

BOOK REVIEW

Scott Campbell's

The Early Heidegger's Philosophy of Life

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Scott M. Campbell. *The Early Heidegger's Philosophy of Life: Facticity, Being, and Language*.
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288 pages.

Scott Campbell's rich and intricate study traces Heidegger's early treatment of the relationship of life and the question of Being, which in *Being and Time* (1927) would crystallize as the concept of Dasein as Being-in-the-world. In this careful analysis of the early lecture courses (and related writings), we have an ampler, more fleshed out "biography of Dasein" (5), whose focus on factual life – human living and speaking – distinguishes Campbell's treatment of this period from other scholarship on it. He presents paths of Heidegger's thinking from a phenomenology of factual life to an ontology of Dasein that traverses a multidisciplinary and diachronic terrain, addressing areas such as science, religion, philosophy, theology, history, and language and eliciting resources from the greats of philosophy's past, here centered on

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Aristotle and Plato, whereby Campbell also gives us indications about what philosophizing in Heidegger's sense entails. This study is a wonderful resource for more deeply engaging and appreciating Heidegger's early philosophical journeying, especially the light it sheds on *Being and Time*, which will lose some of the richness of these earlier expressions of the rapport of life and Being. Furthermore, this book prods us to reflect on the ultimate point of tending to these Heideggerian paths for which such good scholarship is a trusted aid. And that is – by way of the example, guide, and resource of Heidegger's work – to venture beyond this relative terra firma towards the openness of some such journeying of one's own.

The Early Heidegger's Philosophy of Life: Facticity, Being, and Language is divided into four major parts, which address the early lecture courses (as well as letters and manuscripts) chronologically from 1919 to 1925. This division allows Campbell to emphasize significant turns in Heidegger's expressions of what would become the temporally and historically aware self, that self moreover who is the ground from which new philosophical problems of the human condition reveal themselves and summon response. Campbell captures salient moments of these "travels" in each of the sections of the book, which I summarize below with an eye also to their meta-philosophical implications.

The early lecture courses reflect the beginnings of Heidegger's treatment of the contemporary problem that our ways of understanding life conceal those dimensions of experience by which we understand ourselves as living and speaking beings and not simply observers of life, dimensions that for him are "in one way or another the ultimate question of philosophy" (1). He will therefore come up against the absoluteness of scientific epistemology – likewise reflected in philosophies that aspire to a "worldview" – and religious dogma, as they have notably contributed to that concealment.

Campbell addresses these topics in Part I, "Philosophical Vitality (1919–21)," beginning with Heidegger's turn to the realm of lived experience and its continuously changing contexts of meaningful relationships that underlie and spur all scientific (and other) inquiry.

This realm is concealed by the claimed completeness of the findings of science and of absolute philosophical systems, whose domains then become isolated and closed off from life. Campbell draws our attention to developments in Heidegger's search for a way to characterize this ground and for a method capable of retrieving it that does not lose sight of that ground, as science and absolute philosophies typically do. Heidegger will refer to the "historical-I" and to "factual life," understood as a "self-world" comprised of layers of intersecting involvements that echo back and forth in different intensities of concern and are therefore in continuous renewal, which will then become simply "facticity." To "hold" this pre-theoretical yet "graspable" realm (39), he will speak of "taking notice" and communicating the meaningfulness therein, and of phenomenology as the way that philosophy conducts its work of "disclos[ing] and... articul[ing] [unretrieved layers] of pretheoretical, lived experience" (26).

Campbell considers Heidegger's subsequent treatment of early Christianity in *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (1920–21) as a further probe of this pretheoretical realm, with attention now to its temporal and historical aspects. In his efforts to delineate this realm, Heidegger turns to history, specifically Paul's letters, where he discovers an instructive original experience of Christian religiosity, which preceded and subsequently became buried beneath religion's later objectification into theological dogma. On Heidegger's interpretation, these early Christians lived with an acute awareness of temporality. In making the momentous decision to accept the word of God, they lived in anticipation of Christ's future return, whose precise timing was unknown. This indeterminacy was reflected in an urgency that infused the concrete activities and directions of their everyday lives and through which care for one's existence was more intensely experienced. To live one's faith in a state of "absolute concern" is, Heidegger says, "authentically to live temporality" (56). From this encounter with original Christian religiosity, facticity becomes furthermore specified as "the intensification of the present in the intensification of its everyday meaningfulness that makes possible an awareness of the self as

both becoming (and, hence, having been) and as anticipating...[which is how] the temporality of facticity comes through" (58). Here too a clearer connection emerges between the psychological states Heidegger variously describes as "absolute concern," "disquiet," "distress," "torment" and a more palpable awareness of temporality.

