

# Martin Heidegger

## In Conversation

LEO GABRIEL

MEDARD BOSS

DOLF STERNBERGER

MAURICE DE GANDILLAC

EMIL STAIGER • KARL RAHNER

ERNST JÜNGER • HEINRICH OTT

FRIEDRICH VON WEIZSÄCKER

TSUJIMURA • KARL LÖWITH

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1977x

*Edited by*

RICHARD WISSER



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B. SRINIVASA MURTHY



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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

I would like to thank Professor Manfred Frings of DePaul University for his immense help in reading the manuscript, suggesting improvements and encouraging me to pursue the translation. My thanks also to Professor Manfred Feldsieper without whose assistance the manuscript would not have been finalized. However, the translator is responsible for any discrepancies.

B. Srinivasa Murthy  
Long Beach, California



## PREFACE

On September 24, 1969, the *Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen* televised an interview with Martin Heidegger on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. If any prodding was necessary in choosing to publish the text of this broadcast, the remarkable response which followed by way of questions, letters, reactions and press discussions made the decision an easy one.

The written text certainly loses the original audiovisual "picture," which especially in a televised broadcast is able to present the personal exchange that takes place in an interview with a proximity and familiarity that is almost intimate. However, this printed text affords the opportunity of presenting the whole text of the interview with Heidegger and the supporting statements by the participants without the necessary cuts and abbreviations typical of televised programming.

A word about how the broadcast came about: in a revealing essay entitled "The Thinking Voice and Its Thought," Richard Wisser pointed out the singular unity between Heidegger's way of speaking and his way of thinking. According to Wisser, the "thinking voice" of Heidegger does not merely explicate the traditional meanings of notions but presents almost plastically the unity of his thinking with that which is said. The "thinking voice" neither lags behind the meaning nor does it lay anything emotional or wilful into it. If it did, it would no longer be a



pure "thinking voice." Its credibility does not lie in the agreement between the script and its audio reproduction but in its own autochthonous unity: "It is what it says, how it says it."

In keeping with this concept, which has already been illustrated in recordings of lectures by Heidegger, Wisser has used the potentialities offered by television. Not only as the Director of the *Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen*, but also as a Professor of Philosophy, I have gladly supported this opportunity to bring to light Martin Heidegger as he is, as a thinker.

KARL HOLZAMER

## INTRODUCTION

Martin Heidegger—few names in the world of thought have comparable stature. Our time does not lack great men, nor even men who are used to thinking on a grand scale, but it is not rich in great thinkers.

For Martin Heidegger, who has been called a "thinker in times of need," thinking has become the concern of his life. He has freed the word "thinking" from the linguistic entanglements into which it has fallen as long as one confounds it with mere sagacity or purposeful searching consideration. In spite of the increasing thoughtlessness which abounds in today's world, he has kept awake the consciousness of the absolute necessity for reflective, contemplative and deliberate thinking. Whoever reflects today upon the word "thinking" is particularly reminded of Martin Heidegger, whose thinking no-one who thinks can evade. Heidegger has shown that thinking can become daily work without becoming daily routine.

From his experience, the eighty-year-old Heidegger once said: "In thinking, each thing becomes solitary and tranquil." He who does not perceive the sacrifices which Heidegger, disinterested in his own person, has made for his work, will not comprehend the solitude into which his thinking has led him for its own sake. During his whole life, Heidegger has understood what it means to proceed at a distance from both the



dexterity of the ingenious and the thronging of those lacking distance, to take "the step backward" in order to settle the matter of his thinking.

He, himself, has preferred the symbol of a path (*des Weges*) for the task of his thinking. He names one of his books *Holzwege*; another one, *Wegmarken*. *Holzwege* are untrodden paths, far away from the usual tracks and routes upon which the general traffic plies. But *Holzwege* are also paths which lead into pathlessness, and yet must be trodden, if the wealth of the wood be gathered. "Woodcutters and woodsmen know the paths. They know what it means to be on a *Holzweg*. *Wegmarken* point out the direction. They are not interested in the 'new' or the 'old'." Heidegger looks for possibilities in such a way that the unconcealment, in which some things manifest themselves, may not be lost in the shrunk monosyllabism and monotony of automatic intentions and factual compulsions. "Nothing," says Heidegger, "can be proven in the realm of thought; but thinking can point to many things."

In many countries, Heidegger's allusions have guided disciples and masters on their way. He has influenced the methods of several sciences and blocked old-fashioned ways of thinking. He has shifted the riverbed of thinking.

Therefore, at least some of those who started from Heidegger, or who moved toward him; and also those who now go ways of their own; shall speak today about what Heidegger means to them personally. In their responses, the challenge which he has given will be noticeable. In their reflections, his influence comes to light. In their reminiscent visions, their retrospective musings, and their contemplative reflections, the absent Heidegger becomes present to us.

## TRIBUTES TO MARTIN HEIDEGGER



## CARL-FRIEDRICH FRHR. VON WEIZSÄCKER

Today, I am obliged to say a few words about Heidegger. Well, I believe that, most of all, Heidegger's philosophy could teach us that one cannot understand his philosophy in four minutes. Therefore, I would only like to say that, in my opinion, Martin Heidegger is one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century, maybe *the* philosopher of the twentieth century.

It may be of help in understanding Heidegger when I describe how I got to know him. I was a young physicist, a student of Werner Heisenberg. Someone had communicated the idea to Heidegger that he should invite Heisenberg together with Victor von Weizsäcker, my uncle, who was a medical doctor. In their conversation, they could discuss the question of what *medicine*, as my uncle understood it, and *physics*, as Heisenberg understood it, had in common with each other; whether they concur in their understanding of reality and of man.

The conversation took place and Heisenberg took me along as his assistant. That was in 1935, in Heidegger's small hut located in Todtnauberg in the Black Forest.

We sat together in a narrow room at a narrow table. Heidegger sat at one end of the table. Next to him, facing each



other, were the two opponents. Now the two began the conversation. They talked very vividly for perhaps an hour or so. They even had arguments and counterarguments, but finally they were thoroughly confused, and no longer understood each other.

At this point only, Heidegger, who had listened attentively, intervened. He turned to one of them and said: "Well, Herr von Weizsäcker, if I understand you correctly, you want to say. . . ." Then followed three completely clear sentences. And Von Weizsäcker said: "Yes, I wanted to say exactly *that*!" Then Heidegger turned to Heisenberg: "Herr Heisenberg, if I see correctly, you mean to say that. . . ." Again Heidegger formulated three completely precise sentences. And Heisenberg said: "*That* was exactly what I wanted to express!" "Then," Heidegger continued, "it seems to me that the connection could possibly be the following. . . ." Again, four or five sentences followed. Both Heisenberg and Von Weizsäcker agreed: "Yes, that is how it could possibly be. On this basis, we can proceed," and the conversation continued.

I have found that my first meeting with Heidegger led me to realize that Heidegger, apart from the teachings he has expounded in his books, is able to listen and to understand what is being thought, and to understand it *better* than those who thought it themselves.

I dare say: *That* is a *thinker*! I don't want to say more about him today.

