

GATHERINGS SYMPOSIUM

The Human Being

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INTRODUCTION: SCOTT M. CAMPBELL

The previous editor of *Gatherings*, Richard Polt, introduced a new feature into the journal, a Symposium in which Heidegger scholars would discuss a particular issue that was central to Heidegger's thinking. The 2021 issue of *Gatherings* did not include a Symposium only because it was a Special Issue with a Guest Editor. In the current issue, I decided to continue the Symposium and asked six scholars to participate.

Here is the topic and the prompt that I sent to each participant:

Topic: Heidegger's Idea of the Human Being

Prompt: Heidegger's understanding of the nature of the human being changed significantly from the early to later periods of his thinking. Initially, he conceives of the human being as the "historical I" embedded in factual life. In *Being and Time*, of course, he conceives of the human being in terms of Dasein. In his later work, he speaks of human beings as mortals dwelling within the context of the fourfold. Although Heidegger never thought of the human being as the primary topic of his thinking, he offers insights into how to think of the human

being in relation to history, the world, technology, nature, and Being itself. What is the contemporary relevance of Heidegger's understanding of the human being? Do any of these notions – the historical I, Dasein, mortals – offer us meaningful ways of thinking about the human being today? Are there social, ethical, or political issues that Heidegger's ideas about the human being might help us to navigate?

The initial statement from each participant is about 1,000 words, with some exceptions. All of the participants then read each other's comments and submitted a response of about 500 words that took account of the initial statements. In this Symposium, you will note that in his response, Jesús Adrián Escudero replied directly and primarily to the original statement submitted by Tricia Glazebrook. I thought it would be best to give her a chance to reply to those comments, so you will find that reply in a paragraph at the end of the response submitted by Tricia Glazebrook. All of the statements and the responses are listed in alphabetical order. At the very end of the Symposium, I offer some concluding remarks.

KEVIN AHO: FACTICITY AND PEDAGOGY

By the early 1920s, Heidegger already had a fully developed idea of “factual life” (*das faktische Leben*) as the initial point of access to the question of the meaning of being. In a letter to Karl Löwith dated August 19, 1921, he introduces his methodological “starting point” (*Ausgang*) in the following way:

I work by proceeding concretely and factically from out of my “I am” – from out of my spiritual and altogether factual background/milieu/life context; I work from out of that which is accessible to me as the lived experience in which I live. This facticity is, as existentiell, no mere blind Dasein; it lies there amidst existence; that means, however, that I live it – the “I must” about which no one speaks.¹

What Heidegger is suggesting is that human beings are invariably thrown into a factual situation, a shared historical context that is already working behind our backs, shaping the way we feel about, understand, and make sense of things. It is a context that places moral demands on us, creating a prejudicial sense of “I must” (*ich muss*) by disclosing in advance what counts and matters in our lives. In *Being and Time*, he suggests this background understanding is so close to us, so familiar, that we can’t see it. It is “not only close to us – even that which is closest; *we are it*, each of us, we ourselves” (GA 2: 36/SZ 15). Structured by “historicality” (*Geschichtlichkeit*) in this way, a human being “is its past, whether explicitly or not” (GA 2: 41/SZ 20).

There is often a collective sigh of frustration when I introduce this idea to my students, and the frustration is usually expressed like this:

“If we’re already embedded in the prejudices of our situation, then how can we ever adopt a stance of critical detachment where we can begin to challenge or rise above these prejudices?”

And this is, of course, the rub for Heidegger scholars. In his letter to Löwith, Heidegger claims it was his factual origin that informed his clerical training at Freiburg and his early self-identification as a “Christian theologian.”² But in the wake of Trumpism, the MAGA movement, and the January 6th insurrection, my students want to understand Heidegger’s own choices and actions. They want to know how being thrown into the socially and politically conservative milieu of Meßkirch and Black Forest Germany in the early twentieth century shaped his “I must.” To what extent did it skew his love of the provinces, his romanticizing of Bavarian peasant life, or his anti-cosmopolitanism as not so thinly disguised anti-Semitism? And this leads students to ask more fundamental questions. Can we ever really escape the prejudices of our own history? If factual life is so close to us that we can’t see it, are we condemned to exist as incarnations of these prejudices? Is the cherished line from Hölderlin true: “As you begin, so will you remain?”

These questions often create an opening for students to reflect on their own facticity, to consider how the constraints and limitations of our hermeneutic situation prevent us from seeing the moral hazards right in front of us. Will we look back on these blind spots in twenty years, for example, and wonder how we could have been so complicit in the suffering of factory farmed animals, or how our dependence on Amazon.com helped to destroy local bookstores and businesses, or how absurd it was to burn fossil fuel flying across the country to give a talk at the Heidegger Circle on the ecological perils of burning fossil fuel?

For me, these dialogical exchanges illuminate the enduring pedagogical value of the “hermeneutics of facticity” by showing students how to begin questioning their own facticity, to begin to grasp, albeit in an unfinished and incomplete way, why it is that they interpret and make sense of things in the ways that they do. This is, in Heidegger’s words, “the task of making Dasein which is in each case our own accessible to Dasein itself with regard to the character of its being” (GA 63: 15/11). It opens us up to the possibility of understanding who we are. Heidegger refers to this kind of hermeneutic interrogation in terms of a

“radical wakefulness” (*radikale Wachsein*) (GA 63: 15/11), of waking up to the ways in which a tacit background of values, beliefs, and assumptions already undergirds our everyday lives, making it possible “to be” the kinds of persons we are. This is what he means in his lecture course on Plato’s *Sophist* when he writes: “To understand history cannot mean anything else than to understand ourselves” (GA 19: 10/7).

Heidegger, of course, reminds us that because we are structured by thrownness, we can never fully extricate ourselves from the prejudices of our own tradition. This means every interpretation of who we are is already corrupted; it is always going to be a *mis*interpretation. “The chance that hermeneutics will go wrong belongs in principle to its ownmost being” (GA 63: 16/12). But waking students up to the ways tradition distorts our current understanding and blocks off or conceals other ways to interpret and make sense of things is central to Heidegger’s project. Indeed, it is foundational to all good teaching and research in philosophy by showing how our taken-for-granted assumptions are always unsettled, always infused with “questionableness” (*Fraglichkeit*). In his own glorification of *Heimat*, *Blut und Boden*, and *das Volk*, Heidegger clearly fell short of waking up, of carefully interrogating the sources of his own prejudice. But I try to remind my students that the hermeneutics of facticity provides the path that helps expose how and why he fell so short.

NOTES

- 1 Letter to Karl Löwith, August 19, 1921, in *Martin Heidegger and Karl Löwith, Correspondence: 1919–1973*, trans. J. Goesser Assaiante and S. Montgomery Ewegen (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 37.
- 2 Ibid.

JILL DROUILLARD: HEIDEGGER ON BEING A SEXED OR
GENDERED HUMAN BEING

As a feminist Heidegger scholar, I'd like to speak specifically about Heidegger's understanding of a sexed or gendered human being. More importantly, I want to highlight how Heidegger's notion of the human being as historically contingent may be useful for thinking about the fluidity of sex and gender today. While Heidegger's language to examine the human being may have changed over time from the "historical I" to "Dasein" to "mortal dwelling," an important aspect of what it means to be human has remained at the forefront of his thought – that of groundlessness – more specifically, the vying of the human being to create a ground in the wake of such groundlessness. This need to define "what is" in a world of flux is witnessed in contentious discussions regarding fixed understandings of sex and gender and their very relation to each other. The primacy of such discussions and their entanglement with what it means *to be* human leads us to think, as Derrida did, sexual difference as ontological difference.¹ That is, the question of "what is" or what it means to understand "what is" as human beings has historically been influenced by our understanding of sex or gender. Due to space constraints, I will focus largely on a lesser-known text by Heidegger that engages with the sexed/gendered nature of the human being.² Then, I will briefly comment on how the takeaways from this text may be useful for rethinking sex and gender today.

Heidegger first mentions sex or gender in his 1923 Freiburg lecture course, later translated as *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, where he explicitly notes his avoidance of the terms "human" Dasein or the "being of man." Both terms, "human" and "man," are founded on predetermined predicates, based on assumptions of endowed reason, hierarchical classifications, and relation to God. Furthermore, Heidegger demonstrates how the "being of man" is sexed or gendered in advance. After citing biblical quotes that define "man" as made in the image of God (and thus not required to cover his head) as the first "son" of many "brethren," he asks, "Problem: what is woman?"

(GA 63: 22/18). This question, “*Problem: Was ist die Frau?*” is never answered but merely interjected. Yet, three thoughts necessarily flow from its inquiry. First, the concept of man, with its Judeo-Christian roots, necessarily excludes woman from having a direct relation to being (if being is God), since only man was made in his likeness. Second, man, in not having to cover his head, is already established within a hierarchy of sexual difference, and such differences are predicated prior to an interpretative investigation of facticity. Third, the problem of woman introduces a problem of the flesh that makes of man (spirit)/woman (flesh) a dialectical relation, and Heidegger accuses dialectics of committing the same error as static juxtapositions. Of dialectic he asserts, “It steps into an already constructed context, though there really is no context here...Every category is an existential and *is* this as such, not merely in relation to other categories and on the basis of this relation” (GA 63: 43/35).

Though Heidegger does not explicitly explain why he poses the problem of woman, the reader intuits that the issue of *Frau* as woman is tied to a question of generation, as interpreted by St. Augustine, whom Heidegger declares a few pages earlier as the philosopher who provides “the first hermeneutics in grand style” (GA 63: 11/9). In reckoning with the ontological inequality between the sexes, St. Augustine declares that man was created for the contemplative life (of the spirit) whereas woman finds her origins in corporeality (of the flesh) and procreative purpose.⁵ That is, she was created for Adam to have a descendent; she was created for her sex. Woman’s particular relation to sexual fecundity is why she must cover her head and man “ought not.” From her inception, woman is born with a specific form of guilt, accorded because of her bodily intention. Such predetermined guilt runs contrary to Heidegger’s notion of our primordial “being guilty,” that is being born on the basis of a nullity, without ground (GA 2: 329/SZ 284). As Dasein, we are “thrown” into the world without a plan, without a blueprint, and so, woman could not be created for her flesh any more than man could be designed for the contemplative (read rational) life. Aware of “man’s” historical baggage as already being predetermined as not only

a rational animal but as a person whose hierarchy is predefined through an ontological sex/gender inequality, Heidegger prefers to use the term Dasein in his existential analytic.

Whereas the terms “human” and “man” already conjure notions of “what is” in advance, Dasein is more concerned with the “how” of such construction. Dasein as “being-there” is always there at a particular time, at a certain moment in history. It is thus in line with Heidegger’s historical ontology to conclude that neither sex nor gender are static concepts that defy the influence of history. Such thinking has important consequences for how we approach debates regarding sex and gender today. For example, in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, Heidegger asserts that Dasein is neither of the two sexes but rather harbors within itself an intrinsic possibility to become sexed or gendered (GA 26: 173/137). Dasein, by focusing on the “how” of historical construction rather than the “what is” of static juxtapositions, offers insights for thinking about nonbinary, trans, and genderqueer identities. And while Heidegger was not interested in *Lebensphilosophie* and biological constructions of the human being, his discussion of how we become sexed in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* may contribute to genetic ontologies that explain the potential of our genetic material to become other than what it is. For example, future advances in *in vitro gametogenesis* will allow scientists to create sperm or egg gametes from adult stem cell tissue, forcing us to reassess any notion of sexual difference founded on reproductive difference.

