

Preface:

Why Generational Heidegger Scholarship?

Lee Braver

When I took on the guest editorship of *Gatherings*, my first impulse was to do what one does in such situations: invite a bunch of well-known, well-published Heidegger scholars to contribute to it, either something about a theme or just whatever they had lying around. But then I thought, “Do these people really need another line on their CV? Their work is excellent, yes – they are well-known, after all – but it is also already prominent and their avenues to disseminate it smooth – they are well-published.”

So then I thought, who could really use a publication? Clearly, early-stage academics generally have less bulky CV’s and are less proficient with the publishing process, which can present a significant obstacle. First publications are in many ways the most difficult. However well writing seminar papers and dissertations might teach scholarly writing, they do little to nothing to prepare one for publishing – an obscure business that, like most things academic, comes wrapped in layers of arcane rituals and cryptic terminology. Later, after going through the process a few times and making contacts, it gets far easier (the business side, I mean, not the writing and thinking; that just keeps getting harder). Helping early-stage academics break the ice could help launch productive careers, aiding their occupational progress while simultaneously introducing some quality scholarship into the field of Heidegger research.

This struck me as a worthy goal. Being a professor is a calling, certainly, but it’s also a profession. The role of the academic is not just that of the scholar enlightening readers and teacher educating students; it also retains elements of the guild-master training apprentices. Our

pupils must understand and produce arguments, read lots of books, and develop critical skills, naturally, but they also need to understand the business of academia they are proposing to spend their lives working in.

Unfortunately, this is a proposal that has been dubious since before I entered the profession, and has only gotten more so since. The job market – well, I used to say the job market was a vicious, soul-consuming slaughter-house of dreams and joy, but that description just seems too kind now. As Heidegger says of being, I almost feel we need a new vocabulary to be able to talk about it. To make matters worse, one of the few things that can actually help people get jobs is publishing in journals, and that has become awful, too. Backlogs and over-submissions have driven down acceptance rates and driven up response times and publication delays beyond practical efficacy. Journals no longer effectively fulfill one of their functions, namely, bringing attention to talented young scholars for career advancement; this is especially true within the harsh constraints of the early academic time-table.

So, I continued to myself, why not use this guest editorship to help with this problem? Many of those well-known scholars know talented late-stage graduate students or early-stage PhDs eager and highly qualified to get in print. Not only would this help address an ethical problem – the hellish fate of job-seekers, a fate that, I must add, we senior faculty have been and continue to be accessories to – but it can bring new voices and ideas into Heidegger scholarship. Let me make this clear: this is not a job-assistance project to aid students we felt bad for or just wanted to help. The work had to be of high quality, professionally publishable, and it all went through a rigorous screening and revising process (as the authors can attest), with rejections along the way. However, it is hardly surprising that an over-abundance of excellent thinkers and writers exist, far exceeding outlets for them, so getting the high quality work this issue is composed of was not that much of a challenge.

My final thought to myself was about the nature of scholarship. I've always believed in Gadamer's idea that the history of philosophy should be understood on the model of a conversation, and Heidegger's view that all thinking is responding, to our predecessors among others.

I therefore structured this issue of *Gatherings* to reflect this structure – as rejoinders that help newer voices join the on-going conversation; along with new voices, I think the profession could use some new forms of publications. I asked the senior scholars to invite an early-stage academic (roughly, ABD to pre-tenure) to write an essay to which they responded with a shorter piece. I left the nature of the exchange open-ended, with most ending up being along the lines of responses/questions posed/further directions sighted. Megan Altman had originally planned to co-write a different paper with another senior partner for this issue, but he had to step out due to unforeseen circumstances before doing so, which is why I co-wrote the paper included herein with her.

Lee Braver, *University of South Florida*

Hiding out from a global pandemic in a cabin in the foothills of the
Blue Ridge Mountains with my books and my dog