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Carl-Friedrich Frhr. von Weizsäcker (founder of the Maxplanck Institute in Munich for the research of living conditions in the technoscientific world) can be counted as a philosopher as well as a theoretical physicist; he is among those scientists, who not only take into consideration the mutual limitations of the scientific fields, but who also try to put into perspective, with philosophic means, the problems of the cognitive situation arising out of the discoveries of modern physics. Moreover, according to Weizäcker, what has become possible through science demands "political"

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ethics in a technological age and a new "responsibility" of science in the atomic age; he would like this to be realized by a strategy of peace and well-founded self restraint in human action. Von Weizsäcker, who had already, in 1949, pointed toward "the relationship of theoretical physics and Heidegger's thinking," feels that Heidegger has tackled the philosophical task which Weizsäcker himself, as a student, had begun to perceive within the background of modern theoretical physics.



## MAURICE DE GANDILLAC

Martin Heidegger has been an epoch-maker in our generation. Forty years ago, when I was a student of the École Normale Supérieure and only twenty-three years old, I had the good fortune and opportunity of participating in a conference of the Davos University Seminar in Switzerland; being there, I listened to long, difficult and exciting discussions between Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger about the interpretation of the Kantian Analytic. At that time, we also visited Friedrich Nietzsche's house in Sils Maria, together with those two great philosophers.

For the students of my generation, the generation of Jean-Paul Sartre, such a polite, but sharp, conversation as the one which took place between Cassirer and Heidegger was very important because the influence of Marburg Neo-Kantianism was still very much alive at the Sorbonne. Apart from the sociological and Thomistic currents, the predominant master of French philosophy at that time was Léon Brunschvicg. The latter's orientation indicated great affinity with the Marburg School.

Léon Brunschvicg was also present in Davos. Though able to read German, he could not participate in the discussions which interested and impressed us so much. My present colleague, Levinas, who at that time already understood *Being and Time* very well, functioned as a useful interpreter and mediator.

Even on the ski slope for beginners—symbolically called “Idiots Hill”—Levinas readily explained, to all those who were there, the characteristics of Heidegger's philosophy and its relation to Husserl's phenomenology.

Existentialism, as we called the new currents in general, appeared to us as a liberation. Already, Jean Wahl read and wrote about Søren Kierkegaard. Gabriel Marcel had awakened a deep and moving interest by his *Metaphysical Journal*. A little later, Karl Jaspers also influenced us. Nevertheless, Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* was really regarded to be a sensation. The first translations by Henri Corbin—an expert on Iranian Mysticism—were eagerly read and commented on; the text still appeared to be very difficult. But the attraction of Heidegger's personality; the originality of his thought; the half poetic, half philological representation of *Dasein* on the background of Nothing (*Nichts*); gradually spread their influence. Heidegger's influence upon Sartre is well known, although “L'être et le néant” has been sharply criticised by Heidegger.

Later, after the war and the misunderstandings of that time, the famous correspondence between Heidegger and Jean Beaufret, “On Humanism,” became very influential. Alphonse de Waelhens and Jean Wahl, in their lectures at the Sorbonne, very aptly introduced the French students to the earlier reasoning and the more recent development of Heidegger's reflections.

In 1955, on his way to Cerisy-la-Salle Castle in Normandy, where international cultural meetings take place in July and August, Heidegger was a guest of the now famous theoretician of psychoanalysis, Dr. Lacan, and of the poet, René Char. Here, under the serene sun in the garden or by the shore of the peaceful lake, many an enthusiastic conversation took place. Heidegger was not only the head of an unforgettable seminar about Leibniz, Hegel and Holderlin; but he also advanced his famous answer to the question: “What is philosophy?”

Of course, other directions of thinking have become more lively today. Contemporary philosophy has its new ways. But



at least for us, the young and the old, Martin Heidegger remains beside his master, Edmund Husserl, as a man who opened new ways of thought, whose voice will deeply reverberate in our hearts and minds for a long time to come; that voice of a genuine poet, who has revealed new dimensions of thinking.

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Maurice de Gandillac (Professor of Philosophy of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance at the Sorbonne in Paris) is not only well acquainted with German cultural life, but he has also contributed to the philosophy and the philosophical anthropology of Nicolaus von Cues. Besides, he has written about Eckhart, Tauler, and Seuse; he has translated into French and partly commented upon the works of Hegel, Franz Brentano, Max Scheler, Karl Jaspers, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch and others. De Gandillac, who recognized the importance of Heidegger's thinking very early, helped to conduct the discussions in Cerisy-la-Salle in Normandy after the war where, in 1955, Heidegger held the now famous inaugural address, "Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?" (What is philosophy?)

De Gandillac, being a friend of Mounier, Merleau-Ponty, and Beaufret, is in charge of the new International Nietzsche Edition, and in spite of his great interest in Medieval philosophy, is also open to more recent movements of thought.

## MEDARD BOSS

For more than the last quarter of his eighty years, which Martin Heidegger completes today, I have had the pleasure of sharing his friendship. For us both, it was actually a medical concern which brought together the unequal pair, the philosopher and the physician; which still keeps us together today; and which I hope will allow us to wander the same path for many years to come.

Immediately after the war, however, I had first to uncover and thus remove barricades of mischievous calumny, through minute research, and this kept me away from personally meeting the great philosopher.

But it then became evident that Martin Heidegger was already somewhat annoyed to see his insights into man's essence and his world, and their mutual relationship, confined primarily to isolated studies of professional philosophers. Perhaps he hoped that, by my help and that of my students and medical assistants, the salutary effects of his thinking might benefit those who needed it most immediately.

I, for one, had long been searching for a solid scientific basis for my medical undertakings. I soon realized that my scientific opinions about man could never furnish such a basis. The basic humanity of our patients is therefore forever fundamentally inaccessible to the scientific method of research



because of the presuppositions in its own ways of thinking. Of course, this does not in the least deny the enormous usefulness of scientific research, as long as it concerns itself with the pure manipulation of the human body.

But even the most skilful manipulations do not in the least guarantee the pertinent understanding of the inner being of that which is manipulated.

As I already recognized a quarter of a century ago, the basic traits of human existence expressed in Martin Heidegger's epoch-making work, *Being and Time*, I found to be the most reliable basis ever for a humane medicine. And to this day, I have not seen a better basis for it.

The re-thinking of dimensions of Martin Heidegger's *Daseinsanalytik* was so unusual and completely unique for a physician that it required years of hard work. I succeeded to a certain extent mainly because Heidegger gave me innumerable private instructions. Yet the endeavors were richly rewarding, not only for my colleagues, but also for me. I am convinced that my efforts have benefited my patients above all. A comparison between our present day possibilities of medical treatment with that of the past, when we had to deal with intellectual acrobatics of the usual psychological provisional constructions, is striking and speaks for itself.

In this manner, Martin Heidegger, the philosopher, and myself, the physician, each according to his capacity—but with *all* his capacity—have been and continue to be engaged in one and the same task. This is probably the secret of our unshakable friendship. Not only do I realize, again and again, Martin Heidegger's ingenious power of thinking but I have also been allowed to experience that which remains hidden, for many, behind a mighty rampart. I mean his deep benevolence and his unreserved sympathy for the smallest and greatest affairs of others; also, his shy tenderness and the wide-open sensitivity of his heart.