Overall, while Heidegger’s inquiry, “Problem: what is woman?” may not have been raised within the context of a feminist liberatory agenda, the hierarchy of knowledge production that he nevertheless accents in his critique of the terms “human” and “being of man” can prove useful for feminist philosophers who challenge any nonhistorical objective response to this question.

NOTES

- 1 Jacques Derrida, “*Geschlecht: différence sexuelle, différence ontologique*,” *Cahier de l’Herne*, ed. Michel Haar (Paris: Herne, 1983), 419–30. Translated by Ruben Berezdivin as “*Geschlecht: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference*,” *Research in Phenomenology* 13, no. 1 (1983): 65–83.
- 2 To my knowledge, Heideggerian scholarship has not previously engaged with Heidegger’s question: “Problem: what is woman?” that appears in his 1923 Freiburg lecture course, later published as *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*. Most feminist interpretations of Heidegger begin with his 1928 Marburg course, later translated as *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*. This “problem” concerning woman is perplexing, particularly as he leaves it open-ended.
- 3 Augustin, *La Trinité*, Book XII, 10, trans. Sophie Dupuy-Trudelle, in *Philosophie, Catéchèse, Polémique, Œuvres*, vol. 3, ed. Lucien Jerphagnon (Paris: Gallimard, 2002).

JESÚS ADRIÁN ESCUDERO: HEIDEGGER:

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN BEING?

What might be the nature of human being? Before trying to respond to this question, it is necessary to make clear what we understand by nature. And should human beings have a nature, a second question arises: Is there any difference between the nature of human beings and other animals? From this point of view, I would like to briefly point out the difference that Heidegger establishes between human beings and animals. And then I am going to underline two distinctive features of the nature of human beings – namely, meaningfulness and normative agency.

(1) Heidegger mentions in several writings of the 1920s that human beings differ from other animals. In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1929–30) he indicates that this difference is ontological: the human being (to be more precise, Dasein) can comprehend the world it inhabits and have a self-understanding of itself. This claim stems from the belief that the human environment is different from the environment of other animals (GA 29/30: 470/324).¹ The human world is the world of language and meaning. As early as the *Kriegsnotsemester* (1919), Heidegger speaks of the human environment as the world of meaning: “In the experience of seeing the lectern something is given to me from out of an immediate environment [*Umwelt*]. This environmental milieu (lectern, book, blackboard, notebook, fountain pen, caretaker, student fraternity, tram-car, motor-car, etc.) does not consist just of things, objects, which are then conceived as meaning this and this; rather, the meaningful is primary and immediately given to me without any mental detours across thing-oriented apprehension” (GA 56/57: 61/72–73).²

(2) Thus, to be human means to be open to the givenness of things. In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger insists that Dasein is the instance of intelligibility. The truth of the proposition “ $2 \times 2 = 4$ ” is independent of us, but only Dasein allows that meaning to be true or normative (GA 24: 447/315). Dasein, thrown into the world, finds itself beholden to the entities it finds there. As Crowell puts it: “This does not mean that entities depend on Dasein. But their ‘being’ – that

is, any characterization of them as something – is possible only if Dasein holds them up to constitutive standards, or satisfaction conditions, for being the things they are.”⁵ Dasein allows entities in the world to be intelligible as the things they are, and the intelligibility of such things has a normative character. Dasein comes to the fore, no longer as an organism, but as the “agent of truth.”⁴ In this arises the question of human agency.

(3) How might human agency be understood in Heideggerian terms? Agency is not the result of the free-floating action of a transparent, autonomous and reflective subject (the Kantian approach), but rather an active modification of practices into which Dasein is already thrown (the Heideggerian approach). Initially, we are thrown into the normative authority of “the they” (*das Man*). However, this fact does not mean that we are fully determined by social norms, public conventions, or moral values. We, too, have the possibility of actively modifying our understanding and behavior based on past experiences or present difficulties.⁵ This is what it means to be resolute: to be elastic, to be open, and to adapt continuously to changing circumstances. Resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) is not a hermetic and sealed act; on the contrary, it has to leave open the possibility of withdrawal or modification (even the possibility of non-resoluteness). Anticipatory resoluteness demands an active, creative, and flexible relation to ourselves, to others, and to the world.

Finally, for the sake of my argument, I would add that Dasein is an active agent that not only forges an understanding of the world but that can also be held accountable for its actions. This is a main feature of the nature of the human being. By “nature,” I do not mean a sort of immutable essence, but Dasein’s unique openness to a significant world (or, to use Taylor Carman’s expression, its relatedness to a horizon of intelligibility), and Dasein’s possibility to take an active and transformative stance towards the normative background into which it is thrown.⁶

NOTES

- 1 Heidegger's position has been criticized by different authors. Matthew Calaraco accuses him of metaphysical anthropocentrism. See Calaraco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). John Searle states that the Heideggerian account of Dasein is not related to evolutionary theory. See Searle, "The Phenomenological Illusion," *Erfahrung und Analyse*, eds. Maria E. Reicher and Johann Christian Marek (Vienna: OBV & HPT, 2005), 317–336. For a closer analysis of this issue, see Chad Engelland, "Heidegger and the Human Difference," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* (2015): 175–193.
- 2 Here one can find the core idea of Heidegger's hermeneutical transformation of phenomenology. I have developed the methodological implications of such transformation elsewhere. See Jesús Adrián Escudero, "Hermeneutische versus reflexive Phänomenologie. Eine kritische Revision Heideggers früherer Stellung zu Husserl ausgehend vom Kriegsnotsemester 1919," *Analecta Husserliana* LXXXVIII (2005): 157–173 and *Heidegger and the Emergence of the Question of Being* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). See further: Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Hermeneutik und Reflexion* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000); Cristina Lafont, "Heidegger's Hermeneutics," in *The Blackwell Companion to Heidegger*, eds. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 265–84, Barbara Merker, *Selbsttäuschung und Selbsterkenntnis. Zu Heideggers Transformation der Phänomenologie Husserls* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998); and Ramón Rodríguez, *La transformación hermenéutica de la fenomenología. Una interpretación de la obra temprana de Heidegger* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1997).
- 3 Steven Galt Crowell, *Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 240.

- 4 In Robert Sokolowski's words, "There could not be a disclosure without me or someone like me...I am there not merely as a biological organism or a psychological center of consciousness, but as an agent of logic and verification." See Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 14.
- 5 I have further developed this argument elsewhere. See Jesús Adrián Escudero, "Eigentlichkeit und Agency in *Sein und Zeit*," *Phainomena* XXXVI (102-103) (2017): 63-78.
- 6 See Taylor Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse, and Authenticity in "Being and Time"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

TRICIA GLAZEBROOK: BEING HUMAN BEING:
DASEIN, CIVILIZATION, CAPITAL, AND HOME

Dasein is the being whose “very being ... is an *issue* for it” (GA 2: 12/SZ 32). Being human is pretty simple – anyone can do it, just not for very long. Globally, life expectancy is 72.48 years for those born in 2022,¹ though location impacts expectation, e.g., those born in the Central African Republic average 53 years; those in Japan, almost 85.² Regardless, in their years, everyone experiences the being-issue at some point, i.e., everyone experiences being-toward-death. Everyone is, therefore, Dasein.

One cannot possibly, however, be constantly engaging the being-issue. Humans are Dasein only in those moments, i.e., Dasein is not a person but the activity of being-toward-death. Existence precedes essence for Dasein,³ who has “the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself” (GA 2: 188/SZ 232), i.e., Dasein chooses *how to be human*. Diotima is optimistic in saying that one can become immortal through history by birthing wisdom and virtue.⁴ Everyone is Dasein for better or worse: Hitler is as remembered as Mother Teresa.

There are many ways to be human. Three examples are used to discuss more or less functional models: being civilized; being in capital; and being at home. The question that connects these examples is, what does it mean to be Dasein in poverty?

Being Civilized: The Intellectual Conception

The Eurocentric, post-Enlightenment conception of “human being” provided a vision of civilization based on science, arts, humanities, and a conception of reason attributed to a small group of male Caucasians who traced their origin to the Classical period in ancient Greece. The 18th-century poet Hölderlin, for example, was favored by Heidegger for his poetry on the Greeks. As was the case in Athens, the vision of the *polis* had no place for the reality of poverty and exploited labor.

When that vision culminated in the Holocaust, Adorno wrote that poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.⁵ Hitler had created “an administrative

murder of millions”⁶ that collapsed the promise that human being is reasonable and civil. Germany had been the apex of “civilization.”

Capital: The Impossibility of Being Human

Capital is not just economics, but a logic that structures human lived experience.⁷ Capital logic reduces people to wage-earning consumers whose purpose is individual accumulation of private wealth; those who fail, i.e., those living in poverty, are allegedly greedy and lazy. Yet the poor work in much worse conditions for much less compensation than the wealthy: Jeff Bezos earned \$5,688 per hour in 2021, despite retiring in July.⁸ Meanwhile, the highest hourly U.S. minimum wage is \$15.90, with twenty states at \$7.25.⁹

Capital logic also enables dishonesty to protect revenues, e.g., fossil fuel industries run climate disinformation campaigns.¹⁰ Between the corporate charter freeing management and stockholders from accountability,¹¹ and “externalities,” i.e., corporate damage not figuring in budgets, e.g., habitat loss for orangutans,¹² capital interests displace moral and environmental constraints on profit. A U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2010 allowed corporate activity in election campaigns,¹⁵ i.e., funding of politicians. Government thus becomes at best the tool, at worst the weapon of capital. Globally, murder of eco-defenders protecting ecosystems they depend on for their livelihood is increasing.¹⁴

Corporate cost-benefit decision-making is calculative thinking that aims at a utilitarian goal of stakeholders’ best outcome for least investment. Utilitarianism is a calculus, however: values are decided before it is deployed so implementers need no ethical thinking. Separation of capital activities from ethical engagement destroys lives and damages ecosystems irreversibly for the sake of profit over people. Human being cannot exist in this logic of reckoning. Heidegger attributed exploitation to the essence of technology (GA 7: 15/QCT 14), but now, technology is a tool for the logic of capital.¹⁵ The world’s richest 1% owns 45.8% of the world’s wealth.¹⁶ In West Africa, from 2019 to 2020, the proportion of people in food insecurity grew from 54.2% to 68.3%.¹⁷

Those most facing poverty typically grow for their family's subsistence. Climate change is ravaging Africa's subsistence agriculture. Yet African governments often turn to oil – a substantial climate driver – to address poverty in Sustainable Development Goals. Their own, most vulnerable people are abject, literally thrown away.¹⁸

Coming Home

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger identifies *Unheimlichkeit*, literally not-being-at-home (GA 2: 188/SZ 233) and later identifies nihilism as scientific “consolidation of the abandonment of being” (GA 65: 145/99). He also recognizes that *techne* is only possible because of *phusis* (GA 65: 190/133) and counters scientific epistemological dominance by turning to human dwelling in *phusis*. He describes the “power of earth as home” (GA 39: 87–9) and calls earth the “building bearer, nourishing with its fruits, tending water and rock, plant and animal” (GA 7: 179/PLT 178; cf. GA 7: 150/PLT 149). Humans “dwell in that they save the earth” rather than mastering or subjugating it (GA 7: 152/PLT 150) in what is “unpoetic dwelling” (GA 7: 207/PLT 228) caused by “calculative thinking” (GA 16: 520/47), “one-track thinking,” and the “representative idea” (GA 8: 26, 50/26, 44). Rather, he advocates for dwelling together in nature through “cultivating and caring” (GA 7: 195/PLT 217).