Part II, "Factual Life (1921–22)," is an extended treatment of the *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research*, in which Campbell shows how Heidegger now explicitly connects facticity to the task of philosophy and details the workings of facticity. Heidegger asserts that the "the main point of philosophy" is life in its facticity (82), namely "[h]ow the human being lives in its most concrete life-contexts, . . . contexts [that] must be comprehended in terms of the sense of Being of the human being" (68), which is now more clearly understood as "in the world." Philosophy therefore tends to dimensions of concrete human existence not addressed by established philosophical interpretations and, in doing so, may radically recast those interpretations (63). Returning to methodological considerations broached in earlier lecture courses, Heidegger specifies the need for an approach by which philosophy can hold what it thus uncovers while still preserving life's native indeterminacy and ambiguity, which philosophical systems that claim complete clarity suppress, such that, as a result, they avoid life and relinquish philosophizing.

Here Heidegger has delineated components of philosophizing in his sense – an activity that only few can do – which to some extent overlap with his descriptions of living philosophically. Living philosophically is in theory open to all and, on his interpretation, arguably evinced for example by early Christians. For both, "caring movement" enters a state of heightened awareness of temporality and historicity. Campbell presents the structures of that overlapping movement, shifting his focus from an earlier emphasis on factual life as a source of vital life-experience to factual life's "ruinance," a precursor to "fallenness." Here life loses itself in seemingly limitless distractions, identifying itself with the objects and prevailing interpretations of the world and thinking of itself as without limits. For Campbell, the real meaning

of “ruinance” is this concealment of temporality. However, he does not consider “ruinance” a degradation of life but a determination of it within which hidden positive dimensions of factual life are retrieved. Among those positive dimensions are a new openness to the world, tied to a heightened awareness of life’s temporal-historical constitution, and a rigorous questioning of the interpreted layers with which life identifies itself, where one expression of that questioning is philosophizing. The category of “relucence” within life’s ruinance indicates such hidden dimensions, which thereby somehow glimmer through ruinance. Relucence enables a counter-movement of retrieving such dimensions while the category of “prestructuring” indicates the stabilization of what is thus retrieved into fixed determinations, within which there will then be other hidden yet relucen dimensions for later retrieval and so on. This counter-movement also reveals “kairotic time” as a critical aspect of factual life. It refers to that decisive moment when life’s temporality is grasped and its avoidance of temporality through worldly distractions is illuminated as such, thus opening a path of retrieval and other possibilities for interpreting and living life.

In Part III, “The Hermeneutics of Facticity (1922–23),” Campbell presents Heidegger’s development of the historical component of retrieval, with retrieval here understood mainly in the context of doing philosophy, and specifically Heidegger’s philosophical task of “attempt[ing] to redirect current philosophical and theological traditions toward Dasein’s facticity” (103). According to Heidegger, handed-down concepts from philosophy’s history dominate and limit current thinking and require “dismantling.” Yet relucen within them are indications of another understanding and resources for stabilizing it, which need to be drawn out as part of contemporary philosophy’s work of retrieving concealed dimensions of Dasein’s facticity. Campbell suggests that Heidegger’s own turn to Aristotle in *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle* (and to other past philosophers and texts) reflects this kind of movement of contemporary philosophy vis-à-vis its past, which Heidegger refers to as a phenomenological hermeneutics of facticity. For Heidegger criticizes Aristotle’s understanding of

Being, which governs current philosophy. Yet, in the course of examining the facticity of Aristotle's concepts, he also discovers resources for his own task of retrieving the facticity of Dasein, which, as he earlier noted, is the "main point of philosophy" and his reason for redirecting current philosophical research there to revitalize that research.

