Pathos and *Logos*: Martin Heidegger on the Primacy of Affection in Aristotle's Ontology of Human Being

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ABSTRACT: Based on Martin Heidegger's reading of Aristotle's practical philosophy, I argue that virtuous disposition (*hexis*) occupies the space between potentiality and the actualizing of potentiality (*energeia*) and makes it possible for the virtuous person to be fully engaged with the whole of her being in her choices and actions. It is this double movement of retrieval of oneself back from experience and, in turn, this authentic return to experience that I think is the central insight that Heidegger draws from Aristotle's practical philosophy.

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Martin Heidegger's 1924 Marburg course entitled *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* (GA 18) offers an extensive analysis of Aristotle's concept of *pathos*. It becomes clear in the course of the analysis that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is a primary source for Heidegger's concepts of attunement (*Stimmung*) and disposition (*Befindlichkeit*) in *Being and Time*. Drawing primarily on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, but also on *De Anima*, Heidegger shows a close connection between *pathos* and two other pivotal and closely intertwined notions in Aristotle's practical philosophy, namely *hexis* and *aretē*, two words which thought together might be translated as "virtuous comportment" or "the disposition towards excellence." In this essay, following Heidegger, I will try to show that in Aristotle's practical philosophy, virtuous life is made possible on the basis of a reclaiming and drawing back into oneself one's ownmost potentiality (*dunamis*), a return movement made possible by the formation of character (*ēthos*). This argument presupposes that habit (*hexis*) – the active readiness-for and cultivated disposition that one in advance brings to one's engagement with the world, and which for Aristotle forms the basis for authentic action – can be understood as a kind of *dunamis*, a potentiality that for Aristotle is retrieved from and secured through practice, and thus arises out of experience, but in turn makes possible an authentic factical life for the human being. As Heidegger says in reference to Aristotle: "Dasein must, *for itself*, take up the opportunity to cultivate this *hexis*, this being-composed, as a possibility" (GA 18: 180/122).

It is of course true that in his discussion of *hexis* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and of why virtue (*aretē*) needs to be understood as a *hexis*,[1] Aristotle clearly states that *hexis* and virtue need to be distinguished from *dunamis*. The capacity to do something does indeed have to be present in order to form dispositions,[2] but *hexeis* are not simply there naturally or innately in the way capacities are; they need to be inculcated. And it is this being-responsible for one's disposition towards the world that distinguishes one's virtuous *hexeis* from one's natural *dunameis*. This is what I mean by "ownmost" potentiality; that is, not a *dunamis* that one possesses passively by nature and that can be automatically exercised, but a potentiality that one has taken up and made one's own. In a sense, virtuous disposition occupies the space between

potentiality and the actualizing of potentiality (*energeia*) and makes it possible for the virtuous person to be fully engaged with the whole of her being in her choices and actions. It is this double movement of retrieval of oneself back from experience and, in turn, this authentic return to experience that I think is the central insight that Heidegger draws from Aristotle's practical philosophy.

According to Heidegger, Aristotle defines the human being in *Politics* 1.2 as *zōon logon echon,* as the animal whose fundamental disposition is to engage in thoughtful discussion for its own sake and whose very being is essentially determined by this capacity for discourse (GA 18: 45/32). The human being is there said to be a political animal precisely because "man alone among the animals has speech."[3] We moderns who often see living in political community – with deliberation and discussion as the guiding forces that determine action – as an unfortunate but necessary infringement on an intrinsically better life in the state of nature; or we who agree to this "unnatural" or "merely conventional" condition in return for the prospects of economic prosperity, protection from harm, and convenience, can hardly fathom the decision of Socrates to accept death rather than ostracism from the city. But this decision is easier to comprehend if we see the extent to which, for him and for his philosophical descendent, Aristotle, freedom and equality are also not merely natural, innate qualities of human beings, but possibilities whose emergence and flourishing depend upon the prior actualization of a community of free individuals. Participation in such a community – especially the practice of free speech which is the most fundamental political activity according to Aristotle – is what allows us to fully flourish and achieve excellence as human beings. Thus, Aristotle says, the political is the highest good for human beings, that is, the end that governs and fulfills us, and that we choose for its own sake.[4]