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Medard Boss (Professor of Psychotherapy and "Tiefenpsychology" at the University of Zürich) has been influenced by Martin Heidegger's *Analytik des Menschlichen Daseins*, which clearly elaborates the basic entities of "Being in the world." Boss employs Heidegger's understanding of pre-objective forms of existence in his practice. As a convinced representative of the so-called existential-analytics of "Tiefenpsychology" with respect to practical behaviour, Boss does not regard his patients as objects of concrete psychological perception or subjects of medical inventory, but as people who must be set free from existential fears and guilt feelings.



## ERNST JÜNGER

During the Second World War, I met from time to time, young Frenchmen who were studying Martin Heidegger's philosophy. I took this as a good sign of the attraction of a thinker; in spite of the serious disagreements and unresolved conflicts, there were still essential interests which remained steadfast.

That was encouraging and a point for reflection; what was the basis of this attraction? It was strange, not only because it remained in spite of acute political hostility, but also because the gap which separates our two languages had to be overcome. One has to realize that Heidegger's texts are already difficult in the native language and that many obstacles must be overcome before one gets to the core. That certainly is worth the effort.

Therefore it is understandable that conversations, such as those repeated here in Wilflingen, began mainly with discussions about words and terms and their differences in both languages. "Existence" and "Existenz" might possibly coincide, but what about "l'Être" and "Das Sein?"

I have to point out that I was a poor interpreter because, with regard to Heidegger's texts and terminologies, I may call myself an admirer but not an expert. Nevertheless, I am able to answer the question posed earlier, maybe even better: How can this thinker's magnetism overcome such strong resistance?

I realized so much during the meetings. Language alone

could not have produced this effect. Maybe it would be better to speak of influence rather than of effect—of a strong yet anonymous uplifting—just as when, in sluiceways, ships are unnoticeably lifted up to the water level. A person enters the gravitational force of another mind (*Geist*) and changes himself. Here, one had to presume something different from conviction by words, by concepts or even by the individuality of thought itself. Something unspoken had to be operative—an Eros gripped by words and thoughts.

This supposition was corroborated by my first personal meeting with the philosopher at Todtnauberg, high in the Black Forest. There was something at first sight—not only stronger than word and thought, but even stronger than the person. He was simple as a peasant but, like one in a fairy tale, he could transfigure himself according to his own will. "Treasure huts in the deep pine forest." Something of a trapper was also there.

He was a person with the possession of knowledge, whom knowledge not only makes rich, but also joyous, in the same manner as Nietzsche demanded that of science. In his richness, he was secure, yes unseizable, even if the bailiff should come to take his coat; a cunning side glance betrayed this. He would have pleased Aristophanes.

I received such an impression of direct strength only once more, although I have met many contemporaries who carry eminent names, rightly or wrongly. In the second instance, I mean Picasso. Of his creations too, I am less an expert than an admirer. But in relation to him, I felt that unseparable spiritual force which generates the separate; be it in thoughts, deeds, or images; expressed in one word; "work."

A simple word like "Being" has greater profundity than can be expressed, indeed, even by thought. By the word "sesame," someone understands a handful of oil seeds, while another, when he pronounces "sesame," makes a treasure cavern suddenly spring open. One has the key, the other has taken the cue of the seed from the woodpecker.



Martin Heidegger's motherland is Germany, with her language; Heidegger's home is the forest. There he is at home—on untrodden ways and *Holzwegen*. His companion is the tree.

When Heidegger explores language, digging deep into its roots, he does more than is demanded "among us philologists," as Nietzsche would say. Heidegger's exegesis is more than philological, and even more than etymological. He takes a word while it slumbers silently, fresh and in full sprout, and he lifts it from the humus of the woods.

It is not that he discovers a new or unknown meaning in the word. Rather, like a miner, he illuminates language with a new import. The word, on the brink of the unspoken, becomes supple and begins to answer from the silent matter. And not the word alone speaks, but also the thoughts, the concepts, and the images too. The philological surprise is only one among many; it confirms the good choice, the lucky hand.

A last question: Why has this surprise in the master's work, which has enchanted so many, not generally been shared? Here, one has to pose a counter question: Is this the usual way through which phenomena in the spiritual world appear? The lion's share is always that of fashion. And that is fine, because it saves the thinker much empty talk and bleak representation.

Apart from that, the great transitions are the least striking.

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Ernst Jünger (Wilflingen, via Riedlingen) has often demonstrated his friendship with and his closeness to Heidegger's work, through dedication of his own works to Heidegger. In his book, *Zeit der Apostel ohne Aufträge*, he sees Martin Heidegger as the thinker who is moving into unmeasured spheres, beyond the "lines" where the old figures are no more correct.

## KÔICHI TSUJIMURA

Heidegger has been somewhat of a guide for me. In what respect? Primarily, I am a student of Zen-Buddhism and, secondarily, a professor of occidental philosophy.

To bear the duality of East Asiatic Buddhism and European philosophy in one person has been a destined necessity, not only for myself alone, but also for my teachers and predecessors at the University of Kyoto. Because of this necessity handed down to me, I have come to Heidegger's thinking, looking for a path which can lead from Zen-Buddhism to philosophy. To say this more clearly, the path originates in Zen and from there, by way of rethinking Heidegger's thought, arrives at a possible Japanese philosophy. It is an inevitable detour.

Then, a *relationship* between Heidegger's thinking and Zen-Buddhism ought to exist? Yes! There is a very intimate, however not yet sufficiently clarified, relationship which comprises a deep *chasm*. Where is this relationship to be seen? I can cite only one example now. Heidegger once said:

Wälder lagern  
Bäche stürzen  
Felsen Dauern  
Regen rinnt.

Fluren warten  
Brunnen quellen  
Winde wohnen  
Segen sinnt.



These words leave each and every thing in its own sphere. That, which remains unspoken in these words—and that is the main point—is this: “The world worlds itself and man who lives in the world. But, of that I shall not speak here.” Now, an example from Zen-Buddhism! A verse therein runs:

Limitless streams the stream,  
As it streams,  
Red flowers the flower,  
As it flowers.

This expression means that not only we humans, but land, grass, trees, each and everything existing is already Buddha or, rather, has already been Buddha. Here in the openness, skylike, which is neither stream nor flower, not any thing at all, streams the stream, flowers the flower, lives man. The examples cited are not pure descriptions of nature, but events of truth. It seems to me that the real greatness of Heidegger's thinking consists in the fact that it does not remain in this realm of truth; on the contrary, it proceeds into the dangerous zone of untruth, going astray without leaving the realm of truth. The same thing also happens in Zen-Buddhism.

But wherein lies the deep *chasm* which keeps Heidegger's thought and Zen-Buddhism apart? It is difficult to say, if one does not want to let this invisible valley, which is one and the same for both sides, disappear in tiresome monotony. However, the mysterious abyss also belongs to heaven, that is to say, to the openness mentioned above, because heaven reaches into the abyss.

Heidegger speaks sometimes of *that*, namely that which must remain unspoken. In Zen we often say *this*; namely, this one word *before* all utterance. From *this* word before all utterance, a path may lead to *that* which remains unspoken.

Martin Heidegger, the thinker, has shown us Japanese a way and a path.

