Being.

Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics' "method" becomes evident throughout this volume, especially as he traces the implications metaphysics has had for epistemology. He identifies Plato as the one who defined metaphysics at its beginning and whose definition holds sway over the rest of metaphysics. Plato identifies the "Ideas" as those which are true. They are "the one in the many, which first appears in the light of the many and only in so appearing is. As this unifying one, the ideas are also at the same time the permanent, the true, in contrast with the fluctuating and semblant."<sup>5</sup> Here again it is clear that Heidegger is not following the traditional approach of metaphysics that argues beings only occur because of Being. Instead, he points to the definitive event at the beginning of metaphysics where the "ideas" "first appear in the light of the many". That is, what Heidegger variously calls "the beingness of being" or simply "Being", in metaphysics is derived by abstracting from beings. Metaphysics attempts to unify the multifaceted realm of beings into the one, which it then calls Being. This unifying can take place because metaphysics has identified something "essential" about beings; something that transcends all beings. That which transcends all

beings is considered to be what is true in existence. Thus, "truth" does not lie within the world of beings, it belongs to Being, that which is above (meta) the physical ever changing world.

The other side of Being is, once identified, that it helps with the understanding of all beings. Heidegger writes that, "The ideas, as Being, make beings good for visibility; it makes them be present, that is, makes them beings. From that time, Being, as the unifying one in all metaphysics, has had the character of 'condition of possibility'."<sup>6</sup> Once Being, that which is unchanging and true, is posited, it in turn defines beings in their totality as well as how they exist. Remaining with Plato's "ideas", all beings are understood to be contingent upon and emanating from the ideas, which are the "condition of possibility" of all beings. Moreover, all beings are judged, understood, and perceived only in their relation to the ideas. A table can only be understood in light of the idea "Table". The idea "Table" is that which allows for all tables, and against which all tables are judged. The comparison, of tables to "Table", is a judgment because the idea "Table" contains that which is true of Tableness; it is the essence of Table. How well all particular tables embody Tableness is judged against the unchanging, true "Table".

It is the abstraction from beings to Being that

has important ramifications for epistemology. Although Heidegger certainly levels a critique against traditional epistemology in this volume, his criticisms follow from his critique of metaphysics which becomes applicable to epistemology because of its reliance upon metaphysics. It is his treatment of metaphysics that will be considered; however, some of the epistemological implications should have already become evident, as this thesis has examined Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics.

The most obvious point would be metaphysics's division of all of being into the "true" and "apparent" worlds. This is an interesting point that Heidegger plays out in part three "Der Wille zur Macht als Erkenntnis". Because metaphysics only pays attention to beings as such and as a whole, deriving its understanding of Being from beings, all truth is located within being. Heidegger says, "What is true is being" ("Das Wahre ist das Seiende").<sup>7</sup> At first this may appear a little contradictory since metaphysics has tended to place truth within Being and untruth or falsity within the continually changing and shifting realm of beings.

The act of deriving Being from beings is a function of reason. This is an act that attempts to secure a place of permanence amongst an otherwise chaotic existence. Following Nietzsche, Heidegger asserts that this is a necessary aspect of life. It is impossible to

live amidst a constant and unrelated flow of perceptions; a perspective must be established from within which and according to which everything can be ordered.<sup>8</sup> The establishing of the permanent or securing of the presence is done by reason. According to Heidegger, it was Plato, with the "doctrine of two worlds", who first allowed for the possibility of metaphysics. It is with the act of separating the true and apparent worlds, and thereby establishing a permanent perspective with the use of reason, that there first arises the possibility of going beyond or away from beings, that is, the possibility of doing metaphysics.<sup>9</sup>

To a certain extent it may seem that Heidegger is begging the question insofar as he has already argued in the previous parts that metaphysics determines how humanity thinks about Being and beings and now he is asserting that reason first determines how metaphysics can even arise. Although seldom if ever does Heidegger avoid circular arguments, in this case there does seem to be a clear linear progression from life's desire to make sense of the world by making it permanent, to that secured world as true, back to the world of flux in which life finds itself. Heidegger writes that "as life-occurrence praxis is in itself the securing of stability."<sup>10</sup> This "securing of stability" does not mean stopping everything; instead it means the making sense



and ordering of everything around it in such a way as to ensure its continuation as a being.<sup>11</sup> For humanity, this securing comes about through the use of reason which is why Heidegger writes, "only what represents and secures rational thinking has a claim to the sanction of a being that is in being. The sole and highest court of appeal, in whose field of vision and speech is decided what is in being and what is not, is reason."<sup>12</sup> This is the decision that reason makes in order to secure life, to stabilize it, and from which metaphysics arises.

It is the securing of life through reason that leads to the positing of the "true". Again Heidegger writes "the beingness of beings signifies permanent presence. What is thus in being is the true, the 'truth' one can always and truly hold on to as what is stable and does not withdraw, on the basis of which one can gain a foothold."<sup>13</sup> What is true is what is permanent in being. In this sense "what is true is being,"<sup>14</sup> because Being is derived from beings; it is that which captures the essence of all beings. Being is the permanent which allows for the securing of life. Because Being is "permanent presence", it is always in all cases true about beings as such and as a whole. As already mentioned this takes a definitive form (no pun intended) at the beginning of western metaphysics in Plato's "two world doctrine". The "true world" is the one that is

permanent and ever present, in light of which the "apparent world" is understood and against which all beings are judged.

The epistemological implications of this type of metaphysical thinking are, I think, evident throughout western thought. The most obvious and bedeviling problem has been the question of how well do beings correspond to Being. In three succinct statements in part three "Der Wille zur Macht als Erkenntnis" Heidegger summarizes this problem when he writes, "truth means the assimilation of representation to what beings are and how they are", which means "that truth is correctness of representing"<sup>15</sup> and that "correctness means the adequacy of representation to beings."<sup>16</sup> The what and how of beings is contained within Being. It is the truth of beings. Thus, all beings are judged according to or in light of Being. What are the criteria? Correctness of representation and adequacy of representation. A being that is correctly represented according to Being is true. A being is correct when adequately represented. This can be demonstrated with an example from Plato. A table is said to be such, that is true, when it correctly represents the idea Table. In order to be correct, that is, in order to judge the proposition "this is a table" as true, the table must be adequately represented. It must be able to be seen under conditions that allow it to

be specifically determined. In this case the table, must first be adequately represented insofar as it is present in such a way that it can be specifically determined and once having been so determined can be judged whether or not to be true. That is, whether or not it represents the what and how of tables. To state it another way, whether or not the table correctly represents the beingness or Being of Table. In Platonic language, a table is determined to be such by its correct correspondence to the idea of Table. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine Heidegger's critique of epistemology, it is clear how the metaphysical presuppositions upon which epistemology rests could be a source of difficulty, especially when dealing with the adequacy and correctness or representation of beings in the apparent world to their beingness, which is found in the true world.

It is evident in these parts of Nietzsche that Heidegger thinks, contrary to traditional claims, that metaphysics derives its understanding of Being or beingness from beings themselves. This derivation of the essential aspect of being, which is in turn held up as the "true", also has some serious consequences for traditional epistemology. The consequences, in which this thesis is interested, are what type of understanding of Being, beingness and being are arrived at from this

"method". These consequences form part of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics that will be considered in Part II Chapter Five.



## Chapter 5

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Erster Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996) p.429. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume three (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.429 (p.6).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.429 (p.6-7).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.430 (p.7).

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Zweiter Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997) p.245. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume three (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.201.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.245 (p.201).

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Erster Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996) p.462. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume three (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.36.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.516 (p.86-7).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.486 (p.58).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.515 (p.86).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.515 (p.86).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.478 (p.51).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.488 (p.60).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.462 (p.36).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.459 (p.34).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p.480 (p.53).



## Chapter 6

The final two sections to be considered are entitled "Der Europäische Nihilismus" and "Die Seingeschichtliche Bestimmung des Nihilismus" and are parts five and seven, respectively, of Nietzsche. These parts correspond to part one "European Nihilism" and part two "Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being" in volume four of the English translation. These parts of Heidegger's Nietzsche consider several major themes. The two most notable ones are Nihilism and the End of Metaphysics, which will be examined in this chapter. These two themes are intimately related to each other in Heidegger's thought and contain an important sub-theme, namely, the advent of modern metaphysics. In order to consider the end of metaphysics as well as the overcoming of nihilism, it not only makes sense to consider modern metaphysics, it is necessary to focus upon the last developments of metaphysics before it comes to a completion.

Although the purpose of this chapter is to examine Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics, given the nature of the themes discussed in these sections, the outline of his understanding does indeed resemble a



critique. This is mainly due to how Heidegger understands the history of metaphysics, namely, as that which determines all of western history, but neglects that which is most important. It is mainly the "method", especially of modern metaphysics, that leads it to neglect Being, which in turn means metaphysics is at its core nihilistic. Whether this is a criticism per se or fact, is a difficult thing to determine. For the purposes of this chapter such lines of reasoning and statements will be taken as fact, that is, as being true, insofar as they are expressions of Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics. In Chapter Six of Part II, which will consider Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, such statements will be taken as criticism and demonstrated to be such.

The guiding question of philosophy was first defined by Heidegger in the first part as, "What is the being?" ("Was ist das Seiende?"). Heidegger thinks that this question is no longer adequate for modern thinkers as they begin to break away from the Christian dominated, medieval metaphysics.<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, Descartes who makes the distinctive break and asks the question of modern metaphysics which Heidegger states as, "In what way does man, on his own terms and for himself, first arrive at a primary, unshakable truth, and what is that primary truth?"<sup>2</sup> As the first to ask the modern

question, Descartes also is the first to answer. The answer he gives is Ego cogito, ergo sum.<sup>3</sup> It is with this answer that Descartes determines the rest of modern metaphysics.