Campbell shows how Heidegger elicits clues for this task from Aristotle's concepts of *ousia* and *phronēsis*. *Ousia* has been appropriated over the ages to signify pure beholding that is "unconcerned" with the world and, so, conceals temporality and blocks radical questioning. But Heidegger's factual inquiry retrieves a temporal dimension of *ousia* that the tradition conceals. Furthermore in *phronēsis*, Heidegger sees a kind of retrieval occurring, as *phronēsis* "safe-keep[s]...insight" (109) about what to do in a practical situation, insight that is not fixed but changes according to changing situations and is not free from deception. *Phronēsis* thereby reveals a certain truth about human experience.

This section concludes with analysis of *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (1923), where Campbell demonstrates how factual life and an understanding that its way of being is Being-in-the-world is brought more sharply into focus. Heidegger charts additional structures of facticity drawn from Dasein's concrete, average, everyday ways of existing through which it can achieve access to an understanding of its Being. He is thereby redefining phenomenology and ontology from earlier interpretations, which kept inquiry confined within a specific region of objects, and is instead positing a hermeneutic ontology or "a kind of radical phenomenology" (130) that places factual life into question. Dasein thus has a vigilant self-awareness through which it can achieve better understanding of itself. However, Dasein's "concrete present" is with others as the "they" and in the mode of "curiosity" (126). Although Dasein thereby identifies with objective knowledge and evades life's temporality, it is nevertheless in a "pre-having" of Being by virtue of the meaningfulness of these worldly involvements. For within them are traces of Dasein's temporality and concern for its Being that in certain decisive (kairotic) moments will pierce through as a heightened experience of them.

The lecture courses treated in Part IV, “The Language of Life (1923–25),” reflect Heidegger’s shift from laying out the mechanics of facticity to analyzing the works of Aristotle and Plato from within their own philosophical and historical contexts. As part of the project of redirecting contemporary philosophy to the facticity of Dasein, Heidegger investigates the facticity of historical concepts as sources of insight about the fundamental place of language in revealing the “essential relatedness between being human and living in the world” (76). Campbell begins with the *Introduction to Phenomenological Research* (1923–24) where, in formulating a more radical phenomenology, Heidegger seeks to recover the original experience of the concept’s constituent terms. He concludes that for Aristotle *logos* did not originally mean reason, as has been handed down and rigidified through the ages, but rather speaking and discussing with others in the world. Heidegger interprets the latter as “a kind of speaking that encounters the world and therefore encounters Being” (142). Thus, phenomenology was a matter of letting the world be seen through perceiving something, thus setting it in relief against an original ground, and speaking about it in a move that is not free of deception and concealments. Heidegger thereby challenges governing scientific interpretations of existence that in their certainty suppress all deception, opinion, and other standpoints, and he does so to recover the richness of Dasein instead.

Campbell shows how Heidegger, in his factual treatment of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* in *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* (1924), then retrieves authentic speaking from the ordinary everyday speaking in Greek life. This retrieval is significant in redirecting contemporary philosophy to Dasein’s facticity as recovery of concealed dimensions of human experience emanates from speaking with others and is first expressed through language. That is, a new concept or understanding of the human condition arises from perception of another realm of experience, which is given voice through the speaking and listening relations we have with others in the world. Indeed, Heidegger considers the *Rhetoric* as “nothing other than the interpretation of Dasein, the

hermeneutic of Dasein itself"; it retrieves speaking from sophistry by recovering a "possibility of existence" latent within Greek life (163, italics in the original). More specifically, this recovery begins in the rhetorical situation between and among people as in the polis. The listener, taken along by the passions (*pathē*) of the speaker, may be brought to an experience of anxiety or uncanniness, that is, a heightened awareness of his profound finitude, which is a moment of decision about who he is and may trigger authentic speaking. As Campbell summarizes, "When Dasein is struck with the uncanniness of its own nothingness, it searches out conversation...because it is trying to come to terms with who it is..." (173). Of course Aristotle does not more fully delineate this dynamic. Indeed if he did, then Heidegger's turn to Aristotle would be more exclusively scholarly and not principally about "thinking with him" as a way of making Heidegger's own original contributions to philosophy. The point of this turn to Aristotle is, Campbell suggests, to draw out what is latent or unthought in Aristotle's thought as part of the process of doing new philosophy of the present day.