Kôichi Tsujimura (Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kyoto) is a student of the internationally famous Japanese philosophers, Tanabe and Nishitani. Being the director of the Philosophical Seminar IV, Tsujimura, who was a scholarship recipient of the Alexander-von-Humboldt-Stiftung and who studied at the University of Freiburg for almost two years, teaches contemporary European philosophy. Very early, he turned from the tradition of Zen-Buddhism to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, about whom he has published many articles in Japan. In addition, he has also translated several of Heidegger's works into Japanese. For instance, *Der Satz vom Grund* (1962, with H. Buchner) and *Sein und Zeit* (1967, with H. Buchner). Tsujimura has been working on a solution to the problem posed by Heidegger and Zen-Buddhism: The question of Being and Absolute Nothingness. On September 26, 1969, Tsujimura held the official address for the Heidegger celebrations in Messkirch, entitled “Heidegger's Thinking and Japanese Philosophy.”



## EMIL STAIGER

In the summer of 1928, as a twenty-year-old student, I read *Being and Time* in Munich. At that time, I cannot affirm that I understood what was meant. But I was deeply impressed by the spiritual energy, by a dangerous, mysterious splendor in this individualistic prose. As for most readers, the sections about "Man," "Anxiety" (Angst), and "Distress" (Sorge), first opened up to me the "existentialism" which many still regard, even today, as Heidegger's message. I read it again and again. The books *Vom Wesen des Grundes* and *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* were also added and, thus, the question regarding the essence of time came to the forefront.

Kant had understood time within the limits of rational thinking as a "form of inner intuition." But now time seemed to be comprehended as the basic and determining power of *Daseins*, to be the foundation of everything; and so a new possibility came about for the interpretation of the characteristics of a poetic style as individual manipulation of its three ecstasies. Everything could be approached anew from this basis. If the study of literature as a history of ideas had only concerned itself with the thought content of a work and treated formal qualities in a somewhat stale and supplementary manner; if, on the other hand, the appreciation of artistic value had lost itself in incoherent insights; then the way, starting from time taken as

the imagination of the poet, leading to an understanding of rhythm or syntax, was no longer than leading to an understanding of the ideological background; a lyrical breath could be represented as genuine a proof of creative groundwork as the problem of a tragedy.

In those years, Ludwig Binswanger was occupied with his principles of the analysis of *Dasein*. During long walks near Lake Konstanz—we were constantly reminded of Heidegger, yet often of differing opinions concerning the interpretation of his works—we discussed central questions, whose solution we hoped would bring about the salvation of the humanities. Binswanger's efforts led him to publish his book, *Grundformen und Erkenntnis Menschlichen Daseins*, in 1942. The following year, I published the book, *Grundbegriffe der Poetik*. Both books are best understood as attempts to construct components of an extensive task for which Heidegger's ontology seemed to have laid the foundation; in other words, as a contribution to philosophical anthropology, which we hoped would secure and compile the knowledge of our century just as Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* had done for the knowledge of the Goethe era.

By that time, Heidegger was already far away from thinking of a philosophical anthropology. He had posed the question regarding time, which remained the fundamental one for me, only to proceed to the question regarding Being. However, we were not prepared to discuss this question, around which Heidegger has circled, in exciting monotony, since the middle of the Thirties, with his series of concentrated works. So we turned away, disillusioned.

Today I realize, however, that it was a considerable underestimation of Heidegger's later thinking, when we were of the opinion that one must be able "to deal with it;" that it had to serve our aims as some kind of methodology. The later Heidegger not only doubts the old fashioned methods, he doubts science in general, and thus, questions even philosophy, not in order to leave room for arbitrariness, but to shake the claim of



sovereignty which is embedded in the concept of science as such; and in order to prepare us to perceive a language which we do not control; which, rather, controls us.

We did not realize it at that time. Today the danger which science's claim of sovereignty has caused, has become so clearly visible that we are forced to rethink—to rethink in such a manner that precisely what has deceived us can become essential in a new and unimagined way. But it seems to me too early yet to say something about that.

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Emil Staiger (Professor of Modern German Literature at the University of Zürich), who was very early influenced by Heidegger, analysed time as the imaginative power of the poet. With the help of his *Grundbegriffe der Poetik*, and also by his different books dedicated to the art of interpretation, presenting masterpieces of the German language, he contributed considerably to the discovery of our wealth of literary history. He wants to bridge the gulf which exists between learned experts and the admirers of literature. His correspondence with Martin Heidegger about the interpretation of a poem of Mörike shows characteristic traits.

## LEO GABRIEL

To describe Martin Heidegger's importance in a few words is a bold venture which, nevertheless, has to be undertaken. It becomes evident that the sensational techno-scientific progress of mankind is not able to conceal the loss of humanity, the complete alienation of man.

Marxism, existentialism, and anthropologisms of profane and religious nature are all working to firmly establish humanity in this inhuman world. In the center of this new humanistic striving stands Martin Heidegger's appeal for Being. In his question concerning the meaning of Being (*Sinn von Sein*), exactly those dimensions open up by which man might draw near to existence in history and the present. For it is clear that man, as man, cannot realize his humanity if he forces it and himself to be the center and the goal of his efforts of questioning, thinking and acting.

Such an autistic humanity and society, closed to being, will sooner or later necessarily turn into an ideological terror which again tramples upon humanity and brotherhood in the name of truth. Thus Being opens up and gives itself as both a task of and a consolation to man; at the same time, Being keeps man in existence. This is the existential-human truth which Heidegger's thinking speaks about—in a language which is considered shocking by some. But this shocking quality has turn-



ed into the strongest impetus which the philosophical thinking of this century has received.

My personal encounter with Martin Heidegger revealed to me the greatness of that simple, modest, truthful figure, who is unique in this sense. In a conversation with him, daily things (*Alltäglichen*) begin to be illuminated from their very foundation, which gives to everything that is said the clearness, truth and beauty which I had already presumed to be lost. There is probably something in his being which is particularly caring for and protective of the naturally genuine things. I shall not forget how he read source-like poems by Johann Peter Hebel on a small hillock near his house in the Black Forest, next to a spring bubbling forth from the rocks.

I shall not forget how he spoke to me of his congenial relationship with Abraham a Santa Clara; for this is a relationship with Vienna which greets him today through me, thankfully remembering his talks and addresses.

I wish Martin Heidegger many more years of fruitful thinking, which may brighten our path through time.

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Leo Gabriel (Professor of Philosophy at the University of Vienna and President of the Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de Philosophie), who has been especially influenced by existential philosophy and by Martin Heidegger, designs with his philosophy an open system-thinking in his structural logic. He thus answers the disruption of the philosophical Logos into disparate ideologies and irreconcilable positions within various systems. In ideologico-critical reaction to tendencies taking an absolute attitude, it is Gabriel's intention to reach a breakthrough in spiritual communication and human understanding in the form of an "Integral Logic," with the help of an integral "thinking" and with regard to the uniquely structured construction of the world.

## KARL LÖWITH

I became acquainted with Heidegger fifty years ago, in 1919, when I began my studies in Freiburg and when he was still an unknown *Privatdozent* and assistant of Husserl. In the same year, I had heard Max Weber's lectures on "Science as Profession" and "Politics as Profession" in Munich. Within the realm of the university, it was these two towering personalities who indeed impressed me decisively and permanently and who illustrated how important teachers can be.