What is that determination? It is a shift, not only from one question to another, but also a shift in how the question is to be answered. The guiding question of modern metaphysics, as can be seen in the above paragraph, becomes a question about method. This is a method that is "about the path along which the absolutely certain and secure is sought by man himself for man himself, the path by which the essence of truth is circumscribe."<sup>4</sup> The answer to the question also provides the answer for the method; everything rests upon the "I think, therefore I am". About the "I think, therefore I am" Heidegger writes

All consciousness of things and of beings as a whole is referred back to the self-consciousness of the human subject as the unshakable ground of all certainty. The reality of the real is defined in later times as objectivity, as something that is conceived by and for the subject as what is thrown and stands over against it. The reality of the real is representedness through and for the representing subject.<sup>5</sup>

This passage indicates what is often referred to as the "subjective turn" that Descartes took and the rest of

modern metaphysics accepted. Although this subjective turn does not eliminate the distinction between the true and apparent worlds, it does relocate the debate that occurs because of this distinction.

With the subjective turn Descartes realizes that he is dangerously close to solipsism and tries desperately to avoid it. Hume is the inheritor of Descartes' legacy and raises all kinds of mainly epistemological problems, which prompts Kant to attempt an answer in his Critique of Pure Reason. All these thinkers are working on the "subjective turn", that is, they are all essentially asking and answering the same question, albeit in very different ways, which is "How do I know, that I know, what I know?" This is the modern quest for certainty. All of these thinkers still subscribe to the distinction between the apparent and true world and because they do so, it places the truth of their perceptions and judgements in question. Now that the subject has been located within humanity<sup>6</sup>, the issue is no longer the correct correspondence to the true<sup>7</sup>, rather it is, are these beings truly represented to "I", i.e. if I can be certain of their representation, then I know them to be true. What this subjective turn leads to is humanity as the sole and true representers. The cogito sum is the establishment of the one sure thing in this world, and becomes not only the measure of all else,

but that to which all else must present itself to be measured. That is, not only does humanity set itself up as that by which all else is to be measured, it also sets itself up as that to which everything must appear. If it does not appear, it cannot be measured. Because of humanity's situation as beings, humanity only concerns itself with beings and by having located ourselves at the centre around which all else revolves, i.e. by being the measure and measurer, humanity has granted itself dominion over all the beings. This is why Heidegger writes, "because man has essentially become the subiectum, and beingness become equivalent to representedness, and truth equivalent to certitude, man now has disposal over the whole of beings as such in an essential way, for he provides the measure for the beingness of every individual being."<sup>8</sup>

In modern metaphysics it is to humanity that everything must appear and be determined as appearing. That which is most universal about beings, their beingness, is now redefined as "that which is represented to us", which is why Heidegger thinks that "beingness has become equivalent to representedness". Because beingness is now redefined as representedness, truth becomes that about which we can be certain in its representation. The subject must be certain of what appears. Thus truth is no longer the correct correspondence to the true, but the

certainty about that which is represented to the subject, namely, humanity. This shift to humanity as the subject within modern metaphysics gives humanity a priority over all other beings that it did not previously enjoy. Modern metaphysics gives humanity dominion over all other beings.

Nietzsche is, according to Heidegger, the first modern thinker to take this shift of the subject to humanity seriously. In this sense Nietzsche is adopting the Cartesian project in its entirety, only he is actually thinking it through to its logical conclusion. Heidegger writes that Nietzsche assumes the definition of Being or beingness as "representedness" and that he understands "representedness" to be "truth" and by so doing "Nietzsche most unequivocally certifies the rootedness of his fundamental metaphysical position in the cogito sum. 'Truth' and 'Being' mean the same for Nietzsche: specifically, they mean what is established in representing and securing."<sup>9</sup>

It should be remembered that the mark of modern metaphysics is that it shifted the question about being to one of "method", which is why its understanding of Being or beingness arose as representedness and that which is certainly represented is true. Not only does Nietzsche accept the modern definitions of Being and Truth, he also accepts the modern method as the way to

achieve truth. When Nietzsche attempts to usurp the Cartesian ego it is the "body" that Nietzsche says must be placed first. Despite his criticisms of Descartes, it is his method Nietzsche is using. Heidegger writes about Nietzsche, "that the body is to be placed first methodologically means that we must think more clearly and comprehensively and still more adroitly than Descartes, but do so wholly and solely in his sense. The method is decisive."<sup>10</sup> One has to pick that one firm, unquestionable point from which to start and once having done so the proper implementation of the method will garner the inquirer the truth.

What truth does metaphysics garner with its method? It answers the guiding question, with "Being or beingness is 'x'". That is, metaphysics identifies that one essential thing about reality that can said to be true. Nietzsche also attempts an answer to this question. What is important is not the answer but how it is derived. Metaphysics abstracts from all the particular beings "in order to retain the most universal as the "most abstract" (the most removed)."<sup>11</sup> This is how metaphysics differentiates Being from being, by abstracting, which is why "it cannot surprise us, therefore, when we frequently encounter the assurance in metaphysics that of Being itself nothing further can be predicated."<sup>12</sup> The problem with this method is that

metaphysics ends up not saying anything about Being, only what it is not. As Heidegger observes Being "is the most universal and therefore emptiest concept."<sup>13</sup> It is the way in which metaphysics understands Being or the beingness of beings that makes it nihilistic at its core. "The essence of nihilism is the history in which there is nothing to Being itself."<sup>14</sup>

It was Nietzsche's goal to overcome nihilism, not to end metaphysics. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche ended metaphysics but did not overcome nihilism. The end of metaphysics occurs when "'the essential possibilities' of metaphysics are exhausted. The last of these possibilities must be that form of metaphysics in which its essence is reversed."<sup>15</sup> That Nietzsche inverted Platonism, not just switched the true and apparent worlds, has already been shown to be Heidegger's understanding of Nietzsche's metaphysics. This is a conscious inversion that abolishes the true and apparent worlds once and for all. If this is the case then what is left? We are left with only the world in which we live and, given the subjective turn of modern metaphysics, there is no place for us to locate truth other than in ourselves, i.e. within humanity itself. This is why Heidegger writes "'anthropology' as metaphysics is the transition of metaphysics into its final configuration: 'world view' [Weltanschauung]."<sup>16</sup>

Having run through all the other configurations of true and apparent worlds, metaphysics finally exhausts itself by abolishing these and turns to the only other possibility open to it. Nietzsche ends metaphysics insofar as he recognizes that there is only one more possibility for it, to attempt to figure out the world from within it, and he actualizes this possibility.

Heidegger sees this as "anthropology" in a loose sense, because Nietzsche has now consciously located humanity at the centre of everything, as the ones who create "truth" insofar as it is a value that helps us to secure our lives. Even with the abolition of the "true" world and the "revaluation of all values", Heidegger thinks Nietzsche has not overcome the nihilism endemic to metaphysics. Why? Because Nietzsche is still engaged in metaphysics. Nietzsche is engaged, despite his apparent radicalness, in a metaphysical project that derives its understanding of what metaphysics is from Descartes. It is through the use of "method" that Nietzsche intends to understand beings and Being. The method of understanding being in traditional metaphysics, and this includes Nietzsche, is to abstract from being to Being. This makes Being the "most universal and therefore most emptiest concept."<sup>17</sup> Metaphysics is nihilistic at its core not because it posits some ideal over and above itself that can never be achieved and has no relation to



this world, as Nietzsche thought, but because its method of abstracting from beings to Being does not actually say anything about Being itself. That which is taken in metaphysics as the most essential is never considered in itself. Metaphysics leaves Being as the "emptiest concept" and thus "metaphysics as metaphysics is nihilism proper."<sup>18</sup> Because Nietzsche is only concerned with the form of nihilism that arises from the positing of ideals rather than the neglecting of Being itself he is unable, according to Heidegger, to overcome nihilism. In fact, Heidegger writes that because Nietzsche is still involved with metaphysics "consequently, Nietzsche's metaphysics is not an overcoming of nihilism. It is the ultimate entanglement in nihilism."<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter the statements that Heidegger makes about nihilism and the end of metaphysics are here considered as fact, insofar as they are representative of Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics. The final parts of Nietzsche considered in this thesis present some unique challenges with their understanding of the advent of modern metaphysics, the influence it has over Nietzsche as well as how it is Nietzsche who ends metaphysics but does not overcome nihilism. All these topics will be considered further in Part II Chapter Six, when Heidegger's critique of metaphysics is again examined.

## Chapter 6

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Zweiter Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997). Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume four (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991). To fully detail Heidegger's line of argument would probably require much more writing than the original, so I refer the reader to p.115-116 (p.87-88).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.117 (p.89).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.113 (p.86).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.125 (p.97).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.113 (p.86).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.161-162 (p.130). Whether or not this argument is valid is not for this thesis to determine, but it does represent Heidegger's understanding of the difference between modern and pre-modern metaphysics. This is demonstrated by the following passage, "The subject-concept arises from the new interpretation of the truth of being, which according to the tradition is thought as ousia, hypokeimenon, and subiectum, in the following way: on the basis of the cogito sum man becomes what is properly foundational, become quod substat, substance. The concept of the subject is nothing other than the restriction of the transformed concept of substance to man as the one who represents, in whose representing both what is represented and the one representing are firmly founded in their cohesion."

<sup>7</sup> It was Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason who first pointed out that correspondence was no longer the issue, because correspondence would necessarily entail complete knowledge of the true world, i.e. the transcendental. This is a knowledge that Kant argued could never be had and it is because thinkers thought they could and did have it that lead to so many epistemological problems.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.153 (p.121).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.163 (p.131).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.165 (p.133).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.188 (p.156).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.188-189 (p.157).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.189 (p.157).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.304 (p.201).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.179 (p.148).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p.179 (p.149).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.189 (p.157).

- <sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.309 (p.205).  
<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.306 (p.203).

PART II:

THE LATER HEIDEGGER'S CRITIQUE OF METAPHYSICS

Chapter 1

This second part of the thesis will consider the critique of metaphysics that Heidegger levels in the essay "The Way Back to the Ground of Metaphysics" and Nietzsche. To some extent much of the same material will be covered in this section as in the first; however, as mentioned in Part I Chapter One, it is necessary to examine these texts in two different lights. The first light was to illumine Heidegger's understanding and the second is to illumine his critique of metaphysics. It is the second of these two lights that is now lit.

Before continuing, it would be wise to take this light and consider the preceding section. The reason for doing so is that both Heidegger's understanding and critique of metaphysics can be summarized as "metaphysics thinks about beings as beings" ("Sie denkt das Seiende als das Seiende").<sup>1</sup> This became clear in "The Way back to the Ground of Metaphysics and Nietzsche". The problem with this approach, according to Heidegger, is that metaphysics forgets or neglects Being (Sein).