Heidegger translates the verb *echein*, to have, in the phrase *zōon logon echein* as "holding oneself in relation." He says: "This standing-out (*Sich-ausnehmen*) of the human being, this 'comporting-oneself' (*Sichhalten*), this 'comportment' (*Haltung*), is *to ēthos*, character" (GA 18: 68/48). To have a virtue is not like having something stored up that we can appeal to in times that call for risk. Having courage, for example, is a way of

being in the world, an approach to life. *Echein* in this sense is not so much a possession or property of the human being as it is a stance (*Haltung*), a comportment or way of holding oneself that allows the human being to be held out towards and ready for and thus to have the power and capacity for; and in connection with *logos* this means having the potentiality for discourse. Inasmuch as for Aristotle *logos* constitutes human being in a fundamental way, the human being is essentially in communication and in *koinonia*. Thus, *logos*, in Heidegger's analysis, means being-with-one-another in a conversant way. Heidegger says in GA 18:

> So, you see that, in this determination (*logon echon*), a fundamental character of the being-there of human beings becomes visible: *being-with-one-another*. This is not being-with-one-another in the sense of being-situated-alongside-one-another, but rather in the sense of being-as-speaking-with-one-another through communicating, refuting, confronting. (GA 18: 47/34)

For Heidegger, being-with-others is an existential and ontological characteristic of our being as human, what constitutes the human being as such. But it is not just a character (*ēthos)* we "possess" by virtue of being human. It is a characteristic that places us outside ourselves and towards others. We are already, by virtue of who we are, empowered to be with others; we dwell in advance in an attunement to the beings that address us in our concrete relationships, an address that emerges out of this prior attentiveness (GA 2 /SZ 160–166). But this is no less true for Aristotle and is central to Aristotle's notion of character and virtue.

Because of the power to speak, the human being is always already beyond itself and in relation. The central meaning of *logos* and *legein* for the ancient Greeks is this holding in relation. For Aristotle and for Heidegger, human beings do not have their being as a solipsistic possession; rather, self-realization, the realization of our being as *logos*, involves holding ourselves in relation to not being ourselves and thus to what is other than ourselves. In Heidegger's work, this is what he means by being-in-the-world. In GA 18, he says:

> The world's character of being-there is such that the relationality of its there is precisely toward several that are with one another. This world that is initially being there for several that live with one another we designate as *surrounding world* (*Umwelt*), the world in which I am involved initially and for the most part. (GA 18: 47–48/34)

The human being is the being who has its *Dasein*, its being-there, in conversation and discourse. This is why Aristotle discusses the importance of the role of the orator, who has the power to persuade and influence others in the way they are with one another. Heidegger comments: "One must take fully into account that the Greeks lived in discourse and one must note that if discourse is the genuine possibility of being-there, in which it plays itself out, that is, concretely and for the most part, then precisely this speaking is also the possibility in which Dasein is *ensnared*" (GA 18: 108/74).

Heidegger calls this possibility and even tendency to become absorbed in the concreticity of everydayness the "*basic danger of their being-there*" (GA 18: 108/74). It is precisely because of this drift towards idle talk that Aristotle focused on the seriousness of speaking and understood the need to provide a scientific and philosophical grounding for *logos*, in order to return it to its genuine place as the site wherein the *Sache* of what is can be attended to in a genuine way. Thus, Heidegger claims: "…rhetoric is nothing other than the discipline in which the self-interpretation of being-there is explicitly fulfilled. *Rhetoric is nothing other than the interpretation of concrete being-there* (*Dasein), the hermeneutic of being-there itself*" (GA 18: 110/75).