Multiple cultures cultivate and care for the ecosystem in which they live¹⁹ and defend it against capital appropriations by governments, banks, and multinationals often working in collaboration.²⁰ In capital systems, these people are poor, but there is a distinction between “poverty as subsistence, and poverty as deprivation,” the latter caused by development that brought dispossession, deprivation, and environmental degradation.²¹ Subsistence economies that meet daily needs sustainably are a saving of the earth, e.g., women farmers who do not grow for the market in a linear pattern from field to bank account but see themselves as part of the continuous water cycle from cloud to field to river to sea to cloud. . . . In this sense, “survival of the fittest” does not mean of the strongest, but of those who are a good ecosystem fit.

Conclusion

These analyses show that there are many ways to be human because being human is not ontological but enactment. Intellectual “being human” collapsed at its core. Economic being pushes humanity out of justice and out of balance with planetary capacity to provide. Being at home in an ecosystem, however, in Heidegger’s sense of *Gelassenheit*, opens space for revealing Dasein’s place in local and planetary cycles and choosing to be within their limits to meet human needs. Being at home is a richness that need not “[drive] out every other possibility of revealing” (GA 7: 2/QCT 27). Just as monoculture is unhealthy in agriculture, mono-thinking stunts Dasein’s growth.

NOTES

- 1 “World Life Expectancy 1950–2022,” Macrotrends, accessed April 27, 2022, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/WLD/world/life-expectancy#:~:text=The%20life%20expectancy%20for%20World%20in%202020%20was%2072.63,a%200.24%25%20increase%20from%202019>.
- 2 Max Roser, Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, and Hannah Ritchie, “Life Expectancy,” Our World in Data, accessed April 27, 2022, <https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20estimate%20a,life%20expectancy%20of%2072.3%20years>.
- 3 Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Les Éditions Nagel, 1946), 2. “Existentialism is a Humanism,” trans. Philip Mairet in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, ed. W. Kaufmann (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 289.
- 4 Plato, *Symposium*, ed. K. Dover (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 209a. *Symposium*, trans. Alexander

- Nehemas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1989), 209a.
- 5 T. W. Adorno, *Prismen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1955), 30. *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Sherry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 34.
- 6 T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), 353. *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973), 362.
- 7 Tricia Glazebrook and Emmanuela Opoku, “Gender and Sustainability: Learning from Women’s Farming in Africa,” *Sustainability* 12, no. 24 (2020): 10495.
- 8 Ruchi Gupta, “How Much does Jeff Bezos Make a Second?” *Market Realist*, 20 August 2021. <https://marketrealist.com/p/how-much-does-jeff-bezos-make-a-second/#:~:text=Based%20on%20his%20annual%20income,minute%2C%20and%20%240.10%20a%20second>; Dawn Allcot, “2021 Wealth Recap: Who Are the Billionaires that Added \$402B to their Fortunes,” *Yahoo! Finance*, 3 January 2022. <https://www.yahoo.com/video/2021-wealth-recap-billionaires-added-143456071.html#:~:text=Jeff%20Bezos%2C%20who%20lost%20the,Year's%2C%20stood%20at%20%24195%20billion>.
- 9 Minimum Wage. “Minimum Wage – In Your State,” accessed April 27, 2022, <https://minimumwage.com/in-your-state/>.
- 10 Donald Brown, “Responding to the Nomination for U.S. Secretary of State the CEO of Exxon, a Company Which Funded the Morally Reprehensible Climate Change Disinformation Campaign and Politicians Who Are Climate Change Deniers,” *Ethics and Climate*, accessed April 27, 2022, <https://ethicsandclimate.org/category/exxon-and-climate-denial/>.
- 11 Mitchell F. Crusto, “Green Business: Should We Revoke Corporate Charters for Environmental Violations?” *Louisiana Law Review* 63, no. 2 (2003): 175–241.

- 12 WWF, “What Are the Main Threats? Orang-Utans,” accessed April 27, 2022, https://wwf.panda.org/discover/knowledge_hub/ endangered_species/great_apes/orangutans/.
- 13 FEC, “Citizens United v. FEC. Federal Election Committee,” accessed 27 April, 2022, <https://www.fec.gov/legal-resources/court-cases/citizens-united-v-fec/#:~:text=On%20January%202021%2C%202010%2C%20the,ruling%20in%20Citizens%20United%20v.&text=The%20Court%20upheld%20the%20reporting,the%20ban%20on%20corporate%20contributions.>
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RÓISÍN LALLY: WHY ASKING THE QUESTION OF BEING
STILL REMAINS A QUESTION FOR OUR TIME

From *Being and Time* (1927) to “Time and Being” (1962) Heidegger draws us back to Aristotle’s perplexing question – *ti to on* – What is being?¹ Although the titles may suggest a reversal of thinking, it is, rather, a continuation and deepening of the question of being itself. As indicated by the titles, a clue to the puzzle of being points to time. And the two giants who address the question of being in terms of time are Aristotle and Kant. (1) As a first attempt to unravel the mystery of being, therefore, Heidegger excavates their theories of time, concluding that time is the unity of three dimensions – past, present, and future – which he calls “ecstatic temporality.” Thus, temporality is the basic structure of the human being and the horizon of being as such. Later, Heidegger explores (2) time in terms of an extending “time-space,” where things “perdure.” “True time” is four-dimensional and is a pre-spatial perduring whence things unfold.² Adopting the language of quantum physics and new materialism, time-space “diffracts,” enfolding multiple temporalities. (3) Thus, history is not a linear chronological past that marches on from a past to the future. Rather, the past is entangled in cultural and natural time-spaces overlapping geological timescales and deep time consciousness, or what I call, perduring in deep time.

Temporality as the Horizon of Dasein

Influenced by Husserl’s time marked by intentionality, in *Being and Time* Heidegger develops a fundamental ontology as the ontological analysis of Dasein. Dasein experiences the world through nature (*Vorhandensein*), through artifacts (*Zuhandensein*), and through Dasein’s basic structure of care (GA 14: 6/7). We care about things and other beings, and time is the condition of the possibility of care. He achieves this by setting out how Kant’s doctrine of time fails on two accounts: (1) Kant’s interpretation of time moves within the structures of time already laid out by Aristotle, and with its corresponding problem of succession; and (2) Kant did not make clear the subjectivity of the subject, which is

an error in identity and difference. To address the question of time, we will need to take a brief look at Aristotle's concept of time defined in the *Physics* as "a number of motion in respect of 'before' and 'after.'" ³ Aristotle notes that time cannot always be the same, i.e., it must account for change. There seems to be no time without change: trees lay bare, the ball moves position, the cat grows older. In contemporary terms, change is a necessary condition for our noticing of time. Secondly, the notion of time presupposes a system of measurement, i.e., that the reference to mind is indispensable to the definition of time. Aristotle tells us that only when we delimit or "distinguish [*horisōmen*]" a change do we say that time has elapsed. ⁴ So, Aristotle had already identified the notion of delimiting change as crucial in the move to define time. Time does need intervals for its existence.

Implicit in this is an existential determination that implies only that which is in the present, "now," can be said truly "to be." Here continuity causes an aporia; if the past is a non-being and the future is a non-being, then the present cannot exist, and it seems clear that past and future are indeed non-beings. Furthermore, only that which is instantaneously present deserves to be addressed as "is." Thus, none of being *is*. This brings up a further difficulty with defining "now" as both "present" and the "instant." The present character of the now is its continual changing position between past and future, while the instantaneous character of the now is its indivisibility, defined as the "indivisible instant." But here arise two more problems with time: (1) Because an instant cannot be considered part of time, time again becomes non-existent, and (2) the identity of "now" means there is no difference between a prior time and a later time.

Kant solves this problem with his claim that the representation of simultaneity and succession must be mind-dependent since they are presupposed in our experience *in* time. Kant formulates his first argument for internal time thus:

Time is not an empirical concept that is somehow drawn from experience. For simultaneity or succession would not themselves come into perception if the

representation of time did not ground them *a priori*. Only under its presuppositions can one represent that several things exist at one and the same time (simultaneously) or in different times (successively).⁵

The implication for this argument suggests that experience is excluded from any possibility of forming a concept. For example, “cat” cannot be an empirical concept since “[cats] would not themselves come into perception if the representation of [cats] did not ground them *a priori*.”⁶ Let us examine the claim, “the cat is on the mat.” For this to be a truth claim, we must specify a temporal dimension. The representation of “now” the cat is on the mat, requires a time *prior* and *posterior* to its being on the mat. It exists as the same representation in our inner cognition as the very same cat that presents itself on the mat, but now at a different successive time, where it no longer is on the mat.

This may satisfy the problem of the non-existence of Aristotle’s continuous moments because simultaneous and successive moments may be represented through *a priori* concepts rather than ontological ones. It is not clear, however, how we can ever apply those *a priori* temporal concepts to the empirical world. While the argument for the harmonization of the empirically real and transcendently ideal may stand with regard to space, where difference can be grasped within the unity of a single moment of consciousness (one cat is to the left of the other and, therefore, the cats are clearly differentiated), with regard to time it seems to suggest an infinite regress where we can never truly catch sight of the *difference* between different moments or different degrees of time.⁷ As Kant writes, “The finitude of time signifies nothing more than that every determinate magnitude of time is only possible through limitations of a single time grounding it. The original representation of time must therefore be given as unlimited.”⁸ As unlimited, time has only one dimension, i.e., succession. “Different times are only parts of one and the same time.”⁹ Succession and simultaneity becomes a series of memories from past to present and from future to present. It seems that no two things can remain (persist or endure) simultaneously because only things that exist necessarily, exist simultaneously. Kant,

of course, is confronting the question of how cognition can distinguish between sameness (unity) and difference (discreteness). The answer lies in the *a priori* structures of understanding, his second argument for subjective time.