Heidegger's search for clues in the past for his work of drawing out the speaking dimension of contemporary philosophy's vocation also takes him to a factual treatment of Plato's "*Sophist*" (1925). Although Heidegger's relation to Plato is often thought to be one of simply dismissing him as the father of metaphysics, Campbell shows a more complex posture that recognizes and elicits positive aspects of Plato's dialectic for Heidegger's contemporary purposes. Because dialectic is ultimately about arriving at a pure beholding (*noein*) of the Ideas, Heidegger's task of retrieval here must first pass through his factual interrogation of Aristotle's notion of *logos* as speaking, which Heidegger considers to be an Aristotelian radicalization of Platonic dialectic. Dialectic's most basic expression as dialogue or speaking with others then becomes more perspicuous. Dialectic sets something in relief against a background of deception or non-being, in a process that is moreover in some capacity concerned with human existence or care of the souls of the interlocutors. As with Heidegger's factual encounter with Aristotle's concepts, here too he recognizes where he can follow Plato's dialectic and where

he cannot. For the task of philosophy as Heidegger is now specifying it is “not to pass through *logos* to *noein*” and away from life “but rather to accept the original facticity of *logos* and discern truth from within those deceptions and concealments that are immanent within the factual human situation” (194).

Campbell presents a very deftly and carefully woven story of the steps of Heidegger’s early philosophical journeying towards concepts for which he would later become well known but whose paths there are not so known. As a scholarly contribution to this less treated area of Heidegger’s work, *The Early Heidegger’s Philosophy of Life* is a rich, needed, and impressive achievement. It offers a much ampler understanding of *Being and Time*. It also aims to intervene in scholarship concerning the ambiguity that Heidegger ascribes to factual life, where it is both a source of vitality as well as a source of fallenness. Campbell argues that scholars tend to interpret this ambiguity as too sharp an opposition. Factual life is then construed as either overwhelmingly fallen or able to achieve sustained authenticity that can eliminate life’s ambiguity instead of appreciating, as Campbell emphasizes, that the two are never entirely separated, with authenticity “*passing through*” the distortions of ruinance without ever being completely free of them (216, italics in the original).

There is more to Campbell’s book, though, than its contribution to filling in a part of the larger “encyclopedia” of Heidegger’s body of work and scholarship on it, which is significant in its own right. Arguably, the greater significance of presenting this richer picture of the *early* paths of Heidegger’s thinking lies in the insights it offers into how a philosopher of this caliber gets on his way. That is, what kinds of questions, directions, and motivations does he pursue in getting started? This is especially important if we understand, with Heidegger, that philosophy’s vocation today has something to do with phenomenologically retrieving a concealed dimension of the human condition from factual life – the concrete, everyday living, listening, and speaking with others – in a task for which philosophy’s history is both a hindrance and a resource.

What is especially exciting about Campbell's study is that he also keeps us within the zone of this kind of reflection. Here scholarship does not become confined to "reporting" on a thinker's paths in a way that can itself become a kind of "fleeing towards the familiar" of other such scholarship, which can then block off radical questioning by finding engagement with Heidegger that escapes such scholarly confines unintelligible. As Campbell variously emphasizes:

Heidegger affirms, *and this is of the utmost importance*, that no epoch should be robbed of the "burden" of having to ask its own questions... "Philosophical research is...something that will never want to...be able to...take away from future times the burden and concern of radical questioning" (105, em).

Campbell's manner of tracing the beginnings of Heidegger's radical questioning is not only practically instructive in terms of what the work of such questioning may entail; it also encourages us to imagine conducting that questioning in a way that may "think with Heidegger" as he did here with Aristotle and Plato.