Approximately eight years later, in Marburg, where I did my *Habilitation* under Heidegger, I was able to read the proofs of *Being and Time*. Those years after World War I were the brightest, the most fruitful and the most beautiful of my generation. They produced almost everything from which we still spiritually benefit to this very day. At the same time, these years were characterized by criticism of tradition and the present, the radicalism of which could hardly be imagined by the younger generation of today; for they do not rebel because of true hunger and urge, after a catastrophe barely survived, but because of saturation and boredom. The slogan of *Being and Time*, the "destruction" of the entire traditional metaphysics or ontology, had found its propelling motive in this situation after the first World War. It immediately impressed us in a positive way because we were living with the consciousness that nothing



existing could continue to exist, unless it were critically examined from its very foundation and then renewed.

Disgusted by the cultural activities at that time, and even by philosophy, Heidegger wrote me:

I am not much suited, and become less and less so, to inform you about news in learned and printed matters. A new philosophical journal has edited the first volume according to the motto that, by August 1st, something must definitely be published, be it what it may. A character, critical in the true sense, will weigh only little and, after a year, everything will be the same. In addition, there is now a "Symposium;" furthermore, besides "Logos" and "Ethos," "Kairos" will shortly appear. And what will be the next week's joke? I believe that a madhouse has a more reasonable inner configuration than this time. Today one must be glad to stand outside of that which attracts and repels. Where things age so quickly, the foundation must be missing. Probably we have not passed the zenith of the "interest in philosophy." During the next years, "ontologies" will rain (down) upon us; one "works" according to his "instincts," and because of "cleverness and penmanship, which have grown to unusual heights, one will find it very difficult to demonstrate the differences to others."

—namely, the difference between that work and that person; that which is something, and that which is nothing.

Karl Barth's *Epistle to the Romans* (which appeared in 1918) appealed to Heidegger as one of the few signs of true spiritual life. But the ability for compromise also reigned in theology, which did not dare to take Franz Overbeck's critique of all theology seriously.

Young Heidegger was of a different caliber; he was not touched by all this activity; how harmless it was in comparison to today! He has held his breath until now, as well as that power

to dwell in reflection and contemplation, which has made him bypass mere opportune moods and attitudes.

This basically modest, simple and quiet man has, in the meantime, become world famous. His words have influenced philosophical thinking beyond the frontiers of Germany, although he did not expect any immediate efficacy from *Being and Time*; as if his works were something for the sake of school learning, direction, continuation and supplementation.

So many of his students talk today of "Being" and the "history of Being;" I do not know what they mean by it, if they cannot take refuge in the experience as obviously shown by Heidegger. He, himself, realized from the beginning that his philosophical work could be done only by him; that it showed the mark of singularity and the loneliness of an individualist.

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Karl Löwith (Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg) has started from Martin Heidegger, under whose direction he did his *Habilitation* in Marburg, in 1928. In 1952, he returned to Germany from his emigration and taught until his retirement in Heidelberg. Very early, Löwith had already analysed the role of the individual as a fellow man in society. Next to his historical writings, in which he offers a critique of historical existence, Löwith's discourse about Martin Heidegger, whom he characterized as *Denker in dürftiger Zeit* received attention (1953, Third Edition. Göttingen, 1964).



## DOLF STERNBERGER

Heidegger was a mighty impression in my youth. To be more precise, his influence spread through his famous book, *Being and Time*, which appeared in 1927. At that time, I was just twenty years old and a student of philosophy in Heidelberg. Although I was imbued through and through with Jaspers' ethical *Existenz Philosophy*, my youthful and flexible spirit imbibed the totally different language and terminology of Heidegger's Existential-Ontology, ready to be puzzled and possibly to be misled. There was no question of right or wrong, but only the question of Being.

Later, Heidegger once said that his book posed and developed, "for the first time in the history of philosophy," the question regarding the meaning of Being. I only realized later how alarming this claim was and how conceitedly superhuman.

I have heard him myself in Freiburg and attended his seminars; finally, I have tried to free myself from the burden of his philosophical preaching by a critical examination, digging directly into one of the chapters of his book which deals with death. That became my doctoral dissertation and my first book. It is called *Death Understood* (*Der Verstandene Tod*) and appeared thirty-five years ago, in 1934.

Knowing this historical background, everyone will understand that I cannot honestly glorify him. My greetings come from

a considerable distance; I have to be grateful to him for one thing, however, since my early connection with his philosophy, oscillating between fascination and spiritual defense, has led me on my own way.

To put it briefly, at that time as well as today, human beings seem to me to be more important than the structures of *Dasein*; real history more important than abstract "historicity;" and worldly experience more important than the effort to uncover pure phenomena; it is not only more important, but also more truthful, if we consider our human condition.

Heidegger's attempt toward a new ontology truly possesses something titanic, but also something of titanic uselessness. He has sacrificed the human being, human freedom, and the human society, to seek the pure being and, where possible, to express it. With a secret melancholy, he has spoken to us of the "Abode of Being" (*Hut des Seins*) or whispered of a lost paradise.

I am gladly willing to forgo living in the "Abode of Being;" I prefer ultimately the insecurity of human autonomy and believe that only we, ourselves, are called upon to prepare security in this world, be it a joy or a curse. I am of the opinion that ontological runic writings and Delphic language cannot be of any help here.

And, if signposts should be of importance, instead of Heidegger's characteristics of *Dasein*—Distress, Fear and Boredom—I would prefer to choose that other trinity which the Apostle Paul has expounded: Faith, Hope, and Love—but Love is the greatest of all.

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Dolf Sternberger (Professor of Political Science at the University of Heidelberg; President of the German PEN Center in the Federal Republic), as a student at first impressed by Heidegger's Existential-Ontology and his new questions concerning the meaning of death, later on turned more and more toward concrete experience, to research about terminology and practice in the political sphere. Sternberger, initiator and co-author of the *Dictionary of the Barbarian* (1945, 1957, 1968), besides his systematic discussions on "Power and Legitimacy" in his political radio talks and editorials, gives an answer to practical questions of contemporary political concern.



## HEINRICH OTT

We are here in the Protestant parsonage of St. Alban in Basel, whose parson, Rev. Paul Hassler, is a friend of Heidegger. So the philosopher has often been here.

The room in which we are seated, and which serves as my study room, has accommodated Martin Heidegger several times.

I, myself, as a high school student here in Basel, began to read different works of Heidegger. A personal meeting with Heidegger was then arranged by my theology professor, Rudolf Bultmann; later, when I wrote the book, *Martin Heidegger's Way and the Way of Theology*, I could look back upon this personal meeting.

Rudolf Bultmann has been the man, by the way, through whom Heidegger's thinking first made its influence strongly felt in Protestant theology.

Now, I probably ought to say wherein lies Heidegger's importance for theology. I will not take refuge now in Bultmann, nor in any other theologian, but I will try to present the matter as I see it myself.

At the outset, I have to mention a reservation: Martin Heidegger's relationship to theology is somewhat peculiar. He follows theology, on the one hand, with a keen interest, but, on the other hand, always with a certain mistrust. He tells us theologians, again and again, that we ought to keep ourselves as

independent from philosophy as we possibly can. We ought, on the basis of the Bible, to say our thing in our own right without taking refuge in any philosopher. And Heidegger becomes very suspicious when theologians simply transplant thoughts from his own works into theology as, for example, the concept of "Being."