Virtues are dispositions toward acting and feeling in a certain way, namely, in an excellent way. They constitute the general way in which we comport ourselves rather than determine specific actions or feelings.[5] Heidegger warns against the usual understanding of ethical virtue in terms of traditional notions of morality. In particular, he has in mind the false idea that ethical virtue in Aristotle has to do with conformity to external standards, even if these standards bear the gravitas of universal validity. Ethical virtue in Aristotle is not first of all about normative

values. In fact, it would be truer to say that virtuous dispositions protect us from having our *pathē*, our passions (*Leidenschaften*) and affects, determined by outside forces. This is especially true with regard to the tendency to fall prey in our everyday dealings to the ordinary *doxa*[6] that is promulgated oftentimes by the persuasive rhetoric of those whom Plato and Aristotle called the sophists and whom they accused of speaking without owning what they say and without listening to how they are addressed by that about which they are speaking. So here Aristotle is taking a step in the direction of showing how it is possible to retrieve a human being from an inauthentic involvement with beings. His explanation centers around a capability for being-affected that is prior to the actual coming to be of these affections. We have passions because we are capable of being passionate, of being-affected by what is around us. Becoming virtuous is a matter of taking charge of those capacities, turning them from possibilities for ourselves to actualities that allow us to own our being in the situations we face. Being receptive and able to be affected by the world around us and thus having passions – hatred, anger, fear, contrariness, shame, joy and the others Aristotle mentions – is possible because we already stand in relation to the world around us. It is because we are capable of being-affected that we can respond in anger or joy to our situation and our involvement with the things around us. Being virtuous does not exclude this capacity of being-passionate or being-affected by these forces that come upon us. It is rather a matter of how we are in relation to what is, whether we stand in the right way in relation to what matters to us and is of concern to us. Aristotle says:

> It is possible to be afraid or be confident or to desire or be angry or feel pity, or in general to feel pleasure or feel pain both more and less, and on both sides not in the right way; but to feel them when one ought, and in cases in which, and towards the people whom, and for the reasons for the sake of which, and in the manner one ought is both a mean and the best thing, which is what belongs to virtue.[7]

The virtuous person holds her affective life as her own and concretizes it in a way that allows her to stand out in relation to her involvements rather than simply being there in a way that is taken over by what is encountered in experience. But more than this authentic relationship to oneself is achieved by the acquisition of virtue. This awareness of what we are doing and this listening to ourselves is precisely what makes possible a genuine attunement to the other as other than ourselves. Thus, virtue also makes possible the stance towards other human beings and towards things that allows us to be genuinely receptive; it allows us not only to address the things around us but also to be addressed by them, to encounter them in terms of *their* own being. Heidegger remarks that "every concern has *tendency* in itself; it is *after something*, directed at an *agathon* that is always there as *legomenon*, as 'something addressed.' This *being-after* listens to what is spoken" (GA 18: 105/72). In becoming a virtuous being, the movement is from an actual entanglement with one's surroundings to a return to oneself, and this distancing of oneself from the immediacy of one's involvement opens up a horizon of possibilities for being oneself in the situation. The return to oneself, in Heidegger's reading, is a return to oneself as possibility to be. As capable of being in a certain way, the virtuous person is also capable of not being in that way and so free to decide how to be. Virtues are in this sense capacities to both be and not be and this is the ground for what Aristotle calls *prohairesis* or choice. Aristotle says: "Each person stops searching for how he will act when he traces the source back to himself, and to the part of himself that leads the way, for this is what he chooses."[8] The virtuous person is able to be afraid and also not be afraid. Such a person is free to choose how to be in the situation and in response to the situation. Aristotle's discussion of the mean in relation to virtue indicates again the broader context for an understanding of human *praxis* toward which Aristotle is aiming. The virtuous person is able to see the context of the situation in which action is called for, to measure the excess and deficiency, and choose what to do in the moment (*kairos*) within this broader context of understanding. This ability to choose (*prohairesis*) in turn requires openness to options, a lack of immediate compulsion, a certain distance from the occasion, which for the good person heightens rather than weakens the intensity of