As Nietzsche was considered this position was

expanded. It was Nietzsche's goal, according to Heidegger, to overcome the nihilism endemic in Western Europe. Nietzsche identified Platonism as the root of this nihilism. Heidegger carefully details how Nietzsche overturned Platonism without simply exchanging one epistemology for another. That is, Nietzsche did not just invert Platonism and place the sensuous world over and above the supersensuous, which would lead to positivism. The overturning of Platonism was a kind of twisting free insofar as, according to Heidegger, Nietzsche realized that the "true" and "apparent" worlds were correlates and therefore both must be abolished. To abolish both these worlds, however, raises a difficulty of its own, namely, how to avoid a collapse into the "vacuous nothing"<sup>2</sup>, which is perhaps an even more severe form of nihilism. Nietzsche avoided this by placing truth in this world, but in order to do so truth was placed within the perspectives of this world using the principle of the will to power. The result was that objective "Truth" could no longer be transcendently guaranteed, which is acceptable to both Nietzsche and Heidegger, because to guarantee objective "Truth" would mean a reversion to the two world doctrine. Instead, the location of "truth" within perspectives means that there are many subjective "truths" to be had in this world.

Despite Nietzsche's attempt to overcome nihilism,

Heidegger eventually concludes, that "Nietzsche's metaphysics is not an overcoming of nihilism. It is the ultimate entanglement in nihilism."<sup>3</sup> Heidegger draws such a conclusion because he understands metaphysics, regardless of its form, as the root of nihilism. Nietzsche is engaged in metaphysics, according to Heidegger, because he is interested in explaining the beingness of being. Nietzsche, like all other metaphysicians, is solely concerned with beings as such. Specifically, as discussed in Part I Chapter Four of this thesis, metaphysicians are interested in determining the principle upon which all beings operate. Nietzsche determines this as the will to power. The principle is to be derived from the method employed by metaphysics, which abstracts from beings to beingness or Being (Sein). This abstraction is the emptiest of all concepts, according to Heidegger, because metaphysics cannot say anything about it other than that it is. So at the heart of metaphysics, according to Heidegger, lies the most important and emptiest concept. This is why metaphysics, not just Platonism, is nihilistic and why Nietzsche does not escape nihilism.

This line of reasoning will be further elucidated in the second part as "The Way back to the Ground of Metaphysics" and Nietzsche are examined to garner Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. The underlying

point, which becomes clear in the last section of Nietzsche considered in this thesis entitled "Die seinsgeschichtliche Bestimmung des Nihilismus" translated as "Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being", is that metaphysics never actually considers Being as Being (Sein als Sein). That is, metaphysics is preoccupied with defining the how and what of everything that has a certain type of instantiation, namely everything that exists in the way of a being (Seiende), which means that Being (Sein) itself is utterly ignored. Heidegger never makes clear what is on the other side of metaphysics in the texts considered here, other than the possibility to address Being as such. For Heidegger this possibility is of the utmost importance, and will never be realized until we can twist our thinking free of metaphysics.

## PART II: Chapter 1

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Was ist Metaphysik (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1969) p.7. Translated Kaufmann, Walter. "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics" in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (New York: Penguin Books, 1975) p.265.

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Erster Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996) p.212. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume one (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.209.

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Zweiter Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996) p.306. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume four (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.203.





## Chapter 2

Recalling the first chapter of Part I, which dealt with the introduction of the 1949 reprinting of the essay Was ist Metaphysik entitled "Der Rückgang in den Grund der Metaphysik" which is translated as "The Way Back to the Ground of Metaphysics", Heidegger began this essay with a quote from Descartes about how metaphysics is the root of the tree of philosophy. It became apparent that, although Heidegger does not disagree with this analogy, his concern is not with the roots of the tree but the ground in which it is anchored. It is metaphysics' assumption, and even forgetfulness, of the ground that precipitates Heidegger's investigation of it. Because he wants to look beyond or behind the metaphysical roots, this investigation will reveal how it is that metaphysics is to be overcome.

Before proceeding to Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, I think it is important to point to a succinct statement in this essay that seems to be often neglected in discussions about Heidegger's overcoming of metaphysics. He states, "But this 'overcoming of metaphysics' does not abolish metaphysics" ("Doch diese 'Überwindung der Metaphysik' beseitigt die Metaphysik

nicht").<sup>1</sup> In the same paragraph as the quotation, Heidegger agrees with Kant that as long as humanity understands itself as "animal rationale" it will also be "animal metaphysicum."<sup>2</sup> It is also important to note that Heidegger states that if humanity were ever successful in going "back into the ground of metaphysics, it might help to bring about a change in human nature, accompanied by a transformation of metaphysics."<sup>3</sup> So, not only does "overcoming metaphysics" not entail its abandonment, also, if it is "overcome" (in Heidegger's sense) it will be transformed. Transformed in what way? This is apparently a question that can only be answered once metaphysics has been overcome. It is with these very clear statements about the "overcoming of metaphysics" that I turn to Heidegger's critique.

The simplest way to state Heidegger's critique of metaphysics is that it neglects or forgets the ground out of which it arises. Another way of stating this is that it forgets or neglects that which allows for its possibility. Although, in this essay, Heidegger never explicitly equates the term "Being" with "ground", both seem to function in the same manner, namely as that which metaphysics forgets even though it is what allows for its possibility. How does metaphysics neglect or forget its ground? It does so by concerning itself only with "beings as beings" (Seiende) and not with "Being" (Sein).

In the first part of this thesis that dealt with this essay, Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics demonstrated that metaphysics tallies up the many beings including the highest being and mistakes this totality of beings as Being. When metaphysics does this it has two effects. First, when representing the totality of beings as Being, although Being is somewhat present, metaphysics does not elucidate Being as such. Second, since the focus is not on Being as such and the totality of beings is presented as Being, Being is forgotten. So, not only has metaphysics mistakenly identified Being (as the totality of beings), but by doing so it has also forgotten Being. Thus metaphysics, while claiming to have completely elucidated Being indeed has not, and because of the priority it gives itself (as the root of the tree of philosophy), it prevents others from doing so.<sup>4</sup>

The terms "beings" and "Being" introduced by Heidegger are never explicitly explained. It is clear that his critique of metaphysics is that it neglects Being. It has also been demonstrated that metaphysics neglects Being by mistaking the totality of beings as one and the same as Being. So, it is evident that the term "beings" indicates everything that exists in a certain way. That is, exists as a being; beings are particular instantiations that can be clearly delineated and

defined. A quick survey of the world around us shows us such things as tables, rocks, trees, mosquitoes and so forth. These are beings that can easily be identified, defined, grouped according to like characteristics with related beings, and so on and forth. This way of existing is readily available to humanity for investigation, into ourselves and all other beings, since we are also beings, although, according to Heidegger, humanity has a unique way of existing. Our ability to investigate ourselves and the world is evident in most human endeavours such as psychology (the investigation of the human psyche), metaphysics (the investigation of everything that is, or at least all beings according to Heidegger), science (the investigation of natural phenomena), and so on and so forth. All these disciplines, as well as the many others not mentioned, are concerned with understanding and knowing about who and how we are and how everything is related.

Humanity, according to Heidegger, is not just one type of being among all beings. He says that humanity has a mode of existing that is best described as "being-there" (Dasein). Here Heidegger makes reference to his analysis of Dasein in Being and Time and states that "The 'essence' of being there lies in its existence. [das "Wesen" des Daseins liegt in seiner Existenz]." <sup>5</sup> Heidegger says that metaphysics mistakes the term

"existence" as synonymous with "being there".<sup>6</sup> Metaphysics deals with the existence of all things, from the lowest through humanity to the highest. An example of this would be the idea of the "chain of being", which posits God or the divine as the highest entity or being on one end from which everything follows in lesser and lesser degrees.

In Being and Time Heidegger uses the term "existence" exclusively to denote "the being of man".<sup>7</sup> So what is it to "exist" in the way of humanity? As already stated, humanity's essence is in its existence. "Existence" as used by Heidegger in Being and Time "designates a mode of Being; specifically, the Being of those beings who stand open for the openness of Being in which they stand, by standing it."<sup>8</sup> "Those beings" refer to humans. The term "Being" is used thrice in the passage and demands closer examination. The first instance is "a mode of Being". This indicates that Being has certain ways to be, namely through beings. So, something about Being is revealed in beings, but according to Heidegger something is also concealed. By concentrating solely upon the beingness of beings metaphysics is only elucidating one very tiny aspect of Being, which remains concealed because of metaphysics' focus. "The Being of those beings" is the second occurrence and seems to denote something essential about

"those beings". Is this the same as a universal trait that metaphysics would attempt to demonstrate? For Heidegger the short answer is, no. Like in the first instance of "Being" in the quotation, "those beings" who are human in this case, demonstrate an aspect of their Being by being in a particular way, but this by no means exhausts their Being. Finally, "the openness of Being" indicates the ability not to limit humanity's understanding to just that aspect of Being which is revealed in beings. As already noted, beings only represent a small aspect of Being. We, as humans, exist in such a way that we can experience Being in a much more profound way than any other being.

Heidegger says that "Once 'existence' is understood rightly, the 'essence' of being there can be recalled: in its openness, Being itself manifests and conceals itself, yields itself and withdraws; at the same time, this truth of Being does not exhaust itself in being there...."<sup>9</sup> When humanity stops solely concentrating on beings, especially in the manner of metaphysics, humanity is able, according to Heidegger, to rediscover its "essence". Its "essence" lies in the way in which it exists. Humanity's existence is such that it allows Being to reveal itself as such. Although, this is important to note, this revealing by no means exhausts all of Being, because part of the way in which Being

itself is, is always to conceal itself with every revealing.

This sounds very paradoxical, and somewhat obscure. The fact is, it is, especially to those who are used to the metaphysical framework. What Heidegger is attempting to do with his introduction of the terms of "beings, "Being", "mode of Being" is to break out of the traditional language and hence the framework of metaphysics. "Being" is not something that can be totalized like "beings", but without "Being" there could never be any "beings".<sup>10</sup> It is precisely this point that Heidegger is trying to impress upon metaphysics and why he is attempting to focus our attention at the ground of metaphysics. This refocusing on the ground is what will allow for humanity to gain further insights about Being and to stop neglecting it.