I believe that Heidegger is ultimately correct here. And we must be told like that! Nevertheless, Heidegger is of supreme importance to us theologians and our work. It is probably less *what* he thinks, than *how* he thinks, i.e., the method of his thinking ought to influence us. In Martin Heidegger, we theologians meet a thinker of such high standard, earnestness and differentiation in the manner *in which* he examines each and every one of his philosophical steps critically, over and over, controlling them methodically; how he is never satisfied with sham solutions or trivial theses. *This* prudence, this ability to wait, sometimes for years, until a thought has become ripe; this, all we theologians can and must learn. Primarily in our studies, we cannot show experimental results or statistics to prove something. We cannot throw our cards on the table and, *therefore*, we are dependent upon this methodological *rigor of reflection*.

What Heidegger says about the "experience of thinking" (*Erfahrung des Denkens*), for instance, when he writes: "We never come to thoughts. They come to us."—Is that not simply true? This applies also to our theological work! Or what he says about true dialogue: It "neither emphasizes opposing opinions nor does it tolerate the yielding assertion." It "remains close to the center of things"—that too applies to all decent theology!

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Heinrich Ott (Professor of Systematic Theology at the Theological Faculty of the University of Basel), standing in the force field of secular history and the history of salvation, as Rudolf Bultmann has shown it in his theology, has put himself into the service of an existential interpretation—influenced by Heidegger—for an adequate explanation of the Holy Scripture.



In this manner, he attempts to come close to existential preaching as the center of Christian sermons. Regarding the understanding of the question of Being, there is no other way for him than through the problem of thinking. "For it remains true that Heidegger is the thinker of thinking, and that the fact of thinking is an astonishment, indeed a wonder, that has been the impetus of his philosophy."

## KARL RAHNER

What should a student of Martin Heidegger, who is a theologian, and who is so much a theologian that he does not even claim to be a philosopher, say on the eightieth birthday of the man whom he, though a theologian, reveres as his master?

Should he say that present day Catholic theology, as it really is, is unthinkable without Martin Heidegger because even those, who hope to proceed further and ask different questions than he has, still come from him?

Should he simply and modestly, in a thankful mood, acknowledge that he had many good teachers of the spoken word, but, however, only *one* whom he can revere as his *master*, that is, Martin Heidegger?

Should I say that such a confession does not seem to be self-evident, because I hope that the matter of theology and philosophy will always remain more important to me than the persons who deal with theology and philosophy?

Should I sensibly, and hopefully at the same time, try to say that I am convinced that much of Heidegger's work will remain, that his work will continue to influence the future history of the mind, even though today silence has fallen upon him in that market-place which considers itself to be the forum of the mind?

Should I simply, in a thankful manner and from a silent



and intimate relationship, which has remained alive for more than thirty years, greet him today on his eightieth birthday, although I have had very few personal contacts with him during those thirty years?

Be that as it may! Even if one says one greets him thankfully and respectfully, nobody knows what that actually means; but this *one* thing he has taught us, however: In each and every thing we can and should seek that *unspeakable mystery* which instructs us—even though we can hardly name it with words. And this too when Heidegger, himself, has, in a manner strange to theologians, again and again kept silent about that which theologians must say.

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Karl Rahner (Professor of Dogmatics and History of Dogmas at the Theological Faculty of the University of Münster), as Professor of Philosophy of Religion—at the University of Munich, he was the successor to Romano Guardini and the chair for Christian World Outlook—has written about the dynamic element in the Church. He, who tries to remove dangers by not circumventing them, pays attention to intellectual honesty and Christian faith as well as to indispensable essentials. In his book, *Courage for Things New and Untried*, he is interested in the “listeners of the word” as well as in the “free word in the Church,” in order to develop a Christian self-understanding. Rahner’s first theologico-philosophical work, *Spirit in the World* (Munich, 1939, Third Edition, 1964), which deals with the metaphysics of finite knowledge in Thomas Aquinas, does not deny its influence from his teacher, Heidegger.

## ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THINKING RICHARD WISSER

Martin Heidegger, who was born on September 26, 1889, in Messkirch in Baden, has never, throughout his life, denied his Alemanic origin. In a farmhouse in the Black Forest, he wrote the book that soon made his name famous in the world of thought, a book that bears the simple title, *Being and Time*. While he was a philosophy professor at Freiburg, he often spent his free time in the austere simplicity of a hut above Todtnauberg. He has worked there on his manuscripts, many of which has remained unpublished up to the present day. To those pressing him for publication, the eighty-year-old Heidegger says: “Today only novelty counts. But has one really read and understood my publications? Thinking needs time, takes its own time. It has time, lots of time!”

Neither being romantic nor neo-romantic, but thankful for understanding, Heidegger describes the “field-path” (*Feldweg*) in Messkirch, upon which he has often walked; the path which has given him power for his thinking and which symbolizes an “experience.”

“Man tries in vain to bring order into the world by his



planning, unless he has taken into account the exhortation of the field-path. There is danger that people today remain deaf to its language. They only hear the noise of the machines, which they almost believe to be the voice of God. Thus man becomes desperate and pathless. Uniformity creates boredom. The disgusted only find monotony. Simplicity has escaped. Its silent power has evaporated."

Heidegger abstains from saying in an unreflected manner that which he has thought; he is not tempted to polish it up as an opinion and to let it sparkle as a position. Therefore, he constructs no bridges for what one unthoughtfully calls "the better understanding." His resistance is also based upon the simple experiences of the field-path.

In the "Field-path Discourse on Thinking," which initially attracted, and is still attracting, a lot of attention, Heidegger speaks of the "calmness," which "lets" things and man be; of the calmness which does not use and misuse them; which does not exploit them and kill their originality. In Heidegger's thinking, things become again what they are. He is not interested in the usual activities through which each and everything, each and everyone, only become objects of attraction and repulsion, of knowledge and of aspiration for subjective intentions. Heidegger rather keeps up the "earnestness" of things and man.

His reserve; his reluctance to say something on each and every thing, to express "his opinion," is not the expression of conceited arrogance, or of authoritarian behaviour, but the responsibility of thinking about things and man. Thinking does not attack nature, as modern scientists do, nor does it attack man, as modern politicians do. Its intention is, rather, to remove this aloofness of distance—by which modern man only too often deprives things and man of their uniqueness and peculiarity—and to restore the original closeness. Thereby the distance becomes truly perceivable, which imagination and opinion, perception and realization, bring together.

Those who are only interested in change without taking into consideration tradition, who only want to plan everything according to their own whim and fancy, will not understand Heidegger's attempt to save originality and earnestness, let alone the meaning of "the indigenous," which is both well considered and by no means as naive as is supposed by a critically posed naivety. Heidegger, whom many may believe to be reactionary because he does not adapt to the "spirit of the time" (*Zeitgeist*), has analysed that modern man places things and fellow human beings in opposition to himself as available *objects* for domination, thus by making himself the subject of everything, he believes himself to be the center of all being, the standard for all measurement. He not only does not carry on closeness, but he does not even take his stand against distance, which he can't possibly uphold but, on the contrary, destroys. Modern man not only sets himself on a stage in an obtrusive manner whenever he finds the opportunity, but he even sets himself *as* the stage scene within which everything has to justify itself, God as well as nature, things as well as men.