Heidegger's argument is that while the function of the transcendental aesthetic is to expose the ontological perception, which makes possible the knowledge of the being of a thing *a priori*, time as a "pure" form or idea in the mind can never get beyond the subject. Time can only be understood in relation to space because time is the form of inner space. Heidegger writes, "That which in experiencing the phenomena is held in view from the first, although unthematically and unobjectively, is pure succession [*Aufeinander*]. Time, therefore, is the form of inner sense, that is, of our intuition of ourselves and of our inner states" (GA 3: 47/51). For Kant, time and space refer to two distinct regions of experience. However, time becomes the "formal" condition *a priori* of all phenomena. The more that time is subjective, the more original and extensive is the freedom from limitation of the subject. But

if transcendental imagination is to be the primordial ground of human subjectivity taken in its unity and totality, then it must also make possible a faculty on the order of pure sensible reason. But pure sensibility, according to the universal signification in which it must be taken for the laying of the foundation of metaphysics, is time. (GA 3: 175/178)

Heidegger's point is that because the transcendental imagination is the origin of pure sensible intuition, pure intuition (and thus time) arises from the transcendental imagination. However, it seems impossible that time as pure sensibility can form a unity with the "I think." Pure thought has its roots in transcendental imagination, which Heidegger argues *is* time. Furthermore, sensibility and finite intuition are the same. "As a sensible faculty, the imagination is included among the faculties of knowledge, which are divided between sensibility and understanding" (GA 3: 128/135). The imagination as a mode of intuition does not need

itself to be present, “the imagination does not intuit what it apprehends in its act as something actually on hand” (GA 3: 128/135). It is independent or free of its objects. In other words, it is spontaneous. And because Heidegger already defended the idea of a receptiveness associated with spontaneity, it is also formative. As a result, if time remains an intuition, i.e., time as *form*, then knowledge of the world remains within the cathedral of the mind. Heidegger sees the consequence of this type of formalism submitting to systems of total rationalization equated with the array of technological apparatus, including the hydrogen bomb, a technology that can potentially eradicate humanity.

Time-Space as the Horizon of Being

Heidegger is not asking why human beings create such technologies, but what are the conditions that give rise to such technologies. Deepening the question of Being in “Time and Being” he subverts Augustine’s question on time where he asks, what then is Being? Is Being a thing? Is it an ‘is’? *Is* Being at all? Does *It* have a duration of time? The answers to the questions point in three directions: philosopher-artist Paul Klee, philosopher-poet Georg Trakl, and philosopher-physicist Werner Heisenberg.¹⁰ Heidegger recognized that Heisenberg’s “uncertainty principle” could solve reductive scientific objectivity inherited from Kant *via* Newton. For Newton, time and space are absolute. Time is an entity that we just occupy. The void is the space wherein motion takes place and matter is positioned therein. The void is infinite and universal; it is pure nothingness. Because space is pure nothingness, it engenders a coloniality of land as *terra nullius* (empty land) leading to the imperial appropriation of Indigenous lands and the subsequent privatization of natural resources. Heisenberg radically transforms static notions of objective epistemology by contextualizing scientific inquiry where the scientist as observer embodies the empirical process of instrumentation.¹¹

Physicist Karen Barad agrees that quantum theory, relativity, and quantum field theory offer a critical alternative to Newtonian physics and its totalizing metaphysics. Although we associate reciprocal indeterminacy with Heisenberg, she claims that entanglements of objects

and agencies of observation were already at play as a general relation in Bohr's "principle of complementarity."¹² Reciprocal indeterminacy principle states that a given entity can be in (a state of) superposition of different times. "This means that a given particle can be in a state of co-existing at multiple times – for example, yesterday, today, and tomorrow."¹³ Diffraction patterns are a manifestation of a superposition. Superpositions are not a linearity of evenly distributed moments or events but, rather a . . . combination of (different) times.¹⁴ Diffraction patterns, such as wave patterns in the water that ripple and overlap when disturbed by a stone, illustrate how each history coexists with each other.¹⁵ Different times and patterns bleed through each other, overlapping in what she calls "spacetimematterings."

Similarly, in "Time and Being," Heidegger makes the claim that all three categories of time – "has been," "presencing," and "not yet," – enfold and overlap in a unity, which he refers to as time-space. Time itself "is" not. Rather, "true time" is the realm of a three-fold extending that opens up a "pre-spatial" region that first gives a "where" (GA 14: 20–21/ 16). Perdurant determines time and being in their belonging together (GA 14: 7/3). Yet, by constantly passing away, time remains *as* time. Here he gives the example of a human dying: in passing away their time can lead to the notion that time is perishable. However, time remains or perdures as presence. Using Joan Stambaugh's translation, being is "there is." *There is* being and *there is* time. Space and time are, thus, held together or perdure as time-space (GA 14: 18/14). This new dimension of time – the fourth dimension – is no longer associated with the succession of a sequence of nows, nor a prior and posterior now. Space is not an empty void. Nor is it "first and foremost psychological space, *energeia*, *actualitas*, will, but the event of appropriation, or *Ereignis*" (GA 14: 11/7). In short, being as event is an epochal overlapping occurrence that is intrinsically linked to time but is itself not bound by time.

For new materialists such as Barad, the certainty of the past and a linear future based on progress have led, on the one hand, to the present state of militarization, colonial power, and capitalism.¹⁶ On

the other hand, quantum physics has the potential to open up radical spaces for exploring the possibilities for change from inside hegemonic systems of domination.¹⁷ Quantum time suggests that time diffracts, returning to itself from within itself. “Diffraction unsettles colonialist assumptions of space and time: beginnings and ends, continuity and discontinuity, interior and exterior.”¹⁸ This means, theoretically at least, that time travels backwards. Retracing is not about going back to what was, but about the “material reconfiguring of spacetimematterings in ways that . . . produce openings, new possible histories by which time-beings might find ways to endure.”¹⁹ Using Heidegger’s language, time-space is “an extending, opening up the four-dimensional realm” (GA 12: 22/PLT 17). This is the event of “appropriation” or *Ereignis* that lets the past and future withhold themselves while extending themselves in a reciprocal relation where overlapping times bleed through each other.

Perduring in Deep Time

This porosity does not mean that history loses its sequentiality entirely. After all, we can hardly deny the fact of the matter that mammoths roamed the earth for thousands of years; they perdure in geological sites and cave drawings that we study and visit today. As new evidence emerges with depleting ice sheets, time diffracts, retelling their story in new ways. David Wood calls these overlapping time-spaces “time-shelters” where times are nested within times. Nestedness means one time-shelter can be set within another, i.e., the past gathers itself into “nests.” With the unearthing/revealing/disclosure of mammoths, we can travel hop into geological time. This time-travel is also tied to “deep time.” Wood explains deep time as coextensive with geological time but operating as the horizon of human Dasein. Where geological time lets us look back to an unimaginable past, deep time refers to the scale of reference when we expand our historicity to geological timescale.²⁰ The woolly mammoth reminds us of our own cosmic time and the possibility of extinction, which has become an existential threat to humanity. We are also faced with the possibility of the mammoth “re-existing” if successfully cloned. Wood calls such

events “tipping points,” events with a nonlinear, uncertain future.²¹ As histories unfold in nonlinear ways, Barad and Wood call for an ethics of remembering such that we take responsibility for our own interpretation of what our lives are and ought to be in a way that we can imagine unimaginable past and future histories.

Perduring in deep time shows up in the work of Robin Wall Kimmerer, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Interweaving Indigenous ways of knowing and scientific knowledge in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, she expresses in poetic and impassioned rhythm how human history is entangled in nature. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger defines nature as a passive intraworldly totality of entities – plants and rock are world poor. Conversely, Kimmerer teaches us that being gives itself in many ways: human-beings, forest-beings, bear-beings, rock-beings. Dichotomies do not exist in the Potawatomi Nation. There is no us/them, black/white, fast/slow, being/nonbeing, either/or. Instead, life perdures in the memory of the earth: “Old-growth cultures, like old-growth forests, have not been exterminated. The land holds their memory and the possibility of regeneration. They are not a matter of ethnicity or history, but of relationships born out of reciprocity between land and people.”²² To use Barad’s language, the forest-being is superpositioned in nonlinear patterns of spacetime-matterings. Perduring in deep time and remembering the language of nature is an interpretative ongoing process that takes seriously other-than-human entities that occupy and share our world.

NOTES

- 1 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ed. Richard McKeon, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 1028b 2–4.
- 2 This term is borrowed from Karen Barad’s theory of spacetime-matterings. The erasure of cultures, peoples, places, and lives can be found in tracing the entanglements that are inscribed into the materiality of the world, such as atomic bombs, violent ruptures, and tears in the fabric of being. Erasures, she argues, are never complete. Their traces always remain. See Karen Barad, “The Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness: Re-turning, Re-membling, and Facing the Incalculable,” *Eco-Destruction: Derrida and Environmental Philosophy*, eds. Matthias Fritsch, Philippe Lynes, and David Wood (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 226.
- 3 Aristotle, *Physics*, 4.11.219b1–2.
- 4 Aristotle, *Physics*, 4.11.218b32.
- 5 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer, Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A30/B46.
- 6 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A30/B46.
- 7 It is worth noting that for Aristotle the law of non-contradiction is the firmest of all principles and without it all knowledge would be impossible. He formulates it thus: “It is impossible for the same thing to belong and not to belong at the same time to the same thing and in the same respect.” See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1005b19–20. Spatial comparisons do seem to yield something like this kind of confidence.
- 8 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A32/B48.
- 9 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B47.
- 10 Karen Barad in her seminal work, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, notes that Niels Bohr was in fact one of the main contributors to quantum physics and won the Nobel Prize in 1922 for his quantum model of the atom, eleven years before Heisenberg won the 1932 Nobel Prize in Physics for “the creation of quantum mechanics.” I don’t think Heidegger’s investigation into the nature of time,

which paralleled the work on quantum physics, can be separated. See Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 399-404.

- 11 See Babette Babich, "Foreword" to Patrick A. Heelan, *The Observable: Heisenberg's Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics*, ed. Babette Babich (New York: Peter Lang, 2016), pp. xv-xxix. For more on observers and quantum mechanics, see Patrick A. Heelan, *Space-Perception and the Philosophy of Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 207-210.
- 12 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 403.
- 13 Barad, "Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness," 218.
- 14 Barad, "Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness," 220.
- 15 Barad, "Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness," 220.
- 16 Barad, "Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness," 207.
- 17 Barad, "Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness," 212.
- 18 Barad, "Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness," 229.
- 19 Barad, "Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness," 213.
- 20 David Wood, *Deep Time, Dark Times: On Being Geologically Human* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 61.
- 21 Wood, *Deep Time, Dark Time*, 18.
- 22 Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 290.