Why is this so important for Heidegger? Because all beings, including humanity, belong to Being. When we neglect Being we are in some sense neglecting that which is most fundamental about ourselves.<sup>11</sup> Heidegger clearly states what is at stake in overcoming metaphysics when he asks,

can Being itself, out of its own unique truth, bring about its involvement in human nature; or shall metaphysics, which turns its back to its ground, prevent further that the involvement of Being in man may generate a radiance out of the very essence of this



involvement itself--a radiance which might lead man to belong to Being?<sup>12</sup>

To "belong to Being", this is what is at stake for Heidegger in the overcoming of metaphysics. What does it mean to "belong to Being"? There is no short answer, and perhaps no answer at all. It seems easier to indicate what is involved in not belonging to Being. It is evident from Heidegger's statements that metaphysics prevents humanity from belonging to Being, and recalling Descartes' metaphor, metaphysics is that which anchors all human knowledge and understanding. Thus it is possible to say that because of metaphysics, humanity has alienated itself from Being.

I would suggest that this may be most evident in the way in which humanity approaches the natural world. From at least the time of Descartes, with the advent of a Newtonian atomistic science, the societies of Western Europe and North America, especially, have functioned with the idea that Nature is comprised of inert matter that with the proper tools can be manipulated for our own gains. The advent of quantum physics and continuing advances in the natural sciences are beginning to demonstrate the narrowness of this understanding and some of the problems that have been created by acting upon it. If humanity had not been distanced from Being by only concentrating on beings, it is possible that we would

have not brought such radical and possibly catastrophic changes to our world.<sup>13</sup> These are changes that quite possibly are not in accord with Being.

As difficult as Being is to understand, Heidegger does provide some clues. The first one has already been given, when Heidegger gave his definition of "existence" (Existenz). Humanity is understood as being in such a way that we "stand open for the openness of Being in which...[we]...stand, by standing it."<sup>14</sup> The way humanity "stands it", i.e. Being, is by enduring. That is, by "being there" all the time. But this is not just being, like that of rock and trees, rather there is what Heidegger calls the "ecstatic" in human existence.<sup>15</sup> The "ecstatic" is not a "standing outside oneself" that normally would indicate a subject/object dichotomy.<sup>16</sup> It is not the removal from one's body or consciousness. Instead, "the 'out' ought to be understood in terms of the openness of Being itself", and that "the stasis of the ecstatic consists--strange as it may sound--in standing in the 'out' and 'there' of unconcealedness in which Being itself is present."<sup>17</sup> It certainly does sound strange. What has to be understood is that "Being itself" has no specific form--it is not a "being". Thus, humanity exists in such a way that we can experience not only particular "beings", but also "Being" itself.

Perhaps somewhat ironically, our experience of

Being as such in the West has tended to be formulated as Nothing. How can this be? In Western philosophical thought from Anaximander to Nietzsche the focus was solely upon beings as such.<sup>18</sup> If it was not a being then it was nothing. It is from within this mindset that the classical question of metaphysics arose--Why is there something rather than nothing? At the end of What is Metaphysics, Heidegger reformulates the question more accurately as, "Why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing?" ("Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts?").<sup>19</sup> This was Heidegger's formulation of the question at the end of the 1929 essay, but in his 1949 foreword he revises the question further and asks "How did it come about that beings take precedence everywhere and lay claim to every 'is' while that which is not a being is understood as Nothing, though it is Being itself, and remains forgotten?"<sup>20</sup> The answer, of course, has already been given in his critique of metaphysics. This reformulation of the question should not be understood as Heidegger equating Being with Nothing. Heidegger, as part of his critique, is pointing out that metaphysics has understood everything that is not a being as nothing. So in this sense metaphysics has equated Being with Nothing, then promptly and justly by its own logic, did not bother investigating Nothing. But it is this very Nothing that Heidegger says is Being and

needs to be investigated. Granted this is a much more difficult task, since Being has no particular instantiation, it is nevertheless one that Heidegger thinks must be accomplished.

The other clue about Being that Heidegger gives is Time. He emphasizes that this is why he titled his book Being and Time.<sup>21</sup> Heidegger states that "Being is not something other than Time: "Time" is called the first name of the truth of Being, and this truth is the presence of Being and thus Being itself."<sup>22</sup> Heidegger also points out that Being was experienced by the ancient Greeks as "the presence of the present."<sup>23</sup> After a brief etymological discussion of Greek terms, Heidegger eventually concludes that the original meaning of "being" in Greek was more akin to our understanding of "to be present".<sup>24</sup> Heidegger thinks that Time includes both "present time and duration". It is through Time that Being is unconcealed.

The most telling example that Heidegger gives of this point is when he says that Time as present in metaphysics has always revealed Being, but that metaphysics has ignored this aspect of Time. Heidegger says this is even true of the "last name" which was "the eternal recurrence of the same events" given to Being by Friedrich Nietzsche.<sup>25</sup> What is Heidegger attempting to elucidate with this vague description of Time as that

which unconceals Being? It becomes evident when he alludes to Nietzsche. Metaphysics has usually conceived of Time as a series of moments that pass from one to another and duration as being present through a certain series of moments. Heidegger is attempting to get away from this conception of Time, not to say that Time does not also include these aspects. Time reveals something about reality. It reveals that which underlies all those fleeting moments and all those beings passing through those moments. That there is "something" else "there" that allows for everything that "is" (that has "being"), this is what Heidegger calls Being. This revealing of Being in Time leads to the experience of, and what Heidegger means by, "the presence of the present".

To return to the beginning of this chapter, Heidegger's critique of metaphysics is that it neglects Being in favour of beings. Contrary to metaphysics' assertion, the totality of the Many beings does not equal the One and this mistake has been present throughout Western metaphysics from Anaximander to Nietzsche. Although it is difficult to determine what Heidegger means when he uses the term Being, he has provided some clues in this essay, perhaps not as revealing as we might have wished, nonetheless, they do at least point to how humanity, by its very essence of existence and through Time, can and has experienced Being.

## Chapter 2

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Was ist Metaphysik (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1969) p.9. Translated by Kaufmann, Walter. "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics" in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (New York: Penguin Books, 1975) p.267.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.9 (p.267).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.9 (p.267).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.11-12 (p.269).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.14 (p.271).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.14 (p.271).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.14 (p.271).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.15 (p.271).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.14-15 (p.271).

<sup>10</sup> In this sentence I have used the word "totalized". Although I am not sure of the origins of this word I first encountered the idea of "totalizing" in the writings of Emmanuel Levinas and I am using the word with his usage and meaning of it in mind. I understand this term to mean, the making present to the Ego everything that is. That is, the reduction of all beings to a nice little package that a person can hold in his/her mind. Levinas uses the word with a negative connotation because to take the stance of an omniscient Ego that has dominion over everything, is to reduce other people to mere objects among the other objects and not respect these people really as people. I am using the term here because I find Heidegger expressing a similar sentiment about metaphysics, but with regards to Being (Sein). About metaphysics, he says, it encompasses all beings (Seiende), claiming that is all there is, and by doing so neglects Being (Sein). The similarity is the all encompassing aspect that I think can be succinctly stated with the word "totalize".

<sup>11</sup> I wish there were something analogous to Heidegger's conception of Being in Western thought, but there does not seem to be. If there were the explanation of this point would be much more simple. The only thing that provides itself for comparison, and there has been some work done on this comparison see for instance Chan Wing-cheuk Taoism and Heidegger: Tao and Being, is the Taoist conception of the "Tao".

<sup>12</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Was ist Metaphysik. p.10 (p.268).

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger's essay The Question Concerning Technology is beyond the scope of this thesis, but would be informative for those interested in exploring Heidegger's approach to the issue raised in the example of this

paragraph.

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Was ist Metaphysik. p.115 (p.271).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.15 (p.271).

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger rejects in Being and Time the subject/object dichotomy endemic in philosophy since at least Descartes.

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Was ist Metaphysik. p.115 (p.272).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.10 (p.268).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 42. The passage quoted is from David Farrell Krell's translation in Basic Writings (New York: HarperCollins Publishes, 1993) p. 110, because it is more accurate than Walter Kaufmann's translations in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p.23. Translated by Kaufmann, Walter. "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics" in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (New York: Penguin Books, 1975) p.278.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.16 (p.273).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p.17 (p.273).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p.17 (p.273).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p.17 (p.273-274).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p.18 (p.274).

### Chapter 3

This chapter will consider Heidegger's critique of metaphysics found in part one "Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst" of Nietzsche. This corresponds to volume one of the English translation entitled "The Will to Power as Art". It is in this first part that Heidegger introduces the distinction between the guiding question (What is the being? [Was ist das Seiende?]) and the grounding question (What is Being? [Was ist das Sein]) of philosophy. As noted in Part I Chapter Three, the guiding question is that which philosophy has attempted to answer since its Greek origins. It was Nietzsche's overturning of Platonism that, according to Heidegger, not only ended metaphysics but also opened the possibility for the grounding question to be considered and answered. Implicit in the formulation of the grounding question is Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. In order to demonstrate this it will also be necessary to further elucidate Heidegger's understanding of the role Nietzsche played in the history of philosophy.

The guiding question of philosophy is the question that Nietzsche was answering. This question was posed at the beginning of philosophy by the Greeks and,



according to Heidegger, the history of Western philosophy is the attempt to answer this question. It was, however, Nietzsche's desire to overcome the nihilism stemming from Platonism that opened the possibility of being able to ask and answer the grounding question. Heidegger says that "the grounding question remains as foreign to Nietzsche as it does to the history of thought prior to him."<sup>1</sup> This is an important point. Nietzsche, when attempting to overcome nihilism by overturning Platonism, stood at the end of the tradition of metaphysics and could not see the new (grounding) question that was to arise. His overturning of Platonism as the ending of metaphysics was done from within the traditional philosophical framework, i.e. with an eye to thoroughly delineating everything (all beings) that exists as particular instantiations. The answer that Nietzsche provides to the guiding question after the overturning of Platonism, is what Heidegger thinks is the important first step to addressing the grounding question.