No wonder that the essence of nature, which produces something by itself, or the nature of God, who is not merely an opponent, become distorted by such arrogance. When man refers everything to himself as subject, then this total "subjectivity" of man forfeits viewing all that which is by itself, not only that which is for the sake of man. Through his thinking, Heidegger wants to free man from this self-constraint and to bring him again into relation with what is indispensable to him, to the reality of his being, namely that he "ek-sists" (*ek-sistiert*) open to being. Man always surpasses objects and he is not exhausted by the utilities and practicalities of life. Of course, this leads to consequences, last but not least, in his direction and way of thinking.

Heidegger's thought has either found strong support or pointed rejection, but never a lukewarm reaction. One never grasps his thinking simply by reading, nor conquers it by a



sudden raid. It does not become clear through sparkling brilliancy nor does it distract by a wealth of eloquent ideas; it does not serve those who press for action because they are always in a hurry for an instrument to change the world according to their ideological preconceptions or their subjective doctrines. It is critical in a more radical way than usual because it especially brings to light the implications of those "critics" posing as very critical and because it makes recognizable their "critical" points which try to avoid self-criticism. Heidegger's thinking encourages us not to call *him* critical, whose arguments are nourished through misunderstandings of Heidegger's thought, but that person who corrects and enlightens him. His bold ruthlessness and tough consistency, especially for man's sake, are in the service of the task of thinking. That the intellectual world looks to Freiburg, even to the small town of Messkirch and the hut in the Black Forest, is a sign that cannot be overlooked. It should not be misinterpreted by the geographers of the ideological mind nor by the environmentalists or even by the language critics. A world-wide sensation is not really an important event in our century, as is the thinking of a philosopher who, carried on by the conviction that man is the being to whom, in a remarkable way, the "Being" and the truth of man have been entrusted, wants to bring men back to thinking and reflection.

Heidegger has taken root in his Alemanic country. He likes to repeat a saying of his countryman, Johann Peter Hebel: "We are plants which, willy-nilly, have to ascend from earth with roots in order to flourish in ether and to bear fruits."

One has tried, often with bad intentions, to push Heidegger into a corner because of this so-called "naive rootedness," which one may confound with an untimely relationship to nature and landscape description. He draws strength for his work from this radical stance. It is his most intimate expression of personality. If Heidegger's example teaches us anything, it is this: One is able to bring together or separate men by human,

very human, qualities but one *can oblige them to thinking only by thoughts.*

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Richard Wisser (Professor of Philosophy at the University of Mainz) has analysed the question of "Meaning and Being" in order to trace the originality of the inevitable, contrary to the behaviour which solely adapts "to time." By stressing the ontological and ethical features of *Integritas*, he seeks change in historical things and also the permanence of human possibilities. In this connection, Wisser distinguishes between the "responsibility of the first degree" and "institutional responsibility," on the one hand, and the "situational responsibility of second degree," on the other, in which the clear cut traditionalistic solutions are useless and men have to answer for the risk of non-responsible knowledge and irresponsible actions. For Wisser, therefore, "critic of a basic," "human category," corresponds to the structural risk of permanent crisis.



## MARTIN HEIDEGGER IN CONVERSATION

WISSER: Professor Heidegger, in our time, more and more people are loudly proclaiming that the decisive task of the present should be to change social conditions and that it will be the only point of departure promising success for the future. What do you think about this direction in the so-called "spirit of the times" (*Zeitgeistes*), for instance with reference to university reform?

HEIDEGGER: I will only answer the last part of your question because what you have referred to in the first part is too extensive. And my answer is the same as the one I gave forty years ago, in my *Inaugural Lecture* in Freiburg, in 1929.

I will quote you a passage from the lecture, "What is Metaphysics?":

"The areas of the Sciences are still apart. The methods of their subject matter are treated fundamentally in different ways. Today this disassociated multiplicity of disciplines is held together only by the technical organization of the universities and faculties and preserved only through the practical objectives of the different branches under

one signification. On the other hand, the Sciences have lost their close contact with their essential ground."

I believe that *this* answer should suffice.

WISSER: Well, there are very different motives which have led to modern attempts to obtain a reorientation of aims within the social or interpersonal sphere of objectives and a "restructuring" of factual realities. Obviously there is much philosophy at play, for good as well as for bad. Do you see a social mandate for philosophy?

HEIDEGGER: No!—In this sense, one cannot speak of a social mandate!

If one wants to answer this question, one must first ask: "What is Society?"; one must ponder upon the fact that today's society is only an absolute image of modern *subjectivity*; therefore, a philosophy which has overcome the standpoint of subjectivity may not join in the discussion at all.

Another question is how far can one speak of a *change* in society at all? The question concerning the demand for world change leads back to a much quoted sentence of Karl Marx, taken from the "Theses on Feuerbach."

I will quote him precisely by reading aloud: "The philosophers have merely *interpreted* the world in different ways; now the task is to *change* it."

By quoting this sentence *and* by adhering to these thoughts, one overlooks the fact that a world change presupposes a change of *world idea* and that a world idea is only to be obtained by a sufficient *interpretation* of the world.

That means, Marx rests on a specific interpretation of the world in order to claim his



"change" and thereby he shows that this statement is not established. He gives the impression that he has decidedly spoken against philosophy, while, in the second part of the statement, the unspoken demand for a philosophy is tacitly assumed.

WISSER: How can *your* philosophy be effective today for a concrete society, with its manifold problems and concerns, worries and hopes? Or are those of your critics correct who have asserted that Martin Heidegger is so singlemindedly occupied with "Being" that he has given up the "human condition," the Being of *man* in society and as a person?

HEIDEGGER: This criticism is a great misunderstanding! For the question of Being and the development of this question needs, as a prior condition, an interpretation of *Dasein* i.e., a definition of the essence of man. And the fundamental idea of my thinking is exactly that Being, relative to the manifestation of Being, *needs* man and, conversely, man is only man in so far as he stands within the manifestation of Being.

Thus, the question as to what extent I am concerned only with Being, and have forgotten man, ought to be settled. One cannot pose a question about Being without posing a question about the essence of man.

WISSER: Nietzsche once said: The philosopher is the bad conscience of his time. Let us leave the question of what Nietzsche meant by this.

If one considers, however, your attempt to analyse the prevailing history of philosophy as a history of decline from the standpoint of Being and, therefore, as an attempt to "destroy" that

history, some may be tempted to call Martin Heidegger the bad conscience of Western philosophy.

Wherein do you see the most characteristic mark, not to say the most characteristic landmark (*Denk-mal*), of what you call "forgetfulness of Being" and "abandonment of Being?"

HEIDEGGER: First, I must correct your question in one sense, when you speak of the "history of decline." That is not meant in a *negative* sense.

I do not speak of a history of decline but only of the destiny of Being, in so far as it withdraws itself more and more in comparison to the manifestation of Being among the Greeks until the evolution of Being as a mere tool for the technical mastery of the world. Thus it is a withdrawal of Being, not a history of decline, in which we stand. The most characteristic indication of the forgetfulness of Being—and forgetfulness is *always* meant here in the Greek sense *Lethe* i.e., self-hiddenness, self-withdrawal of Being—the most characteristic mark of destiny in which we stand is at present, as far as I can see, the fact that the *question of Being*, which I have put forward, has not yet been *understood*.