IAIN THOMSON: HEARING THE PRO-VOCATION WITHIN THE PROVOCATION:
HEIDEGGER ON THE WAY TO POST-METAPHYSICAL HUMANISM

Was Heidegger really an antihumanist, as has so often been alleged? For this *Gatherings* “Symposium” on “Heidegger and the Idea of the Human,” I would like to step back and briefly address the vexed question of Heidegger’s relation to humanism, with the aim of clearing up some confusions that militate against recognizing (what I have often argued is) the enduring importance of Heidegger’s thinking.¹ I shall suggest that the widespread caricature of Heidegger as an “antihumanist” relies on a superficial misunderstanding of his more complex relation to humanism. When his actual views are understood, it becomes clear that Heidegger remains essentially humanistic from *Being and Time* (1927) to “The Letter on ‘Humanism’” (1946) and beyond. Indeed, at the very heart of his thinking, *Heidegger is an affirmative thinker of the ontological essence of the human being*, that is, an *ontological humanist* dedicated to disclosively thinking the being definitive of the human being.²

For Heidegger early and late, we human beings come into our own only by *realizing* (in both senses) our ontological essence as world-disclosive Dasein (that is, as beings who actively participate in disclosing the intelligibility of our individual and historical worlds). That the early Heidegger of *Being and Time* fits squarely into the humanistic tradition of “perfectionism” – the philosophical tradition according to which human beings have an ontological essence and our highest ethical fulfillment comes from recognizing, cultivating, and developing that essence – I cannot argue for here (though I did so in detail almost twenty years ago).³ But if Heidegger’s most famous work is recognizably humanistic (even deriving part of its enduring appeal from the fact that the second division of *Being and Time* gives its readers a kind of ontological *Bildungsroman*, a philosophical account of what it means to grow up and take responsibility for our own lives), then how did Heidegger get his reputation for *antihumanism*? That widespread misunderstanding, let me acknowledge, is in some significant measure Heidegger’s own fault.

Here I am not simply thinking of Heidegger's infamous decision to affiliate his thinking with Nazism and so (however inadvertently) with Nazism's rightly opprobrious legacy of horrifyingly *antihuman* mass murder. In the present context, that terrible connection is complicated by the fact that when Heidegger was an active member of the Nazi party, the most obvious philosophical content of his political interventions was to contest, undermine, and seek to transcend mainstream Nazism's neo-Darwinian understanding of the human being in *biological* terms. Even while a Nazi, Heidegger consistently opposed his thinking to the ontologically reductive and empirically flawed metaphysical "biologism" that led directly to the mass-murderous eugenic program of Nazi genocide.⁴ That means (still moving much too quickly here) that Heidegger's Nazi period is philosophically characterized by an *anti-antihumanism*. That anti-antihumanism followed from Heidegger's maturing thinking of the ontological essence of the human being, that is, from his own brand of ontological humanism (as I shall go on to suggest). I realize, of course, that it is provocative to leave such assertions undeveloped and undefended (even when one has done so at length elsewhere).⁵ But that very provocativeness brings me back to my main point.

In suggesting that Heidegger's antihumanist reputation is partly his own fault, I am thinking primarily of his own quite deliberate *provocation* on the topic in his "Letter on 'Humanism'" (not coincidentally, his first public statement outside Germany shortly after the defeat of the Nazis ended the War in Europe). There Heidegger explicitly chose to risk *opposing* his thinking to the entire historical tradition of "humanism" because "the highest determinations of the essence of the human being in humanism still do not realize the authentic worth [or proper dignity, *die eigentliche Würde*] of the human being," with the result that historically humanism "does not set the *humanitas* of the human being high enough" (GA 9: 330/251). In short, Heidegger opposes the historical tradition of humanism because it has not yet thought the authentic essence of the human as *Dasein* – where *Dasein* has been subtly rethought and situated ontohistorically as "an

‘ecstatic’ relation of the essence of the human being [i.e., a relation of Dasein in its “authenticity”] to the truth [i.e., the *alêtheiac* disclosure of being” (GA 9: 332-3/253).

Historically, humanism preconceives the essence of humanity in accordance with the metaphysics of its age: for example, as a mouthpiece of the *logos*, a creation of God, or a rational “subject.”⁶ Humanism’s reductive conceptions of the essence of humanity thus fail to think (let alone recognize their own condition of possibility in) humanity’s true “ecstatic” ontological essence as Dasein, the being who discloses an intelligible world by responsively and creatively disclosing *being* – that dynamic field of intelligibility that “gives itself and refuses itself simultaneously” (GA 9: 335/255), both informing and exceeding all sense-making.⁷ In short, Heidegger’s objection is that, at its very essence, *humanism is not humanistic enough*, since it fails to discover that true (ontohistorical) essence of the human being (viz., our disclosive relation to being as such). Despite acknowledging that his own thinking is “certainly” a “humanism” in this more essential sense, Heidegger explicitly abjures that label owing to “the damage caused by all such terms” (GA 9: 147/241) which carry undeconstructed metaphysical baggage.⁸ Describing his own (more essentially humanistic) thinking *as* “humanism” could too easily reinforce the ready-made metaphysical prejudices whereby the modern tradition preconceives humanity as a “subject” constitutively split off from a world of “objects” (as Sartre himself had mistakenly done in the incredibly popular piece to which Heidegger was responding, and as most philosophers still do today), thereby obscuring humanity’s ontological essence as Dasein (that disclosive *intersection* “between” what modern metaphysics disastrously dichotomizes as subject and object).⁹

Heidegger anticipated that his provocative opposition to traditional humanism would come as “a shock” but, confronting the spreading nihilism of the age, he thought the “risk [*wagen*]” worth taking (GA 9: 346/263) in order to help awaken a deconstructive reflection on the unquestioned metaphysical presuppositions of modern subjectivism and late-modern enframing (to which he traces the growing nihilism of Western humanity’s historical situation). So, was Heidegger’s deliberately

provocative “risk” indeed worth taking?¹⁰ The historical reception of his work that speaks loudest raises doubts on this score (although I cannot rehearse all its details here).¹¹ Put simply, Heidegger’s *deconstruction* of humanism has been mistaken for a mere *destruction* of humanism. But in Heideggerian deconstruction, the negative ground-clearing moment is always in the service of the positive moment of rediscovery or disclosure of the more originary condition.¹² For Heidegger’s provocative opposition to humanism to prove worth the risk, then, the deconstructive reading he initiated needs to uncover a deeper (and quieter) ontological *pro-vocation* (i.e., literally, a “speaking-out” that “calls-forth”), a *speaking-out* of being as it speaks-into (or “claims,” *Anspruch*) the essence of human being (namely, *Dasein*, that historical taking-place of being which, in a world-historical irony, currently threatens to take being’s place, as our modern metaphysical “insurrection” eclipses being and “subjectivism” passes itself off as “humanism”).

Heidegger’s attempt to help provoke this deconstruction only succeeds in uncovering this more essential provocation when “the human being becomes claimed [*angesprochen*] by being” (GA 9: 323/247), that is, when we recognize that being “speaks” into us, its abundant meaningfulness taking shape (always only partially) as the intelligible world we disclose. In the “clearing” (*Lichtung*) of being, the originary “open” of being as such gets “lit up” by a partial metaphysical understanding of the being of entities. But our essence is our standing-out into that prior openness that exceeds any metaphysical closure; this is the “ek-sistence” or *ecstatic* standing-out of *Dasein* as a world-disclosive being (GA 9: 323–24/247). That is why Heidegger says that what *metaphysics* understands as “the ‘essence’ of the human being [really]...lies in ek-sistence [or “standing-out” into being]” (GA 9: 325/247).¹³ Being as such – encountered and disclosed in its apparently inexhaustible excessiveness – is “a treasure withheld from [metaphysics] and yet held before it, the richness of its own proper wealth” (GA 9: 331–2/252–3), because metaphysics is itself founded on *partly* disclosing being’s polysemic richness but repeatedly mistakes that partial grasp for the whole truth. In Heidegger’s terms: “Being... gives itself and refuses itself simultaneously” (GA 9: 335/255), offering

itself to disclosure and allowing itself to be partly captured conceptually while also exceeding and overflowing every such partial grasp of it, even those of the most rigorous and historically enduring metaphysical *ontotheologies* that seek to capture and stabilize it once and for all.¹⁴

In other words, metaphysics repeatedly fails to recognize that ontological excessiveness which it cannot fully capture but which nevertheless makes its partial disclosures possible. Being's inherent richness thus enjoins us instead to move beyond metaphysical attempts to capture being once-and-for-all in any metaphysical ontotheology so as to begin to do justice to being's inexhaustible polysemy in and as *thinking*. Heidegger thus points us toward being's vaunted "mystery" (*Geheimnis*, the gathering of polysemic being into its home, "the onefold of its manifold dimensions" [GA 9: 315/241]). Being remains "simple" and yet the way it happens (or "prevails") is always unique, whether that prevailing happens for an entire epoch or in the life of an individual human being.¹⁵ Being happens as a subtle hinting, a quiet beckoning that calls to be creatively and responsively disclosed by us. "In this way being remains full of mystery, the simple nearness of an unobtrusive prevailing. This nearness happens as language itself" (GA 9: 333/253.) Provoked by Heidegger's "opposition" to metaphysical "humanism," can we learn to hear that deeper pro-vocation, being's reaching out to be said?¹⁶ Helping us learn to do so is the aim of Heidegger's (all-too-quickly sketched) *phenomenological* descriptions, which seek (in the first place) to help attune his readers to *being* as the "noth-ing" whereby that which is not-yet-a-thing beckons (in its inchoate suggestiveness) to be disclosed.¹⁷ In short, Heidegger's aim is not nihilism but its transcendence in an essentially pluralistic, post-metaphysical humanism.¹⁸ Let us be thus provoked.

NOTES

- 1 See e.g. Iain Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). (Owing to the extreme brevity required of this piece, I have had to consign most of the support for my views to these references.)
- 2 For an explanation and defense of Heidegger's ontohistorically contextualized essentialism, see Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, chs. 1–2.
- 3 See Iain Thomson, "Heidegger's Perfectionist Philosophy of Education in *Being and Time*," *Continental Philosophy Review* 37, no. 4 (2004): 439–67. Heidegger himself argues in his "Letter on 'Humanism'" that *Being and Time* was already moving toward that humanism I have called *ontological perfectionism*: "Where else does 'care' tend but in the direction of bringing human beings back to their essence? What else does that mean than that [biological] man (*homo* [i.e., the human species thought anthropobiologically]) [should] become human (*humanus* [i.e., authentically proper to the human as such])? Thus *humanitas* really does remain the concern for this thinking [which dwells in the claim being makes on human beings, i.e., seeks to speak from out of being's speaking into us]. For this is humanism: to be sensitive and to care that human beings be human [*menschlich*] and not inhumane, 'inhuman,' that is, outside their essence" (GA 9: 319/243–24).
- 4 Some might think that, insofar as Nazism is forever defined by that genocidal vision (as well it should be), Heidegger's own Nazism remains (paradox notwithstanding) markedly anti-Nazi. Unfortunately, the possibility that Heidegger might have accepted genocide on the basis of different arguments cannot be entirely refuted (although this is a topic for another time).
- 5 See e.g. Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, ch. 3; Thomson, "Heidegger's Nazism in the Light of his early *Black Notebooks*: A View from America," in *Zur Hermeneutik der 'Schwarzen*

Hefte: Heidegger Jahrbuch II, eds. Alfred Denker and Holger Zaborowski (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2017), 184–209; and *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, esp. chs. 2–3.