the moment. Virtue requires deliberation as well as decision about what can be done. Thus, Aristotle defines virtue in Book II, Chapter 6 as *hexis prohairetikē, en mesotēti ousa tē pros hēmas*, "the active condition (*hexis*) that makes one apt at choosing, consisting in a mean condition in relation to us."[9] Heidegger translates *hexis prohairetikē* as "being-composed in the ability-to-resolve-oneself" and he understands the "mean" as "the way the world itself stands to us, or how we are in it" (GA 18: 192/129–130). Virtue gives us the ability to stand resolutely in the moment.

In his discussion of *pathos* in GA 18, Heidegger shows through a remarkable reading of passage after passage in Aristotle's corpus that the affects and emotions we have are not incidental properties that are imposed on living beings from outside but belong to the very constitution of their being. Heidegger identifies three primary senses of *pathos* from Book Δ of the *Metaphysics*. Together they manifest a being that is capable of being affected and thus moved. But in Heidegger's reading, being-moved, being able-to-be-moved, belongs to the very being of such beings. Living beings are beings that can be touched. The capacity to be touched, he argues, is not a passive state, nor a mere effect of an outside cause that has nothing to do with the constitution of the being that is affected.

The first meaning of *pathos* that Aristotle lists is the ordinary everyday meaning of *pathos* in the sense of alteration, the capability of changing and becoming otherwise (*alloiōsis*). The living being can be affected because its being is susceptible to change. It is at risk and exposed in its very being.

The second and related sense of passion that Aristotle lists is *pathos* in the sense of *paschein*, the suffering that occurs when this capability of being moved is actualized (*energeia*), set into work and at work. Heidegger says: "Occurring itself [what happens to one], is taken as *pathos* in its being-there itself. *Energeia*: the 'being-there' of such a shifting-occurring-to-one (*umschlagenden Mit-einem-Geschehens*)" (GA 18: 195/131). In Heidegger's reading, the first two senses of *pathos* – the one defining *pathos* as a *dunamis* and the other as an *energeia* – are interconnected. The capacity to be affected is a way of being disposed towards what can affect it, a being already in the world in advance such that one is open to

what is around it and exposed to it. And, in turn, *energeia,* the being at work and actualization, is such that when something happens to a being that alters it, this alteration presupposes that the power to change and be affected belongs to its being. The capability to change always exists in the face of the being's being-situated, the basic attunement to others that characterizes living beings. *Metabolē*, the exchange from something to something, relationality, is a defining characteristic of the being of living beings.

Aristotle identifies a third, narrower or more specific, sense of *pathos*, *pathos* in the sense of something unpleasant or harmful (*blaberon*), something that causes one to suffer, or to have the experience of pain (*lupē*). The living being is attuned to the world in such a way that it can be taken down by the things around it; its being-there in the midst of things is such that something can befall it and it can find itself in submission to what threatens its being.

The fourth and final sense of *pathos* designates "the 'size,' the 'measure,' of that which occurs to me in a harmful way" (GA 18: 195/132). Something happens to me that strikes me down or hits me with a ton of bricks, as we say. This definition of *pathos* carries the sense that my being is always subject to the possibility of destruction, of something catastrophic befalling it (*phthora*). The third and fourth senses are clearly related in that the destruction and privation to which my being is exposed, even the terrifying exposure to an overwhelming force that would utterly destroy me, is dependent upon the fact that my being has fallen into and found itself submitted to the world around it.