In Part I Chapter Three, some rather nebulous passages were quoted with the promise of further explanation. Perhaps the most difficult one to understand is Heidegger's comment on Nietzsche's attempt to reconcile the traditional problem of the tension between Being and Becoming. Heidegger writes, "In that way Nietzsche in will to power attempts to think that

original unity of the ancient opposition of Being and Becoming. Being, as permanence, is to let Becoming be Becoming."<sup>2</sup> To explain this passage will require a retracing of Heidegger's understanding of Nietzsche's unique contribution to philosophy, which will also demonstrate Heidegger's dissatisfaction with metaphysics as well as the new opening to Being that Nietzsche provides.

The overturning of Platonism entails, according to Heidegger, not only the abolition of the "true (supersensuous) world" but also its correlate, the "apparent (sensuous) world". If the sensuous world, still understood as the "apparent world", is simply placed above all else as the "true world" (a simple inversion of Platonism), the effect is to exchange one epistemology (Platonism) for another (positivism).<sup>3</sup> With the abolition of both worlds only the sensuous remains, but not as the "apparent" now made "true". It has already been shown (Part I, Chapter Three) how in order to overturn Platonism both worlds must collapse. It was also demonstrated that Nietzsche avoided a collapse of everything into the "vacuous nothing", because he was interested in overcoming "nihilism in all its forms."<sup>4</sup> To illustrate this point Heidegger says,

But the sensuous world is the "apparent world" only according to the interpretation of

Platonism. With the abolition of Platonism the way first opens for the affirmation of the sensuous, and along with it, the nonsensuous world of the spirit as well.<sup>5</sup>

This is an interesting quote because with the abolition of the "true" supersensuous (übersinnliche) world, Heidegger says that not only can the sensuous (sinnliche) be affirmed but also the nonsensuous (nichtsinnliche). The contrast between übersinnliche and nichtsinnliche is very important because, Heidegger by including the nichtsinnliche, is not placing the sinnliche above all else as the only experience we have in our existence and at the same time is avoiding the Platonic dichotomy of the übersinnliche and the sinnliche.<sup>6</sup>

The problem that arises for Nietzsche with the overcoming of Platonism is the necessary relocation of truth in this world. Here many of the classical problems of scepticism (see especially David Hume) can arise. Nietzsche avoids such problems because he designates the will to power as that upon which all beings operate. Again, it is important to notice that Nietzsche is very much in the tradition of metaphysics when he employs the will to power, because it acts as a way to explain why everything that is (has being) exists the way it does. The important difference between Nietzsche and the preceding tradition, however, is his radical

perspectivalism that allows him to, in a unique way, locate truth in this world. Everything that exists operates upon the will to power, which means for Nietzsche, everything exists within its own perspective. Thus, truth can be found within the various perspectives. The major and most disconcerting consequence this position has, especially for traditional metaphysics, is that it eliminates "Truth" (objective Truth) and only allows for many (subjective) truths.<sup>7</sup> The immediate objection to this position would be that if "truth" is now entirely perspectival, then nothing can be known to be absolutely true. To this both Nietzsche and Heidegger would agree, but for very different reasons than those of the objector. Their point is that one cannot escape one's perspective, i.e. "step outside" oneself in order to determine what "really" is "True". In fact if one pretends that the "objective" "Truth" can be known, Heidegger states that,

But such appearance becomes semblance in the sense of mere appearance only when what becomes manifest in one perspective petrifies and is taken to be the sole definitive appearance, to the disregard of the other perspectives that crowd around in turn.<sup>8</sup>

The reply to those who think that it is terrible that "Truth" has been lost is, it is impossible to step

outside oneself and when one claims to have done so and put forth this as "The Truth" the consequence is actually to reduce all other perspectives to that of mere appearances. It results in a negation of all other perspectives as mere appearance and at the same time becomes "petrified", that is, itself is no longer representative of the original perspective which also continues to change. Thus, the attempt to have "Truth" results in none whatsoever.<sup>9</sup>

To further clarify Nietzsche's position, he states "'Semblance' as I understand it is the actual and sole reality of things", about which Heidegger writes, "That should be understood to mean not that reality is something apparent, but that being-real is in itself perspectival, a bringing forward into appearance, a letting radiate; that it is in itself a shining. Reality is radiance."<sup>10</sup> Although drawing upon Nietzsche's perspectivalism, Heidegger is also showing his phenomenological influences. According to him, something can only appear within a perspective or horizon. It is that perspective that allows it to appear. This is not to suggest that everything that is, is a mere construction of that perspective.<sup>11</sup> To illustrate how the perspective and that which appears are interrelated Heidegger states, "But upon deeper meditation it becomes clear that all appearance and all apparentness are

possible only if something comes to the fore and shows itself at all. What in advance enables such appearing is the perspectival itself. That is what genuinely radiates, bringing something to show itself."<sup>12</sup> Reality, for Heidegger, is a "perspectival letting-shine" ("perspektivischen Scheinenlassens"),<sup>13</sup> that is, reality is that which appears with the perspective.

This is a very subtle point of Heidegger's and needs further explanation. This is one of the cases where Heidegger uses some unique language to explain himself, which makes it difficult to rephrase without mischaracterization. To say, "reality is that which appears with the perspective", could be misunderstood in two ways. The first would be to think that there is something "out there" that then is interpreted through the perspective. This would be something like the neo-Kantian philosophy of the nineteenth century, that collapsed the transcendental distinction and had to deal with the problem of never being able to "really", directly, experience the "in-itself" or even validate the positing of it. The second misunderstanding would be that the perspective is the sole reality. At the extreme this would take the form of solipsism. If Heidegger's position is neither of these, then what is it? "Reality, Being, is Schein in the sense of perspectival letting-shine." ("Die Realität, das Sein, ist der Schein im Sinne

des perspektivischen Scheinenlassens").<sup>14</sup>

To illustrate what he means, Heidegger quotes a comment made by Erasmus about the works of the painter Albrecht Dürer. Heidegger paraphrases Erasmus and writes, "by showing a particular thing from any given angle, he, Dürer the painter, brings to the fore not only one single isolated view which offers itself to the eye."<sup>15</sup> Although this may seem somewhat counter-intuitive at first, after all, paintings are two dimensional and can only contain one specific view, Heidegger completes Erasmus' sentiment with,

by showing any given individual thing as this particular thing, in its singularity, he makes Being itself visible: in a particular hare, the being of the hare; in a particular animal, the animality.<sup>16</sup>

The painting, by giving a very "limited" perspective, opens up or reveals something more essential, not only about that which is painted but Being itself. For Heidegger, reality is the perspective, but the perspective always points to the multiplicity of perspectives where truth can be found. It is those perspectives that shine or radiate reality.

As difficult a course to navigate as "perspectival letting-shine" ("perspektivischen Scheinenlassens") is, it has been necessary to consider

in order to appreciate the implicit critique of metaphysics that Heidegger levels at the end of this part of his Nietzsche. Before considering it, however, there is one more distinction that needs to be addressed. The perspectival letting-shine does involve truth, but the problem with truth is that it tends to become petrified. Heidegger thinks that art does a better job than truth of letting-shine. He states "But the value of the real is measured according to how it satisfies the essence of reality, how it accomplishes the shining and enhances reality. Art, as transfiguration, is more enhancing to life than truth, as fixation of an apparition.<sup>17</sup> Here Heidegger is definitely uses the word "truth" to mean a hypostatization of a particular perspective. In contrast, art allows many different aspects of reality to show itself or shine in and through it.

The implicit critique of metaphysics contained in the above quoted passage is that metaphysics tends to deal with "truth", in the petrified sense. It is interested in being able to know, truly, everything that exists. In order to accomplish this task, metaphysics has to systematically order and define all beings. The problem with this approach is that it does not capture "the essence of reality". Instead of showing reality, with its multifacetedness, metaphysics takes a stance (usually the supposed "objective" stance) and proceeds to



delineate everything from this one point of view. Thus, the approach of metaphysics is actually contrary to what it claims. It claims to have accounted for everything that "is", but in doing so it has come nowhere close to capturing the essence of reality.

This chapter began with the promise of explaining a rather nebulous comment that Heidegger made about Nietzsche. It reads, "In that way Nietzsche in will to power attempts to think the original unity of the ancient opposition of Being and Becoming. Being, as permanence, is to let Becoming be a Becoming."<sup>18</sup> Given the treatment of Heidegger's implicit critique of metaphysics in the preceding paragraph, this statement about Nietzsche should be a little easier to understand. Metaphysics has erred by petrifying one perspective and calling it truth. In contrast, with his introduction of the will to power, Nietzsche although a metaphysician, has introduced a way to allow reality to shine, namely, through the many perspectives. This is how Being, which Nietzsche understood as permanence, lets "Becoming be a Becoming", i.e. Nietzsche defines everything that is in such a way as to not petrify "truth" which would only admit a single perspective. Instead, he defines everything that "is" as being perspectival, which respects the essence of reality. It is because Nietzsche is still interested in understanding the universal characteristics of beings

that he is prevented from recognizing the grounding question of philosophy. But, because of how he defined everything that "is" he opened the possibility for the grounding question rather than the guiding question to be pursued. This is one of the reasons why he is the last metaphysician, according to Heidegger.



## Chapter 3

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Erster Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996) p.64. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume one (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.67.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.220 (p.218).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.162-163 (p.160).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.212 (p.209).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.212 (p.209).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.212 (p.209).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.211-214 (p.213-216).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.216 (p.214). I think this is a remarkably similar point to that of A.N. Whitehead's "Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness".

<sup>9</sup> Kaufmann, Walter ed. The Portable Nietzsche (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) p.485-486. To see how Nietzsche very succinctly explains how this happens see "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable: The History of an Error" in Twilight of the Idols.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.218 (p.215).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.217 (p.215).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.217 (p.215).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.218 (p.215).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.218 (p.215).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.189-190 (p.187). The Latin states "ex situ rei unius, non unam speciem sese oculis offerentem exprimit".

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p.190 (p.187).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.220 (p.216-217).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.221 (p.218).



## Chapter 4

This chapter will examine the critique of metaphysics that Heidegger develops in part two of Nietzsche entitled "Die Ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen", which corresponds to the first part of volume two of the English translation. In the previous texts considered, Heidegger's critique has been that metaphysics mistakes the totality of beings for Being. The problem with this is that it mistakes everything that "is", i.e. has a particular type of being, for the complete picture. Over and against "everything" stands "nothing", i.e. everything that "is not" or does not have a particular type of being. It was seen in volume one of Nietzsche that metaphysics takes this approach due to the guiding question of philosophy (What is being? [Was ist das Sein?])).