- 6 “Every humanism is either grounded in a metaphysics or made to be the ground of one. Every determination of the essence of the human being that already presupposes an interpretation of [the being of] entities without asking about the truth of being [as such], whether knowingly or not, is metaphysical... Accordingly, every humanism remains metaphysical” (GA 9: 321/245).
- 7 See *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, ch. 3, and below.
- 8 “Is this not a humanism in the most extreme sense? Certainly. It is a humanism that thinks the humanity of the human being from out of the nearness to being” (GA 9: 342–43/261). Heidegger makes clear that he is against trying to rehabilitate the word “humanism,” owing to “the damage caused by all such terms” (GA 9: 147/241), that is, terms with metaphysical baggage that remains uninterrogated and hence still in effect, and which thus calls for an ontohistorical deconstruction, which clarifies the metaphysical baggage of such a term in order to help rediscover its more originary meaningfulness – where more “originary” means not only historically antecedent but also, and more importantly, still capable of *inspiring* meaningful disclosure now and in the future.
- 9 Sartre inadvertently ignited the whole controversy when he blithely proclaimed that “Existentialism is a Humanism [*L’existentialisme est un humanisme*]” in the very title of his (almost unimaginably) famous essay from 1946 (to which Heidegger’s “Letter on ‘Humanism’” obliquely responds). Sartre’s notoriously muddled “definition” of existentialism went wrong at its second step, falsely glossing Heidegger’s view that “existence precedes essence” with the non-equivalent claim that “subjectivity must be the starting point,” and thereby immediately showing that Sartre had failed to understand *Being and Time*’s boldest ambition in Division One, namely, to undermine the modern dualisms that stem from Descartes’ influential establishment of a subject/

object dichotomy. (Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Humanism of Existentialism,” in *Essays in Existentialism*, ed. Wade Baskin [Secaucus, NJ: The Citadel Press, 1965]: 34.) In his “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” Heidegger’s objections to humanism are largely directed against modern “subjectivism,” the modern subject’s over-compensatory attempts to bridge the alleged ontological gap between subjects and objects by establishing “mastery over the totality of what-is” (GA 5: 92/QCT 132) by developing “our unlimited power for calculating, planning, and molding [or “breeding,” *Züchtung*] all things” (GA 5: 94/QCT 135) as we seek to establish ourselves as the being “who gives the measure and provides the guidelines for everything that is” (GA 5: 94/QCT 134). Thus modern metaphysical *subjectivism* is an ongoing historical process which Heidegger soon recognized was developing historically into late-modern “enframing.” On this point, see *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, 55–64; and Thomson, “Post/Modernity? How to Separate the Stereo from the Styrofoam,” *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 11 (2021): 183–97.

- 10 Such provocations do not work well in the age of unthinking technological reaction, where they often set off prejudice-reaffirming chain-reactions that, at best, eventually lead a few to think through the matter for themselves. (Unsurprisingly, Heidegger hoped for more from his readers. But did he realize that his deliberate “shock” would be *amplified* by the fact that this was a former Nazi coming out against humanism? That is far from clear.) How many were actually awoken to pursue Heidegger’s vision of a more essential humanism? And how many were lost in those “inevitable misinterpretations” he predicted (by which his non-readers assumed he was merely providing “a defense of the inhuman and a glorification of barbaric brutality,” “irrationalism,” “atheism,” and even *nihilism*). He anticipated and rejected such conformist non- or misreadings of his text as “simply mirrorings of what one believes one knows before one reads” (GA 9: 346/263) – that is, as hermeneutic examples of projectively

imposing one's preexisting prejudices onto a text rather than responsively and creatively disclosing its manifold riches (and thus as telling failures to be essentially human!).

- 11 In the briefest sketch: Heidegger's deliberately provocative opposition to humanism – as part of an attempt to think a more essential humanism (which would deconstructively uncover and transcend the nihilistic metaphysical prejudices of modernity and late modernity) – was subsequently taken up and radicalized by famous French Heideggerians like Foucault and Derrida. Both thinkers ventured even further into a deliberate rhetorical antihumanism, which each deployed as a wedge with which to emphasize their own philosophical originality with respect to Sartre's "existential generation" (whose long post-War shadow these French Heideggerians sought to think their way beyond, in part by returning to a more *faithful* reading of Heidegger, that is, more critical and creative readings that sought to develop Heidegger's thinking even further than he did). Foucault was later asked about his notorious "death of the human" thesis from the conclusion of *The Order of Things* (originally published in 1966), where Foucault notoriously suggested that our taken for granted privileging of "humanity" is only a recent historical invention, a contingent development perhaps fated to be washed away by the next historical wave like a drawing in the sand at the edge of the sea; less than a decade later, Foucault reportedly said that even he had now come to find that antihumanistic conclusion "too pessimistic" and "apocalyptic." (See Simeon Wade, *Foucault in California* [Berkeley: Heyday, 2019]: 86–87. Cf. Jacques Derrida's more carefully nuanced stance in "The Ends of Man" [1969], in *Margins of Philosophy* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982].) Much more troublingly, the controversy was reignited almost two decades later when the self-described French "new philosophers" tried to mobilize their own regressive return to Kantian modernism by attacking the "antihumanism" of the previous generation of these French Heideggerians, which they

- further exaggerated in their polemical attacks. (See e.g. Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *French Philosophy of the Sixties: An Essay on Antihumanism* [Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990 (originally published in 1985)].)
- 12 See Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 141 ff. The only way beyond metaphysics is to pass through it; “every inquiry into ‘being,’ even one into the truth of being, must at first introduce [or lead-into, *einführen*] its inquiry as a ‘metaphysical’ one” (GA 9: 322/245).
- 13 Heidegger’s oblique rejection of Sartre’s aforementioned confusion is obvious; “the reversal of a metaphysical statement remains a metaphysical statement” (GA 9 328/250).
- 14 See Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, ch. 1.
- 15 The later Heidegger’s reliance on such “prevailing” (*walten*) became the focus of Derrida’s final deconstructions of Heidegger (in *The Beast and the Sovereign 2*), because for Derrida the idea of something beyond language lending itself to language (so as to warrant particular claims) was untenably committed to postulating being as “the myth of the transcendental signified” (as he famously put it in *Of Grammatology*). But Derrida’s critique depends on his own axiomatic adoption of metaphysical postulates borrowed from Saussure’s linguistics, resulting in a *linguistic internalism* that seeks to derive meaning entirely from the myriad differences between words instead of from any extra-linguistic reference (as in Heidegger’s view; see Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, ch. 3).
- 16 To do so is to recognize that Heidegger’s deconstruction of humanism seeks to help creatively disclose a more originary, post-metaphysical humanism. This *ontological humanism* understands human being not by naively adopting its own epoch’s metaphysical understanding of the being of entities (i.e., its ruling ontotheology) but, instead, by thinking the essence of the human being in terms of the truth of being as such (that is, the ineradicable *alêtheiac* tension between revealing and concealing). Hence Heidegger holds that “the essence of humanity is too little

attended to and never thought in its provenance [*Herkunft*, i.e., being's "coming-here" *to and as* Dasein], which as the essential provenance [or coming-here] for humanity's historical unfolding, always remains the essential future [*Wesenszukunft*, the essence of the to-come, the coming toward us of essence, i.e., being's dynamic historical disclosure and unfolding]" (GA 9: 323/247). This is to think of being not as ineffable but as *inexhaustible*, repeatedly unfolding in those events that join being and human being together by bringing both of them into their own and so transforming them beyond any finality or totality of form or comprehension.

- 17 See Thomson, "Nothing (*Nichts*)," in *The Heidegger Lexicon*, ed. Mark Wrathall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 520–28. As Heidegger nicely hints in the "Letter on 'Humanism,'" the way the "nothing happens...through thoughtful saying" is "what in the future continually has to be thought" (GA 9: 362/274–75).
- 18 See Thomson, "Heideggerian Phenomenology and the Postmetaphysical Politics of Ontological Pluralism," in *Phenomenology and the Political*, eds. S. West Gurley and Geoffrey Pfeifer (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 19–42.

RESPONSE: KEVIN AHO

One of the themes that recurs in this symposium is the idea that “facticity” (*Faktizität*) is always in relational tension with “transcendence” (*Transzendenz*), where we struggle to create or fashion ourselves against the limitations and constraints of our embodiment, our socioeconomic circumstances, and the specific time and history that we find ourselves in. If facticity designates the simple givenness, the “that it is” (*dass es ist*) of Dasein, then transcendence reveals how it is against the backdrop of this givenness that we exist, projecting meanings for ourselves and pressing into possible ways of being. Existence, then, is always an expression of transcendence; it refers to how we “go beyond,” “surpass” or “exceed” (*übersteigen*) our givenness by taking a stand on it, interpreting it, and giving it meaning.

This tension is, as Jesús Adrián Escudero reminds us, what distinguishes Dasein from the “impoverished” (*verarmt*) nature of animals, a nature that is, for Heidegger, invariably trapped in the necessity of instincts. Unlike the animal, Dasein is always “beyond . . . and alien to nature” because it is free to give meaning to beings (GA 26: 212/166). But this meaning-giving freedom is not radical or absolute; it is always situated and constrained by the contingencies of facticity. This notion of situated freedom helps illuminate how the categories and concepts we employ to make sense of things are never fixed and static; they are always subject to “possibilizing” (*ermöglichen*), to being unsettled or disrupted by the epochal movements of history. Jill Drouillard makes this point by exploring how our conceptions of sex and gender are flexible and unstable and that the meanings we attribute to them are already embedded in a particular time. And this sense of the fluidity of meaning helps loosen the ways in which traditions stubbornly cling to the metaphysics of “what is.” This has the power to transform our understanding of nonbinary, trans, and queer identities. And as Tricia Glazebrook and Róisín Lally point out, it also opens a critical space to challenge the destructive and exploitative logics of late modern capitalism and re-envision our relationship to nature and to the earth itself.

Iain Thomson suggests that this idea can also help us better understand Heidegger's famous critique of humanism which views the essence of humankind in terms of substance – as the rational animal, the spiritual-ensouled-body, or the *ego cogito*. Heidegger rejects this form of humanism “because it does not set the *humanitas* of man high enough” (GA 9: 330/251). To be human is to be bound up in a relational struggle with the historicity of being, a struggle that opens a dynamic field or space of intelligibility. Never fixed or stagnant, it is a pluralizing space, always overflowing and excessive. And, as this symposium suggests, it is emancipatory precisely because it holds open the horizon of what “may be” (*Mög-liche*), that releases or frees possibilities, meanings, and ways of being that are all too often concealed by the calcified norms and assumptions of tradition.