But rather than end with this exposition of the four meanings of *pathos* listed in *Metaphysics* Δ, Heidegger retrieves from *De Anima* II.2 yet another meaning of *pathos.* Aristotle says there that there are two senses of *paschein*, one that connotes destructive change (such as Aristotle mentions in *Metaphysics* Δ), but the other that does not destroy but rather promotes the being that is affected *and* actualizes it. Something happens to me, I encounter or undergo something that does not threaten to annihilate me but to the contrary rescues and preserves my being such that the possibilities within me become genuinely real. Here again there is a movement but not one that is enervating or exhausts my being but one

that intensifies it in its being such that I do not become otherwise through alteration but remain in my being. For Aristotle and for Heidegger, holding oneself in one's being and continuing to be does not preclude but presupposes the change and undergoing that belongs to beings whose being *is* to be situated with and alongside others. Engagement is a way of being. Heidegger uses an example from Aristotle: "For it is not the case that a builder becomes another through building, when he builds a new house. Rather, he becomes precisely that which he is" (GA 18: 192/132). *Pathos*, then, can be both a *sterēsis*, a being-deprived, as well as a being-realized; and for Heidegger these two fundamental but opposite movements belong together in the constitution of living beings; together they characterize the fundamental disposition of the being-there of Dasein. The withdrawal of one's being in the face of pain and loss that shakes one from one's steadfast composure in relation to the world is counteracted by a counter-movement of pleasure in reaching out and striving to be in which one finds fulfillment and completion of one's potentiality.

One of the most interesting aspects of Heidegger's treatment of *pathos* in Aristotle's works is his discussion of embodiment, a discussion that it seems to me is sorely needed but neglected when Heidegger deals with *Befindlichkeit* and *Stimmung*, disposition and attunement, in *Being and Time*. Heidegger insists emphatically in this text that "the *pathē* are not 'psychic experiences,' are not 'in consciousness,' but are a being-taken up of human beings in their full being-in-the-world" (GA 18: 197/133). In an analysis of Book I, chapter 1, of *De Anima*, Heidegger argues that *psuchē* in these passages is not understood as a mental or spiritual state but as the *ousia*, the way of being-there and being-present, of living beings. In that sense, the discussion of the *pathē* that belong to the soul does not preclude its bodily character. The body belongs to living beings and bodiliness is constitutive of such beings in the fullness of their being. Even in the analysis of thinking, *nous*, Aristotle is not referring to a brain process. *Nous* is akin to *aisthēsis* and is a way of making the world present to an individual even when the beings with which it is involved are absent but present in memory. Heidegger says:

> Insofar as *noēsis* is the highest possibility for the being of human beings, the entire being of human beings is determined so that it must be apprehended as the *bodily being-in-the-world of human beings*.
>
> What was, here, provided by Aristotle, is still not taken advantage of today. Only in *phenomenology* has this begun. No division between "psychic" and "bodily acts"! This is seen practically, for example, in the way that I move my hand, the way that I make a movement with it. *One must note that the primary being-there-function of bodiliness secures the ground for the full being of human beings*. (GA 18: 199/134)

In GA 18, Heidegger insists that when Aristotle refers to ethical virtue and *hexis* or habit as *alogos*, without *logos*, he cannot mean that they are devoid of a relationship to *logos*, since they can listen to *logos*. Listening and hearing are an essential, albeit opposite, dimension of dialogical *logos*. In the primary sense of *logos*, *logos* means speaking to and addressing others with whom we exist, or in some cases simply speaking to ourselves, which also requires listening. Heidegger says: "The human being is a being that says something to others and therefore *lets something be said*. This is the fully primary meaning of speaking in the sense of letting-something-be-said-by-others" (GA 18: 111/76). Aristotle associates hearing the other speak with *orexis*, the desire to be affected and in that way to be-there-with the other who speaks. In that sense, listening to the other is *alogos* – in the sense that the listener is not speaking but, in reaching out for and anticipating the voice of the other, is opening the space that makes conversation possible. All *logos* requires and is co-constituted by this *alogos*, even when one is speaking to oneself.