WISSER: Again and again, you doubt and make questionable two points: The claim of the sovereignty of science and the understanding of *technology* which sees in science nothing but a useful means to obtain any desired aim more quickly. Especially in our time, in which most men put all their hope in science and in which they are shown, by world wide telecasts, that man achieves what he wants through technology, your thoughts on science and on the essence of technology have led to much



brainracking. Firstly, what do you mean when you assert that "science does not think?"

HEIDEGGER: First of all, to begin with the brainracking, I find it quite healthy! There is yet too little brainracking in the world today and great thoughtlessness, which is connected with the forgetfulness of Being.

And the statement that "science does not think"—which caused a great sensation when I said it in one of my lectures in Freiburg—means: science does not move in the *dimension of philosophy*. It is, however, *dependent* upon this dimension without knowing it. For example, physics moves in space, time and motion. Science as science cannot decide what motion is, what space is, and what time is. Science, therefore, does not *think*, in *this* sense it cannot think with its methods.

For example, I cannot say what physics is with the methods of physics. I can only think of what physics is in the mode of philosophical questioning. The sentence, "science does not think," is *by no means a reproach* but is simply an identification of the inner structure of science; essential to it is the fact that, on the one hand, science is dependent on what philosophy thinks; on the other hand, it forgets philosophy and does not take notice of that which ought to be thought.

WISSER: What do you mean, *secondly*, when you say that the law of technology is a greater danger for mankind today than the atom bomb; you say that the basic feature of technology is a "framework" which orders reality as stock for demand; or to put it in other words, it makes each and everything available by the pushing of a button?

HEIDEGGER: Concerning technology, my definition of the

nature of technology, which until now has not been picked up anywhere, is—to say it concretely—that modern natural science is grounded in the development of the essence of modern technology and not the other way around.

First of all, I want to say that I am *not against* technology; I have never spoken *against* technology, nor against the so-called demonic elements in technology. Rather, I endeavour to understand the *essence* of technology.

When you quote this thought concerning the danger of the atom bomb, and the even greater danger of technology, I think about what is developing today as biophysics, that in the foreseeable future, we will be in a position to *make* man in a certain way i.e., to construct him, purely in his organic being, according to the way we need him: skilled and unskilled, intelligent and...stupid. It will come to that! The *technological* possibilities are available today and were discussed by Nobel Prize winners in a conference at Lindau—as I had already cited years ago in a lecture in Messkirch.

So, above all, the *misunderstanding* that I am *against* technology is to be rejected. I see technology in its essence as a power which challenges man and, in opposition to which, he is not free any longer—that something is being announced here, namely a relationship of Being to man—and that this relationship, which is concealed in the *essence* of technology, may come to light someday in its undisguised form.

I do not know whether it is going to happen! I see though, in the *essence* of technology, the first appearance of a very profound mystery, which I



call an "occurrence" (*Ereignis*), which may lead one to the conclusion that there can be no question of resistance against, or condemnation of, technology. On the contrary, it is a question of understanding the *essence* of technology and the technological world. In my opinion, that cannot happen as long as one moves philosophically within the subject-object relationship. That means, the essence of technology cannot be understood from a Marxist point of view.

WISSER: All your considerations are based upon, and lead to, the "question of Being" (*Seinsfrage*), which is the basic question of your philosophy. You have pointed out, time and again, that you do not want to add a new thesis to the already existing thesis about Being. Precisely because Being has been defined rather differently—for instance, as quality, as possibility and reality, as truth, even as God—you ask for an understandable unison, not in the sense of an overall synthesis, but with regard to the meaning of Being.

In which direction is your thinking leading to an answer to the question: Why is there being (*Seiendes*) rather than Nothing?

HEIDEGGER: Here, I must answer two questions. First is the clarification of the question of Being. Well, I believe that there is a certain obscurity in your phrasing of the question. Here the phrase the "Question of Being" is ambiguous. Here, "the question of Being," on the one hand, means the question concerning being as being. And we determine what Being is in this question. The answer to this question gives us the definition of Being.

The question of Being, on the other hand,

can also be understood in the following sense: Whereon is each answer to the question of being based i.e., wherein, after all, is the unconcealment of Being grounded? For example: It is said that the Greeks defined Being as the presence of the presencing. In presence speaks the present, in the present is a moment of time; therefore, the manifestation of Being as presence is related to time.

If I try to define presence from the point of view of time and if I look at what is said about time in the history of thinking, then I find that, from Aristotle onward, the essence of time is determined by an already *determined* Being. Therefore, the traditional conception of time is not useful. And, *therefore*, I have attempted to develop, in *Being and Time*, a new concept of time and temporality in the sense of an ecstatic openness.

The other question is a question which was already posed by Leibniz, which was taken up again by Schelling, and which I repeated literally at the end of my aforementioned lecture, "What is Metaphysics?"

But this question has an entirely different meaning for me. The usual metaphysical idea which is posed in the question means: Why, after all, is there being and not rather Nothing? That is to say: What is the *cause* or the *ground* that being is and not Nothing?

I ask, on the contrary: Why is there being at all and not rather Nothing? Why does being have priority? Why is not Nothing thought of as identical with Being? That means: Why does the forgetfulness of Being dominate, and from where does it come?



It is, therefore, a completely different question than the *metaphysical* question. That means that in asking: "What is Metaphysics?," I am not asking a *metaphysical* question, but asking about the *essence* of metaphysics.

As you see, all these questions are unusually difficult and basically inaccessible to ordinary understanding. It requires much "brainracking," lengthy experience, and a real discussion of the great *tradition*. One of the great dangers in our thinking today is precisely the fact that thinking—in the sense of philosophical thinking—has no longer a real and original reference to tradition.

WISSER:

Evidently for you, everything depends upon the destruction of subjectivity and not that which is emphasized today, the anthropological and anthropocentric; the idea that man, through the knowledge he has of himself and through the activity he has accomplished, has already realized his essence. Instead, you direct man to take notice of the experience of "*Da-sein*," in which man realizes himself as a being who is open to Being, and to whom Being presents itself as unconcealment. You have dedicated your complete work to proving the necessity for such a change in humanity through the experience of "*Da-sein*."

Do you see indications that what you have thought necessary will become a reality?

HEIDEGGER:

No-one knows what the destiny of thinking will be. In 1964, a lecture—which I, myself, did not give—was delivered in a French translation under the title, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking." I make a *distinction* between philosophy i.e., metaphysics, and thinking as I understand it.

Thinking, as I contrasted it to philosophy in that lecture, primarily by attempting to clarify the essence of the Greek *Aletheia*—this thinking stands in a much simpler relationship to metaphysics than to philosophy but, precisely because of its simplicity, it is much more difficult to accomplish.

And it demands a new accuracy for language rather than the invention of new terms, as I once thought; on the contrary, it demands a return to the original contents of our own constantly decaying language.

A future thinker, who is perhaps given the task of really taking over this thinking which I have tried to *prepare*, will have to acknowledge the following words, which Heinrich von Kleist once wrote: "I step back before one, who is not yet here, and I bow a millenium ahead of him, before his spirit."



# **MARTIN HEIDEGGER**

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*Translated from the German by B. Srinivasa Murthy Ph.D.*

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