Part I, Chapter Four of this thesis demonstrated that Heidegger develops his understanding of metaphysics in part two of Nietzsche. Contemporaneous with this he also continued revealing his critique of metaphysics. Part two of Nietzsche asserts that, it is not only the guiding question that defines the metaphysical project but also that metaphysics has gained such prominence

because philosophers have been attempting to answer the guiding question. Here Heidegger thinks that, rather than attempting to answer the guiding question, it should itself be investigated. It is through his investigation of the guiding question of philosophy that his critique of metaphysics is revealed.

There have been two themes surrounding the "nothing" that have surfaced so far in the consideration of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. The first is that metaphysics posits the nothing as that which has no being. The second, indirectly, comes from Nietzsche's attempt to overcome nihilism. The previous chapter dealt briefly with the nihilism embedded within metaphysics. It was suggested that the Platonic separation of the "true world" from the "apparent world" was the source of this nihilism. Although this is still true, in part two there is an explicit merging of these two themes. While exploring the meaning of nihilism Heidegger writes,

If we turn to the word itself we may say that nihilism is an event--or teaching--whereby it is a matter of the nihil, the nothing. Considered formally, the nothing is a negation of something--indeed of every kind of something. What constitutes being as a whole is every such something. To posit the nothing is thus to negate being as a whole. Nihilism thereby has as its explicit or tacit fundamental teaching the following: being as a whole is nothing.<sup>1</sup>

Implicit in the above passage is the accusation that metaphysics is nihilistic, but for a different reason than ascribed in the previous chapter. It is already known that metaphysics totals all the beings that exist and mistakenly identifies this as the One or Whole or Being, against which the nothing is posited by default. Again this is evident in the classical question of metaphysics which asks, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" It is the "things" with which metaphysics solely concerns itself. What Heidegger has so astutely observed, however, is that this method leads to the negation of "being as a whole", precisely because it posits the nothing. This in turn leads Heidegger to the conclusion that for metaphysics, "being as a whole is nothing", because of the way in which metaphysics proceeds to answer the guiding question of philosophy.

At first thought, to move from the premises, (i) everything that is (i.e., has a particular being), is everything, and (ii) everything that does not have this particular being is nothing, to the conclusion, "being as a whole is nothing" may present a non sequitur. Although Heidegger never clearly states how he arrives at the conclusion, I think it is possible to present a Heideggerian-type argument for it. Since metaphysics is only concerned with what "is" it will also be logically led to consider what "is not". Here metaphysics develops



a dichotomy between everything and nothing. Everything is on one side and nothing on the other. All meaning and everything of value is placed on the side of everything, whereas nothing remains on the side of nothing. The problem with this division is that there is no higher authority to whom/which an appeal can be made to guarantee the meaningfulness and value of the side that contains everything. For instance, if all meaning and value are placed in the "true world" or the "Good" or "God", nihilism will ensue because there will be no meaning or value in the rest of everything that "is". Also, the "true world", the "Good", "God" will not have dominion over the Nothing. The nothing presents itself against everything that is and over which everything has no authority. Since everything has no authority over nothing, the nothing is able to negate everything. That is, nothing presents itself to the whole as something other than the whole, because it is not some thing. Since, ironically, "nothing" remains unaccounted for, precisely because it is not some thing, everything (the totality of beings) loses its privileged place and collapses into the nothing. Thus leading to the conclusion "being as a whole is nothing". In Western philosophy, it is the failure to consciously recognize the negating power of the nothing vis à vis the whole that helps to give rise to the nihilism that pervades

throughout Western culture and thought.

Nietzsche avoids the collapse of everything into the nothing when overturning Platonism by locating all truth and falsity in this world. Although this is a clever move, according to Heidegger, Nietzsche has not entirely escaped metaphysics because he is still operating with an idea of the whole of being. The implicit critique of metaphysics, including Nietzsche's, in the above argument and quotation is that because of the way the issue of being is understood, metaphysics necessarily leads to nihilism and neglects Being. Heidegger offers, as an alternative position to metaphysics, the statement "That which determines being as a whole is Being."<sup>2</sup> What this means, Heidegger never says. This statement definitely stands in contrast to how Heidegger sees metaphysics as proceeding, which could be formulated as "that which determines being as a whole is nothing". The formulation only arises because metaphysics remains preoccupied with answering the guiding question of philosophy rather than investigating the question itself.

Since Heidegger's criticism of metaphysics is that it attempts to answer the guiding question, the onus is placed on him to provide an alternative. He writes that "the guiding question is adequately posed only when it is developed."<sup>3</sup> To "develop" a question is to inquire

into about what it is asking. Heidegger realizes that some thinkers would object to the idea that one could "question questioning" as it "strikes sound common sense as rather unwholesome, extravagant, perhaps even nonsensical".<sup>4</sup> It is not, however, as unwholesome, extravagant or nonsensical as it may seem. In Chapter Four of Part I of this thesis the idea was raised that to ask a question is to in some sense already to provide an answer. It was mentioned in a footnote that this idea was not entirely foreign to philosophy, because Socrates in many Platonic dialogues talks about having to already know something about what one is searching for in order to recognize it when it is found.

The criticism that Heidegger levels against metaphysics is that it seeks to answer the guiding question of philosophy. What is wrong with this? The question itself already provides an answer in its phrasing--What is being? (Was ist das Seiende?). The answer to this question has no choice but to investigate being. Some of the problems with this project have already been elucidated in this and previous chapters. In order to avoid these problems altogether, rather than answering the question, it needs to be determined what exactly it is asking.

When Heidegger examines the guiding question he finds that it is not asking about everything that exists,

instead "what is meant is being as such, neither some particular being nor a group of beings nor even all of them taken together."<sup>5</sup> That is, the guiding question is not even asking for the answer that metaphysics has provided. The guiding question is after "something essentially more: what is meant is the whole, being taken as a whole from the outset, being taken as such unity."<sup>6</sup> The contrast in the above two quotations is between being as a whole, i.e. a totality of all beings, and being as a whole, i.e. the essential unity or completeness of existence. In the unfolding of the guiding question it becomes apparent that this unfolding can lead to the asking of the grounding question (What is Being? [Was ist das Sein?]), as Heidegger admits that "we are seeking the Being of beings; we are trying to reach it."<sup>7</sup>

The unfolding of the guiding question of philosophy sets a standard, for Heidegger. He writes that "by this 'setting the standard' we understand the preeminence of an exceptional region within being as a whole. The remaining beings are not actually derived from that exceptional region; yet that region provides the light that illumines all."<sup>8</sup> This is the result of unfolding rather than answering the guiding question; that being maintains its integrity as a unity, but there is a place or standpoint within it from which humanity can begin to investigate other beings as well as Being

itself. To thoroughly explain this notion of Heidegger's would be to far exceed the scope of this thesis; it needed to be mentioned in order to stand in contrast to and therefore implicitly critique metaphysics.

Heidegger makes it clear that the unfolding of the guiding question allows for a type of investigation into being as a whole that otherwise could not occur. If Chapter Four of Part I is recalled, Heidegger introduced the idea of a "fundamental metaphysical position" in Western philosophy. This position arose because in order to ask a question, one must have a particular stance from which to pose it. It was shown that the guiding question has been understood by philosophers as inquiring into the archē or principle of being. Heidegger rightly observed that in order to thus inquire requires a kind of going out beyond being itself, which in part contributed to the stance philosophers have taken when asking the question. Again, Heidegger also correctly noted that the guiding question is of such scope that even the questioner cannot escape its answer.

The implicit critique of metaphysics, which has now become clear in the above quoted passage, is twofold. First, the guiding question, because it is not developed, is understood to investigate the archē and thus include more than it is legitimately entitled to. Second, in order to understand the guiding question as having such

a wide scope is to take an impossible stance, namely, as not being within the scope of the answer. The development of the guiding question instead, has enabled Heidegger to maintain the unity or wholeness of being and legitimately locate the investigator within this whole. It is the investigation from within, rather than from without as attempted by the metaphysician, that Heidegger thinks will lead to a revealing of Being itself, something traditional metaphysics has neglected entirely, in his opinion.



## Chapter 4

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Erster Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996) p.390. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume two (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.173.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.390 (p.173).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.411 (p.193).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.411 (p.193).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.411-412 (p.193-194).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.412 (p.194).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.413 (p.195).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.415 (p.197).





## Chapter 5

In Part I Chapter Five of this thesis it became evident that Heidegger puts forth in part three "Der Wille zur Macht als Erkenntnis" and part six "Nietzsches Metaphysik" of his Nietzsche a type of "method" used by traditional metaphysics. These two sections correspond to parts one and three, respectively entitled "The Will to Power as Knowledge" and "Nietzsche's Metaphysics", of volume three of the English translation. This "method" is to abstract from beings to Being or beingness; the what and the how of beings. Once accomplished, this conception of Being in turn defines humanity's understanding of beings. The most significant consequences this "method" has is for epistemology. Because Being is derived from beings and then placed over and above them, Heidegger correctly observes that "truth" is located exclusively within being. This entire process arises from the exercise of reason in order to secure life, a securing that must make it permanent. In this way the metaphysical project becomes possible and receives its definitive form from Plato and his "two world doctrine". This chapter will examine Heidegger's critique of metaphysics that occurs within his treatment

of the consequences that the metaphysical origins have had for epistemology.

There are two aspects of the development of metaphysics that Heidegger addresses in these parts. First is the securing of a perspective amidst an ever changing environment. Second is the placing of this secured perspective over and above the world of change as the true, unchanging world.<sup>1</sup> The first act Heidegger identifies as an act of reason that occurs in order to allow for an ordering of the environment in which it is then possible to live. The second act, also an act of reason, is the beginning of metaphysics, because it is an abstraction from or a going over and above beings to being as a whole. Traditionally, metaphysics refers to this as Being. The Being of metaphysics, which Heidegger also refers to as the beingness of beings, represents the what and how of beings. That is, it denotes that which is common to all beings which in turn explains why beings are the way they are. This is the only way metaphysics has ever understood Being.