Aristotle indicates by his notion of *orexis*, desireful striving, that our way of being related to our end, our way of having our end, is in the mode of being-towards. The end is the good life (*eu zēn*); this is the end that Aristotle calls *haplos*, in itself simple and unqualified and never a means to something else. Deliberation, Aristotle says, considers what

is *pros to telos*, the means in the sense of what is in relation to or in accordance with the end and intrinsic to it. Through deliberation, the end is articulated and specified and made actual for action. Human action is not like *poiēsis*, with its means-end formula, where the end is outside of the being who acts. *Praxis* has to arise out of oneself and be done for its own sake because of its intrinsic nobility. The goodness of the agent determines the quality of the action. What counts for action is that action manifests the excellence of the person in the fullness of her being. So the end of human action is not outside the human person who acts, except inasmuch as the excellent person is outside himself or herself.

Aristotle says that all knowledge presupposes a certain kinship between the knower and the known. He calls this kinship *alētheia*. *Theōria* is the activity of knowing the being of that which is other than ourselves. It implies a kind of thinking that transcends mere thinking and opens up a kinship between thinking and being. Following Aristotle, Heidegger calls *thēoria* or the *logos* of *thēoria* the genuine sense of *logos* (GA 18: 217/148). *Logos* is fulfilled in many ways, as Aristotle shows in Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but in each of these ways it finds its proper fulfillment in the addressing of the world and in the discussing of it. Heidegger says:

> In *legein*, beings in the world that are there, and Dasein itself as living, come to interpretation to the degree that beings move themselves in the world. Speaking is the constitutive mode of fulfillment for concernful dealing. For the being-there of human beings, there remains a possibility of that determinate *legein* in this concernful dealing looking away from concern in the sense of *poiēsis*, of directed having-to-do…it does not also need to have the character of acting. It can take on the character of the mere treating of something in the sense of debating it. The *logos* becomes independent; it itself becomes *praxis*. This mode of dealing is *theōria*, no longer looking around with the purpose of…, but rather looking to grasp things in their being and being-there. (GA 18: 217–218/146, tm)

Aristotle says that *eudaimonia*, happiness, as the end of human life, requires self-sufficiency and a complete life. In his discussion of *phronēsis* he says that this end can never be chosen because it is always already there as that towards which the action is ultimately directed. Aristotle wonders whether happiness can be attained before death and answers that being in one's end in this way is possible as an *energeia*, a being at work, that in its choices and actions chooses to choose and thus to disclose itself as fully and humanly present in the situation. Aristotle says: "what is always chosen as an end and never as a means to something else is called final in an unqualified sense. This description seems to apply to happiness above all else."[10] Happiness is not a good among others that we can choose. Happiness is the kind of human activity that takes up for itself its own end as a possibility for being. In happy actions we choose ourselves.

Heidegger cautions that we not take this *autarkēs* to mean that the happy person leads a solitary life. The human being is by nature a being with others. But being-there authentically with others requires that we hold ourselves as resolutely there in our being with others. In his discussion of practical wisdom, Aristotle says: "To someone disabled by pleasure or pain, the source immediately ceases to be apparent, and it does not seem to him that he needs to choose and do everything for the sake of this end, since vice is destructive of the source."[11] In such cases, we wander to and fro and lose ourselves in the dissipation of being with others and allow ourselves to be determined by others in an indiscriminate way. Practical wisdom is the capacity to hear the call of our end as the source of human action and the capacity to call ourselves back resolutely to stand by this guiding force. Aristotle contrasts such a person with the morally weak person who cannot abide by the choice he has made. In Heidegger's own work, he discusses, in similar ways to Aristotle, losing oneself in the publicness of *das Man* and thus failing to hear one's ownmost self while listening to the they-self.

NOTES

1 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2002), 1106a 6–12.
2 *Nicomachean* Ethics, 1103a 23–25.
3 Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1278 b20.
4 *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a 19–b 11.
5 See Heidegger's discussion of *ēthos* in relationship to oratory in GA 18: 165–7/111–113.
6 See GA 18, Chapter 3, section 15 for an extensive discussion of *doxa* in relationship to the average everydayness of being-there and the power of rhetoric.
7 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106b 19–24.
8 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1113a 7–9.
9 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106b 36.
10 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097a 35.
11 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140b 17–20.