RESPONSE: JILL DROUILLARD

I've been tasked with reading the other contributions through the lens of my initial response regarding Heidegger's thoughts on being a sexed or gendered human being. Both Aho and I refer to Heidegger's early work on the hermeneutics of facticity, and I was struck by the significance of his question regarding our ability to escape the prejudices of our time, particularly as they feed into preconceived notions of sex and gender. Aho notes that Heidegger begins with the “starting point” (*Ausgang*) of “I am.” I am thrown into a world where universal signifiers are already set up and values are pre-determined – I am thrown into a certain historical situation. This historical context is already embedded with pre-existing prejudices of sex or gender. The first thing that “I am,” upon my birth, is an assigned sex or gender. Actually, thanks to modern technology, my parent(s) can know my sex or gender at around 12 weeks, leaving months to plan for the decor that is appropriate to my gender “reveal” (which is also a “conceal”). As Glazebrook, a contributor to this symposium and one of the pioneers of thinking Heidegger within a feminist lens, demonstrated roughly twenty years ago, we are thrown into a world already demarcated by gender.¹

Sex or gender (and I say “sex or gender” because I don’t have enough space to properly define these terms) is paramount to our shared historical context, a context that as Aho notes, defines our “I am” and our “I must.” Yet this shared historical context is often taken for granted, as the dominant narrative sieges meaning to the detriment of marginal histories. We are predisposed to an understanding of what matters to us, but certain groups of individuals orientate themselves differently in their circumspective mode of concern. What “shows up” in the world for you might not be in my horizon. Here, someone’s “I must” may be contrary to “I am.” I am thinking primarily of what it means to be queer in a heteronormative world.²

So, how do we escape the prejudices of our time? As a starting point, listen to marginalized voices of knowledge production. What is being concealed in your revealing of truth? How does your grounding of sex or gender relate to an attunement to Being, or foreclose such attunement? Heidegger’s historical ontology entails being receptive to Being (via the “call of conscience” or “the clearing”). I take such receptiveness to be an attunement to becoming/change. Thus, I agree with Thomson’s comments about Heidegger critiquing humanism for not being human enough, not being receptive enough to the disclosiveness of Being. Sartre declares his atheism outright, thus foreclosing such receptiveness. Dasein is supposed to be disclosive of Being, should be claimed by Being, yet too often Dasein acts like “they do” and follows the status quo. Dasein gets trapped in a humanistic tradition, bogged down by an Enlightenment hangover that views human beings as superior based on reason or calculative thinking. Glazebrook discusses the how of this trapping in her remarks on capitalism and civilization as she demonstrates how capital logic conceals other modes of revealing.

Throughout these different contributions, we see how possibilities are foreclosed by attempts at grounding. What is tricky is that we must necessarily “ground the ground.” How to do this while keeping in mind that other grounds are possible? Overall, the question of sex or gender is intricately tied to a question of Being, so we must be attuned/receptive to both.

RESPONSE: JESÚS ADRIÁN ESCUDERO

Among the different contributions on Heidegger's post-metaphysical humanism (Iain Thomson), on the issue of being gendered humans (Jill Drouillard), or on the pedagogical value of the hermeneutics of facticity (Kevin Aho), I would like to focus on one aspect that might be missing in Tricia Glazebrook's account of capital and technology.

Capital is basically understood as physical capital. From the perspective of the classical industrial paradigm, people tend to be reduced "to wage-earning consumers whose purpose is individual accumulation of private wealth" (Glazebrook, 171). This is one way of viewing and assessing capital. However, people might also be wage-earning workers who want to provide a better life for themselves and their beloved ones. But I would like to go a step further: we now live in a society of knowledge and information. This means that people are increasingly hired for their human capital and not so much for their physical strength (as it used to be in the industrial era). While robots, machines and artificial intelligence are rapidly replacing human force, people's education, skills and innovative capacity become more and more important. And who is the owner of such human capital? The workers themselves. In the era of the industrial revolution the means of production used to be controlled by entrepreneurs or company owners. But in the present digital era, the knowledge, the experience, and the skills belong to the workers. They can take their human capital with them anywhere and use it for any purpose they might have: starting their own business, creating a cooperative, designing collaborative projects, working for a non-profit organization, or joining the five millions of Americans that after the Covid era are part of the "Great Resignation" movement (although I prefer the expression the "Great Re-signification").

Technology might not serve only as a tool for the logic of capital and a source of extracting natural resources (be it our national or foreign resources). This is one side of the coin that is undeniable in the light of our current ecological crisis. And, of course, we need to be vigilant and critically point out the level of human poverty and natural destruction associated with any kind of technological activity. However, the other

side of technology is its constant capacity for innovation. We are passing from an economy based for more than a century upon gas and coal to more efficient, clean and sustainable sources of energy. This transition is widely due to technological innovation and enables us to develop alternative ways of dwelling on our planet. As Heidegger reminded us, quoting Hölderlin's *Patmos*, "Where danger is, salvation grows."

RESPONSE: TRICIA GLAZEBROOK

What does it mean to be human? In this symposium, we speak of identity, self, the possibility to choose who one is, and of critical analysis, and even opportunity of decision to find a different path than the hegemon's "this-is-how-it-is" pretense of fixed history.

Kevin Aho is the only one of us to show how it is to engage emergent thinkers in this process of being human as self-in-a-world and self-in-word. For we speakers in this symposium are only as we say, talking to ourself; AKA thinking, the origin of action. The self is thus derivative of community – first there must be others, then we can talk.

Jill Drouillard's focus on groundlessness and the desire for ground also implicitly emphasizes this aloneness of community presence in the invisibility of gender – the being-here as not being, godlessness, when anywhere, anytime, one can speak of "man" and immediately erase me, make me a tag-on at best, make me first with children, as if I never grew up, as if "hu" is redundant and there is only "man," who can be hu-, even super- and bat-. . .while I am, on a good day, almost human, or an exception. Competent in math, I enjoyed an "exceptional" status, and did not want to lose it through recognition that women are just as good as men in math, given the same education. Heidegger's conception of Dasein – what I saw in his truth essay – made me want to try to push for a different "event" in which gender is not a determinant of value.

This is important in Jesús Adrián Escudero's account of human beings and animals, that is not at all offensive to me to compare to gender denigration – other animals, trees, mountains. . . "nature" in full is where human beings live as an especially destructive species, though people contribute to this destruction disturbingly disproportionately.

Indeed, to be human means to be open to the givenness of things, thus to live in a world of meaning with the possibility to take an active, transformative stance toward the context into which Dasein is thrown. My contribution identified some specific human contexts in which just such an active, transformative stance is called for.

At the same time, Róisín Lally emphasizes the importance of listening in thinking, toward an ontological shift that recognizes time outside the conception, in the age of technology, of time as a sequence of “nows.” Rather, time is Aristotle’s paradox of that which is both perishable and constant. This is the possibility of a new beginning that is not driven by capital schedules of month-end and year-end recording of financial gains and losses but respects the cycles of life and is aware of human being that can only speak as a listener to its ecosystem in all its glories and hurts.

Iain Thomson defends Heidegger against the claim that he is antihumanist by uncovering a much deeper humanism in which Heidegger sees human being as an affirmative thinker of the essence of human being that takes responsibility for its own life. Heidegger’s humanist puts being into question and pro-vocates against the understanding of human being in its time.

Together, these contributions of what it means to be human as a Heideggerian provide a diverse range of analyses in which I see a desire for change, for justice, deeper attentiveness, and critical thinking that was deeply embedded in Heidegger’s writing to understand human wonder of being and ecosystems, in which Dasein is but a brief questioner who might envision a better world.

In conclusion, I answer to Jesús Adrián Escudero’s inspiring response to my work. I agree capital should not be considered primarily as physical and have long argued it to be a *logic* that defines human living as working for money to succeed. Yet I am more cynical than Adrián. “Human capital,” like “human resources,” follows the logic of capital by seeing people as labor value. The cost of education-based human capital in the U.S. thickens the poverty/color/class line, yet the working-class too have knowledge, skills, and capacity. Poverty

is not countered by “innovation,” a trending word often found near “entrepreneur,” amongst corporations and industries built on capital logic, and in research aiming at climate mitigation using well financed hi-tech, such as nuclear power or fusion, or space technologies. Heidegger did not support this kind of “saving power” that overruns nature, and he withdrew into *phusis* as an opening for thinking not limited by the essence of technology that has enabled technoscience that in turn has enabled capital logic. The saving power can quite probably not be found in mainstream, middle-class employment in the U.S. that functions largely in the logic of capital and, for example, encourages little vigilance concerning poverty or knowledge of climate-related erosion of Africa’s food security. Such is the logic of capital that defines how contemporary human being in the global North understands itself. Thank you to Adrián for drawing attention to this understanding that needs deep change, a homecoming to live driven not by the destructive logic of capital but of the logic of care for people, other life forms, and ecosystems.

RESPONSE: RÓISÍN LALLY

Perduring in deep time is not a metaphysical claim. I agree with Iain Thomson that Heidegger is a humanist from beginning to end. Thomson’s argument balances on a knife-edge between interpretations of Heidegger as either a reductive metaphysical biologist or reductive metaphysical realist. The tension lands on a post-metaphysical humanism. This is similar to what I call perduring in deep time, the ability to imaginatively travel hop from a geological past to an unimaginable future. Because time is our most important frame of reference, it stands behind our reality structuring. Our time survives from the Eurocentric concept of time as abstract and universal. But, as Thomson argues, time offers only a partial truth. Thomson’s contribution captures this partiality as a “pro-vocation” and challenge to think about how that which is not-yet-a-thing calls to be disclosed. For example, although we cannot ever know the extent of the environmental crises, we can speculate about the possible consequences.

Postmodernity's allergy to any form of teleology gives rise to crippling anxiety, particularly in young people, as Kevin Aho's biographical account of his students shows. As I try to help my own students navigate a world that stands on the brink of atomic war, where weather patterns are causing mass migrations, and ecocide seems to foreclose on any possible future, thrown into the world not of their making, my students have said they feel paralyzed. Aho's point is that while they cannot escape the prejudices of their tradition, they have a responsibility to interrogate the origin from which such prejudices arise. Origins, however, are slippery. For Trish Glazebrook, the origin of the human being – Dasein – is co-constituted from the very beginning in the site or “place” (*archē*) of the womb. The womb is the “landing-site” and the first place the body finds itself co-structuring. Thus, human Dasein is always already embodied.¹ Jill Drouillard notes that the space of Dasein, not yet human, is neither sexed nor gendered. However, Dasein, as pre-spatial, harbors within itself the full spectrum of sexes and genders. This pre-spatiality has no exact starting point, and according to Glazebrook, life is a continuous process that is actualized in an infinite circularity between *archē* and *telos*. This circadian rhythm is a circular logic of origin and end, cause, and purpose. She applies her theory to the economy as an alternative to capitalism. Reciprocal circular economy is a process from the local farmer to the planetary global market, from human-beings to nonhuman-beings. This reciprocity unravels the west from coloniality. Perduring in deep time calls us to return to multiple pasts and retell the story differently but also to imagine and indigenize futures such that the stories will have been retroactively told not only by the oppressed but also in accord with the rhythm of non-human beings and in so doing decolonizes time and being.