In Part I Chapter Five of this thesis some of the consequences that metaphysics has had for epistemology were considered, notably, that "truth is correctness of representing" and that "correctness means the adequacy of representation to beings".<sup>2</sup> This understanding of both truth and correctness arise because of the division

between the true and apparent worlds. Something is judged to be "true" if it correctly represents the "True", i.e. that which is contained within the permanent and true world. To use a previous example, the proposition "This is a table" is judged to be true if "this" correctly represents or corresponds to that which is essential about being a table, namely, Tableness. In order for the table to be judged as such, i.e. as correct, it must be adequately represented. Thus, epistemology with its metaphysical assumptions functions by having beings represented adequately to the perceiver, who is then able to judge their correctness vis à vis the true. This is Heidegger's understanding of how what is traditionally known as correspondence theory arises within epistemology. Generally stated, some thing is true if it corresponds correctly to the true.

Heidegger subscribes to an understanding of truth that he claims appeared at the beginning of metaphysics. He says that it was determined that the "essence of truth" is "alētheia (unconcealment and revealing),"<sup>3</sup> but that this essence of "truth would in future times retreat before the determination of truth as approximation (homoiōsis, adaequatio)."<sup>4</sup> Although metaphysics never takes issue with the original "essence of truth as alētheia", this unconcealing and revealing of truth, that is, truth "as the adequate opening-up of beings through

representation", has been allowed to "sink unexamined into oblivion."<sup>5</sup> This sinking into oblivion means that the essence of truth is forgotten and "representation is transformed into the self-securing mustering of everything representable, that is, transformed into certitude in consciousness. Everything else in which representation as such might be grounded is denied."<sup>6</sup>

This last quote introduces Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, that it neglects or forgets Being, and what the consequence of doing this is. By not considering the truth of Being or Being as Being, which first presents truth as a revealing or unconcealing, metaphysics is unable to ground the presentation of beings in anything other than humanity. This occurs because of the way in which humanity understands itself with relation to all other beings. It is with the initial act of reason that secures life and leads to the positing of the true world that humanity sets itself up as the measure and measurer of all beings. This means that all beings are beings insofar as humanity is able to represent them as beings. Heidegger writes that humanity is "the being before whom all beings are brought and through whom they are justified as such. Thus man comes to be a ground founded on himself, and a measure of the truth concerning beings as such."<sup>7</sup>

If the truth of all beings, which metaphysics

takes as the entire truth, is determined by humanity, then the original essence of truth that first appeared in Greek thought cannot show itself. Heidegger does say that metaphysics has considered the Being of being, this has been traditionally formulated as the true world, but has neglected the "truth of Being as Being."<sup>8</sup> Because metaphysics is "the truth of beings as such and as a whole" it grounds how humanity understands itself. From the beginning of Western metaphysics humanity has been defined as a "rational animal."<sup>9</sup> When we, while systematizing beings according to our metaphysical framework, came to ourselves, we found that we were indeed the type of being which matched the category "animal". But there was an important distinguishing characteristic, namely, rationality. It is because this definition determines our relationship to all other beings, the truth of which we have already grounded in ourselves, that the definition "rational animal", which is already indicative of the metaphysical mind set is never questioned and therefore humanity's relationship to the truth of Being never arises.<sup>10</sup>

As mentioned in previous chapters, this fundamental aspect that has gone unconsidered throughout all of metaphysics is what Heidegger considers to be the failing of metaphysics. He thinks that if the metaphysical mind set could be overcome, then humanity

could seriously consider what the relationship between the truth of Being and our own essence is. Heidegger's hope that this will occur is due to the appearance of Nietzsche as the last metaphysician.

In the two parts of Nietzsche under consideration here, Heidegger understands Nietzsche to be logically concluding metaphysics. This is a continuation of the same theme explored in the previously examined parts of Nietzsche. In his inversion of Platonism, Nietzsche is able to abolish the "true" and "apparent" worlds leaving only this one. He is still caught up in the metaphysical mind set, however, as his concerns are still about how to understand humanity in relation to all other beings, rather than humanity's relationship to the truth of Being.

This is why Heidegger says that Nietzsche's radical anthropomorphizing of all beings, through the will to power, is no surprise. Indeed Nietzsche is simply thinking things through as "this ruthless and extreme anthropomorphizing of the world tears away the last illusions of the fundamental metaphysical position; it takes the positing of man as subiectum seriously."<sup>11</sup> That is, Nietzsche recognizes, in a way never done before, that humanity is the measure and measurer of all things and instead of positing an ideal as measure, like in the past, Nietzsche actually, consciously uses

humanity as the measure. Although Nietzsche remains within the metaphysical position by only concerning himself with humanity's relationship to all other beings, it is the conscious recognition of humanity as the measure which also entails the abolition of the ideal that Heidegger thinks will not only end metaphysics but help humanity to begin thinking. That is, to think outside of the fundamental metaphysical position which will allow for the consideration of the relationship humanity has to the truth of Being, something heretofore left unthought. It is with this goal in mind that the final parts of Heidegger's Nietzsche will be considered.





## Chapter 5

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Erster Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996) p.480-518. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume three (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.50-86.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.460 and 480 (p.34 and 53).

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Zweiter Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997) p.286. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume three (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.238.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.286 (p.238).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.286 (p.238).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.286 (p.238).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.287 (p.239).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.234 (p.189).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.263 (p.217).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.263 (p.217).

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Erster Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996) p.590. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume three (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.155.



## Chapter 6

This chapter will finish considering Heidegger's critique of metaphysics in parts five and seven, respectively entitled "Der Europäische Nihilismus" and "Die Seinsgeschichtliche Bestimmung des Nihilismus" of Nietzsche. These correspond to part one and two of the English translation of volume four, which are entitled "European Nihilism" and "Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being". In Part I Chapter Six Heidegger's understanding of the development of modern metaphysics as well as how Nietzsche ended metaphysics and why metaphysics is at its core nihilistic were explored. These topics will again play an important role in his critique, but the most important will be why metaphysics is at its core nihilistic because it is this topic that best demonstrates Heidegger's criticism of metaphysics.

Thus far Heidegger's critique of metaphysics has been that it neglects or forgets Being. In Chapter Six of Part I it became clear that Heidegger understands metaphysics as employing a method of abstraction when attempting to determine Being. It is the abstraction from beings to Being that Heidegger says is the method used by metaphysics to conceive of Being. The problem

with this method is that it makes Being the "most universal and therefore emptiest concept"<sup>1</sup> about which "nothing further can be predicated". The problem with this method is that with "the interpretation of Being as the most universal, nothing is said about Being itself, but only about the way in which metaphysics thinks about the concept of Being."<sup>2</sup>

At this point the use of the word Being needs to be clarified. Up until now Heidegger has contended that metaphysics neglects or forgets Being in favour of beings. This still remains the case; however, when Heidegger mentions the "beingness of beings" or "beings as such" he is indeed referring to Being. The important distinction is that from the metaphysical perspective, Being is only thought as the "beingness of beings" or "beings as such". As Heidegger stated above, metaphysics always considers Being as a concept.

Here the traditional metaphysicians may object to Heidegger's analysis of their discipline on two accounts: (i) that they do not accept his distinction of Being and beings, i.e. the ontological difference, and (ii) that even if they did Heidegger has not provided anything definitive about Being either. To the first point Heidegger answers with an observation of the history of Western metaphysics. In every metaphysics he encounters he finds the distinction between Being and

beings, although this distinction is always taken for granted and never examined. The traditional metaphysicians think that,

the relationship to "being" has already been sufficiently defined by the explanation of man's relations with beings. One takes both the relations with beings and the relationship to Being as the "selfsame," and indeed with some justification. The fundamental trait of metaphysical thought is intimated in such equivalence.<sup>3</sup>

Thus not only is the ontological difference made in traditional metaphysics, it is then not considered because humanity's understanding of its relationship to beings is seen as an adequate and even equivalent understanding of its relationship to Being. It is with this equation that humanity becomes indifferent to its relationship to Being. To illustrate this Heidegger writes, "such indifference to Being in the midst of the greatest passion for beings testifies to the thoroughly metaphysical character of the age."<sup>4</sup>

Second, Heidegger does offer some ideas about Being itself, not just Being as a concept. First and foremost, he says that humanity's relation to Being is "revealed as discordant". In one of his clearest and most concise passages about Being Heidegger states,

Being reveals itself to us in a variety of

oppositions that cannot be coincidental, since even a mere listing of them points to their inner connection: Being is both utterly void and most abundant, most universal and most unique, most intelligible and most resistant to every concept, most in use and yet to come, most reliable and most abyssal, most forgotten and most remembering, most said and most reticent.<sup>5</sup>

Obviously Being does reveal itself as "discordant". Discordant, I would suggest, because although humanity does stand in relation to Being, according to Heidegger, due to the essence or the truth of Being, i.e. the nature of Being, it cannot be reduced to a mere concept that will fit seamlessly within any metaphysical system. Any metaphysical system itself is dependent upon Being and owes its existence to Being, insofar as Being is that without which nothing else can come to exist, but cannot itself be comprehended within its categories of being. Hence the system forgets that to which it owes its very existence.

This forgetting of Being occurs at the very beginning of metaphysics when Plato defines Being as "idea", which means from then on "Being is sought in the idea, in the idea-like and the ideal."<sup>6</sup> Although Being is contained within metaphysics from its beginnings, the first thing metaphysics attempts to do is change Being into a being, "whether it be a supreme being in the sense of the first cause, whether it be the distinctive being

in the sense of the subject of subjectivity, as the condition of the possibility of all objectivity, . . . , [or] it be the determination of the supreme being as the Absolute in the sense of unconditioned subjectivity."7 Being is the "idea" or "ideal" that metaphysics seeks to place over and above beings, but Being always has to be intelligible to metaphysics. By making Being intelligible to the system, metaphysics reduces Being to another being, although, granted, the greatest or supreme being. But this too may be a hollow victory, because that which is posited as most universal (usually the supreme within metaphysics) is also the most empty of all concepts. Thus the nihilism inherent in metaphysics is there for two reasons: in the first case because it reduces Being to an empty concept and in the second case because this empty concept prevents metaphysics from considering Being itself.