RESPONSE: IAIN THOMSON: ONTOPOLITICOSEXUAL PRO(-)VOCATIONS

I only have space to respond to a few of my colleagues' diverse and thoughtful interventions on "Heidegger and the idea of the human." Let me set out from one of Kevin Aho's nicely provocative questions: I think Heidegger's anti-cosmopolitanism cannot be reduced to anti-Semitism, though matters perhaps look differently from the high desert of New Mexico, where Heidegger partly anticipates our indigenous peoples' critiques of the cosmopolitan erasure of their own languages and traditions, which emerge from and preserve a closer connection and more sustainable attunement to nature, as Tricia Glazebrook shows in her own important response and Róisín Lally nicely reiterates in her conclusion. I have nonetheless argued that Heidegger's anti-Semitic view of nomadism *is* "virulently ignorant," so to help think nomadism futurally I would turn instead to Levinas's more suggestive (post-Heideggerian) envisioning of an earthly "wandering" that reflects a greater rather than a lesser attunement to the source of meaningfulness.¹ Indeed, while Heidegger's immense importance for ecology has long been recognized, such efforts also need to be critiqued and supplemented with the insights of Levinas, Derrida, and many others, even as we hold onto the later Heidegger's crucial (and still provocatively untimely) insight *that environmental devastation and capitalism both follow from metaphysical enframing* and so require a correspondingly "deep" *ecophenomenological* response at this ontohistorical level (as I have shown in detail elsewhere); in addition to the more direct responses we also need to address their devastating symptoms.²

Aho's provocative conception of *radical wakefulness* – which I envision as a ruthless deconstruction of ontotheologies and what Derrida recognized as their "carnophallogocentric" reinforcements – encourages me to pick up on Jill Drouillard's insightful interventions on "Heidegger on being a sexed or gendered human being," responding especially to Drouillard's timely and important call to bring Heidegger more thoughtfully into relation to the historically important LGBTQ+ movements. Supplementing Drouillard, Derrida reads Heidegger's thinking of Dasein as a "pre-dual sexuality," not neutral or neutralized

in its sex or gender but instead as a primal, polysexual, and multigendered potency not yet metaphysically dichotomized into heteronormative categories (or any other of those brittle and rigid dualisms that require constant reactionary reinforcement to stabilize and defend).⁵ As I showed above, the later Heidegger's postmetaphysical humanism thinks being as conceptually inexhaustible, as repeatedly informing and yet always exceeding our most encompassing (and apparently immutable) conceptual categories. To think *sexuality* (or the *being sexual* of the human being) in the later Heidegger's terms is thus to think sexuality as inherently *queer*; that is, as an original sexual excessiveness impossible ever to fully capture in any dichotomy or broader set of fixed categories – hence the great importance of that wonderfully postmodern “plus,” a powerful placeholder for that *futural* emergence in which being takes place disclosively.⁴

In short, if *being as such is inherently polysemic* (in its inexhaustible difference, as the later Heidegger convincingly shows), then our sexed and gendered being is similarly polysemic. This means our approach to sex and gender should never have been to “account for deviations from the norm” but, instead, to ask how such contingent and repressive “norms” get established and reinforced in the first place (and repeatedly), and what deconstructive thinking can do here (as elsewhere) to help restore an ontologically receptive openness that is both more liberatory and more in tune with being (that is, truer and more natural than our current metaphysical conceptions of “truth” and “nature”). The relentless deconstruction of mutually reinforcing metaphysical binaries set into motion by Heidegger still has much to contribute here, which also means that this ongoing deconstruction will continue to excavate powerfully liberatory energies, embodiments, and forms of life, and so should seek (following in the footsteps of Drouillard, Derrida, Foucault, Butler, and so many others) to thoughtfully help encourage these repressed, miscategorized, obscured, and unrecognized sexualities to proliferate and develop freely, while also deconstructing the reactionary forces that rise up to repress such futural emergence (*nihilistic* forces of reaction that seek to prevent more meaningful futures from arriving, arrivals

that always need our disclosive participation). In light of the increasingly murderous war against transgender folks in particular, moreover, this ongoing task of liberatory deconstruction takes on a renewed urgency today.⁵ Such urgent issues need to continue to be thought in their suggestive intersections and tensions with increasingly pressing environmental disasters, threats to indigenous communities, the ongoing war against non-human animals, and all the other wars against being's nascently postmodern refusal to be confined to obsolete, repressive, and nihilistic metaphysical categories.

All of these murderous wars of reactionary nihilism are driven in part by a reaction against the unsettling anxiety that initially comes from recognizing that being overflows all our seemingly fixed categories, inevitably complicating the easy answers such categories falsely underwrite. Those who have not learned to bear the anxiety that comes from staying open to being's polysemic excess (and so who have not learned to tap into the disclosive creativity that such openness enables) often rush toward conformist authoritarianisms (patriarchal, heteronormative, cis-gendered, neurotypical, etc.) which uniformly promise to reinstate the old repressive categories, carelessly (if not sadistically) crushing all those caught in the interstices of that outdated world they seek vainly to bring back, all those whose very existence embodies being's struggle to help a more livable postmodern future to arrive and survive. Remember: *Being neither commands nor stays silent but only hints* (to paraphrase Heidegger's Heraclitus, who recognizes that *nature loves to hide*, never fully entering into the light of any existing historical world). This means that there will almost always be more than one meaningful way to answer being's call by picking up on and creatively disclosing its suggestive hints. As a result, what I have called Heidegger's postmetaphysical humanism – his deliberately “risky” quest to help human beings learn to embrace our defining openness to being by teaching us to hear and disclose being's polysemic hints both responsively and creatively – remains not just an important philosophical and pedagogical struggle but an ineliminably *political* one as well. (Let us be thus provoked, repeatedly, to think responsively and creatively.)

NOTES

DROUILLARD

- 1 Tricia Glazebrook, "Heidegger and Ecofeminism," in *Feminist Interpretations of Martin Heidegger*, eds. Nancy J. Holland and Patricia Huntington (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2001).
- 2 See Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2006).

LALLY

- 1 Tricia Glazebrook, "Architecture against Mortality: Building Origins," *Interfaces* 21/22 (2003): 52.

THOMSON

- 1 See Thomson, "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy," *Inquiry* 47:4 (2004): 380–412. Here I would emphasize the importance of Derrida's deconstruction of both Heidegger's and Levinas's untenable attempts to dichotomize human being from all other forms of animal life (in Derrida's brilliant *The Animal that Therefore I Am* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2008]). If we had time for a fuller discussion of the important issues he raises, I would ask Jesús Adrián Escudero how he might respond to such a critique (on the ontological question of *animality*), given his own adoption of a seemingly intellectualist (and so potentially non-human animal excluding) view that human existence is defined by the ability to endorse or reject a normative background.
- 3 See Jacques Derrida, "Geschlecht I: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, trans. P. Kamuf and E. Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 14.
- 4 Heidegger demonstrates that "love is love is love is love is love is love is love is love" (as Lin-Manuel Miranda poetically disclosed it). Indeed, with Arendt's help, Heidegger thinks ontological love

so broadly that it includes not only erotic love but also familial love of children, pedagogical love, therapeutic love, love of the friend, our love of artworks, our love of nature, and much more. See Iain Thomson, "Thinking Love: Heidegger and Arendt," *Continental Philosophy Review* 50, no. 4 (2017): 453-78.

- 5 Currently, authoritarian reactionaries calling themselves "conservatives" in Texas, Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee, Arizona, and Ohio are passing laws that criminalize the life-saving medical treatments needed by transgendered youth. (I mean "life saving" literally, because without family and community support, the attempted suicide rate for trans youths is a horrifyingly high 42%, which drops to a still terrible 18% for those with such support. Criminalizing these youths' attempts to have their identities recognized is thus quite predictably going to drive up that suicide rate. Since "murder" means *unjustified killing*, this is murder, plain and simple. See the "2015 U.S. Transgender Survey Report" [<https://www.ustranssurvey.org/reports#USTS>, accessed 27 March 2022] and Samantha Michaels, "Texas' Anti-Trans Crusade Is Spreading," *Mother Jones*, 17 March 2022. It is terribly ironic that the occasional successes of trans women athletes increasingly get deployed as an anti-trans wedge issue (or gateway to transphobic policies), moreover, because the aforementioned laws seek to prevent trans youth from blocking the very puberty-inducing hormones those opposed to trans athletes object to (!), setting up a vicious catch-22 for trans athletes (and so suggesting that the real purpose of these laws is not to resolve problems but instead to punish those whose very being colors outside the metaphysical lines that these reactionaries seek in their murderous ignorance to defend).

CONCLUDING REMARKS: SCOTT CAMPBELL

Allow me to extend my gratitude to all of the participants in this symposium. Both the statements and the responses indicate a broad diversity of views, some of which are drawn directly from Heidegger's texts and others that go well beyond the scope of what Heidegger said. But even when those views extend beyond Heidegger's own concepts, they still show that Heidegger's understanding of what it means to be human can be extrapolated to address contemporary practical and theoretical problems. The most important early formulation of the human being pertains to Dasein, that being who asks the question about its own Being. This suggests that to be human involves a kind of self-reference: to be human is to ask the question of what it means to be human. All of the symposium statements place the meaning of human being in question and call on us to think differently about how we want to live out our own humanity.

Kevin Aho retrieves Heidegger's understanding of the hermeneutics of facticity to show how Heidegger's understanding of the human being calls on us to live out our humanity with a kind of hyper attention to the prejudices that our thinking may harbor. Jill Drouillard shows how Dasein's self-referential question about its own being is a question about our gendered identities that may be of value for feminist philosophers working on these issues today. Jesús Adrián Escudero reminds us that Dasein is a responsible agent, accountable for its actions, who is able to modify and adjust to changing circumstances. Our thrownness is such that we are bound by prejudices but do not remain captive to them. Can Dasein live in poverty? Tricia Glazebrook asks us to consider the Dasein of poverty, quite literally the Being-there of the impoverished, in her elucidation of different ways to be human: the civilized human being, the human being governed by the logic of capitalism, and an explicitly Heideggerian approach to being at home in our living environment. Róisín Lally extends this analysis, in a way, in an excursus on Aristotle's understanding of time which concludes that Heidegger opens up a profound and relational sense of time that calls on us to think in a more responsible way about our connectedness to nature and to non-human

animals. Finally, Iain Thomson asks if we can really accuse Heidegger of being an anti-humanist. In spite of Heidegger's criticisms of humanism, and in spite of his politics, we find a deep sense of humanism in Heidegger's thinking, which calls on us, indeed, which pro-vokes us, to engage in creative and imaginative thinking.

There are scholarly debates to be had about Heidegger's understanding of the human being, and those debates are evident here. What is clear, though, is that Heidegger's relevance perdures. His understanding of the human being, in terms of the hermeneutics of facticity, pre-gendered Dasein, the responsible agent, Being-at-home in a living environment, our fundamental connection to nature, and the provocation to become more fully human, maintains a philosophical significance both through and beyond what Heidegger himself envisioned.