This criticism of metaphysics is levelled at the entire tradition, even the last metaphysician--Nietzsche. Heidegger's comment, that follows, is an indictment of Nietzsche's project as metaphysics. Despite all of Nietzsche's efforts to overcome nihilism, it is his failure to overcome metaphysics that ultimately defeats him. Heidegger writes,

As an ontology, even Nietzsche's metaphysics is at the same time theology, although it



seems far removed from scholastic metaphysics. The ontology of beings as such thinks essentia as will to power. Such ontology thinks the existentia of beings as such and as a whole theologically as the eternal recurrence of the same. Such metaphysical theology is of course a negative theology of a peculiar kind. Its negativity is revealed in the expression "God is dead." That is an expression not of atheism but of ontotheology, in that metaphysics in which nihilism proper is fulfilled.<sup>8</sup>

By attempting to abstract from beings to Being, i.e. identify that which is most universal, Nietzsche also is neglecting Being by only thinking it as a concept, a concept that because of its universality is also the emptiest; and by understanding Being only conceptually Nietzsche, like all the other metaphysicians, is unable to contemplate Being itself. Ironically, according to Heidegger, anyway, if Nietzsche had only taken aim at metaphysics rather than nihilism, he may have succeeded in his attempt to overcome nihilism.

The severity of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics has now become very clear, so clear, that even Nietzsche the consummate "antimetaphysian" is thoroughly indicted in the nihilism that has pervaded metaphysics since its inception. The reduction of Being to a mere concept, and in that sense the reduction of Being to another being, has been metaphysics' failure from its very beginning. It is only with the completion of metaphysics, which also at the same time signals the completion of nihilism, that humanity is now able to

consider its relationship to the truth of Being in some way other than as merely an empty concept. Obviously, this is a matter of the greatest urgency and importance for Heidegger. If this relationship is considered in earnest by humanity it will mean a radical change in how humanity understands itself, Being and beings. This is the shift to thinking (Nachdenken), away from metaphysics and/or philosophy, that Heidegger advocates throughout his later career. It is this shift to thinking that will save humanity from itself.



## Chapter 6

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Zweiter Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997) p.189. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume four (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.157.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 189 (p.157).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 182 (p.151-152).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 228 (p.195).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 226 (p.193).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 197 (p.162).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 312 (p.208).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 210 (p.314).



## Conclusion

This thesis sought to answer the two part question: (1) What is the later Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics?, and (2) What are his basic lines of criticism concerning metaphysics? The answer to this question is that metaphysics considers only beings (Seiende) and as a result neglects Being (Sein). This answer originally appeared in "The Way Back to the Ground of Metaphysics" and reappeared in many of the sections of Nietzsche that were considered.

The first text examined was Heidegger's 1949 introduction to the 1929 essay Was ist Metaphysik?. The 1929 essay is interested in answering one of the classic questions of philosophy, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" The 1949 introduction is more interested in examining this classic question, rather than answering it. During his consideration of the question, Heidegger found that metaphysics defines its subject matter by the way it asks the question. By asking, "Why is there something rather than nothing?", metaphysics only concerns itself with things that "are" and views all else as nothing. Stated differently, metaphysics only

concerns itself with beings (Seiende) and understands everything else that does not have a particular type of existence as "nothing". Since Being (Sein) does not have a particular type of existence, otherwise it would be a being (Seiende), metaphysics sees it as nothing. Recalling Descartes' metaphor, metaphysics is the root of the tree of knowledge, but the ground in which that root is anchored is never investigated. This is the negligence of metaphysics concerning Being (Sein). Because Being (Sein) does not have a particular type of existence, metaphysics understands it to be nothing and therefore not worthy of investigation.

This line of thinking continued in Nietzsche. The part, entitled "Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst", begins with Heidegger distinguishing between the guiding and the grounding question of philosophy. The guiding question of philosophy asks, "What is the being? ("Was ist das Seiende?")", whereas the grounding question of philosophy asks, "What is Being?" ("Was ist das Sein?"). Heidegger thinks that philosophy, since the Greeks, has only been concerned with answering the guiding question of philosophy. Here, again, Heidegger observes that the entire metaphysical project is determined by how the question is originally formulated. When one only asks after beings (Seiende), one will always find only beings (Seiende).

The second section of Nietzsche, entitled "Die Ewige Weiderkehr des Gleichen", introduced a new aspect of Heidegger's analysis. The understanding and critique of metaphysics Heidegger had put forth until then was that metaphysics only concerned itself with beings (Seiende) and that this had been traditionally done by the separation of the "true" from the "apparent" world. Nietzsche found metaphysics nihilistic for this very reason, because the "true" world was the one that contained all the truth, whereas we were left to live in the "apparent" world. Nihilism occurs due to the belief that the world in which one lives is not really "real". This in turn diverts one's attention away from living one's life here and now in this world. Although Heidegger agrees with this formulation, he found metaphysics, regardless of its form, to be nihilistic because of the dichotomy it makes between beings (Seiende) and nothing. Heidegger asserted that "being as a whole is nothing."<sup>1</sup> He came to this assertion because metaphysics only investigates beings (Seiende) and defines all else that does not have being as nothing. This results in the "something" (all beings) and "nothing" dichotomy. I argued that Heidegger was led to the conclusion "being as a whole is nothing", because all meaning and value is placed within being, traditionally the "true world", and that, because nothing did not have



being (Seiende), it stood as something over and against being as a whole. This means that no matter what form metaphysics takes it will always be nihilistic because of its approach to beings (Seiende).

This was further illustrated in part three and part six of Nietzsche, respectively entitled "Der Wille zur Macht als Erkenntnis" and "Nietzsches Metaphysik". The most important aspect of Heidegger's understanding and critique to emerge was that of metaphysics' methodology. Heidegger observed that metaphysics arrives at a conception of Being (Sein) by employing a method of abstraction. The abstraction is from beings (Seiende) to Being (Sein). What metaphysics refers to as Being (Sein) is the same as Heidegger, however, metaphysics is only able to formulate the most abstract concept about Being (Sein) that does not do it justification. It is because this concept is arrived at by the abstraction from beings (Seiende) that it ends up as the most abstract and thus emptiest concept. Metaphysics derives its only understanding of Being (Sein) from beings (Seiende), rather than contemplating Being (Sein) itself. Thus metaphysics continues to neglect Being (Sein), because its only understanding of Being (Sein) is in light of beings (Seiende).

The last two sections of Nietzsche considered in the thesis, part five "Der Europäische Nihilismus" and

part seven "Die seinsgeschichtliche Bestimmung des Nihilismus" continue to press home Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics as nihilistic. In these sections Heidegger sees Nietzsche as completing metaphysics, but because he is still engaged in metaphysics he does not overcome nihilism. Nietzsche is the last metaphysician, according to Heidegger, because he brings metaphysics to its logical conclusion. Since Plato, metaphysics has divided the world into the "true" and "apparent", which has resulted in a considerable number of problems, especially around the issue of coherency, for these systems of thought. As they have developed and become more sophisticated, they have explored and adopted many different forms. These possible formulations are all only available within the attempt to answer the guiding question of philosophy, which means there can only be so many variations. Nietzsche was the last, because he abolished the distinction between the "true" and "apparent" worlds, but remained within metaphysics as he still attempted to answer the guiding question of philosophy and thus focused solely upon beings (Seiende) as such. This is why Nietzsche remained entangled in nihilism, because he too neglected Being (Sein) in favour of beings (Seiende).

As this thesis has considered both Heidegger's understanding and critique of metaphysics, the term

"onto-theology" has appeared and been discussed. Heidegger sees all metaphysics as onto-theology because all metaphysical systems are concerned with delineating beings as such, including the greatest of all. Given his definition of metaphysics as onto-theology, the implications of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics for the discipline of theology could be rather serious.

The one major obstacle any theology would have to avoid would be not to reduce God to one being among many. According to Heidegger, the greatest of all beings has traditionally received the name "Being" (Sein) from metaphysics; however, Heidegger acutely observed that the concept of Being (Sein) is derived through an abstraction from beings (Seiende). This method in combination with the metaphysicians' lack of attention to Being as such is what causes Heidegger to conclude that the concept of Being (Sein) is the "most universal and therefore emptiest."<sup>2</sup>

This is of course not the conclusion a theologian would wish to reach about God. The difficulty that Heidegger presents to theologians is how to talk in a meaningful way about God without making God into another being. Since Heidegger demonstrates how it is that Being becomes the emptiest concept in metaphysics, theologians know what not to do when attempting to discuss God. Primarily, this would mean not using a concept of God or

at least not using a concept of God that is derived through or abstracted from beings (Seiende). How one would do so has been attempted, but the success of these projects remains to be determined.<sup>3</sup>

At certain points Heidegger makes reference to the folly of "Christian philosophy" and theology, which, I would suggest, means he was aware of the impact his thought would have upon these fields. This certainly does not mean that he asserts an atheistic position, quite the contrary, merely that he thinks that Christian thinkers do not do justice to God when they arrive at an understanding of God through an abstraction from beings (Seiende), as metaphysics does. This is why Heidegger asks, in all earnestness, "Will Christian theology make up its mind one day to take seriously the word of the apostle and thus also the conception of philosophy as foolishness?"<sup>4</sup> The apostle to whom Heidegger refers is Paul and the passage to which he refers is from Corinthians I, 1:20 in which Paul rhetorically asks, "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"<sup>5</sup> It appears that Heidegger urges Christian thinkers to heed the words of their own scripture.



## Conclusion

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Erster Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996) p.390. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume two (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.173.

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Nietzsche: Zweiter Band, in Gesamtausgabe Band 6.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997) p.189. Translated by Krell, David Farrell as Nietzsche: volume four (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) p.157.

<sup>3</sup> The way in which a project such as this may take shape is basically an open ended question. Heidegger himself did provide some clues and other thinkers have certainly taken Heidegger's position seriously and have made several, very different, attempts at talking about God without reducing God to a being. For the tip of the iceberg, both of Heidegger's and other's attempts, please see Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Was ist Metaphysik (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1969) p.20. Translated Kaufmann, Walter. "The Wat Back into the Ground of Metaphysics" in Existentialiam from dostoevsky to Sartre (New York: Penguin Books, 1975) p.276.

<sup>5</sup> Holy Bible (NSRV). Corinthians I, 1:20



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