

Heidegger's philosophy: Reconstruction

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Heidegger's Metaphilosophy: A New Reconstruction

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Abstract

The essay proposes a new reconstruction of Heidegger's metaphilosophy. Providing a common explanation to a variety of Heidegger's pronouncements on the nature of his discipline in seminars and public addresses, the essay stresses their ties to the phenomenological doctrine of *Being and Time*. My presentation spans four major theses: (1) Philosophy is actual in the *practice* of philosophizing, understood as an activity of intrinsic worth. (2) The essential procedure of philosophizing is clarification of experience. (3) The medium of philosophizing is conceptual knowledge. (4) The goal of philosophizing is non-conceptual: a "fundamental attunement." Focusing on the apparent tension between (3) and (4), I argue that the structural relations between the conceptual and the non-conceptual elements in Heidegger's metaphilosophy are best accounted for in terms of the duality of *understanding (Verstehen)* and *being-attuned (Befindlichkeit)* in the existential analytic. In conclusion, I suggest that the metaphilosophical vision this analysis yields is faithful to the existential promise of philosophy and provides the conceptual resources to defend its essential status as a mode of human realization.

Keywords

Metaphilosophy, Heidegger, Philosophy as a practice,
Being and Time, Attunement

This essay proposes a new reconstruction of Martin Heidegger's metaphilosophy: a system of beliefs, operative across the philosopher's voluminous corpus, regarding the nature, value, and goals of the discipline, for which he remains an exceptionally influential figure to this day. While many of Heidegger's views transformed over his half-century career, one of his convictions that has apparently remained unchanged is in the immanent philosophical status of metaphilosophy: the "question of what philosophy itself is does not accompany philosophy as something added on later, but inherently belongs to philosophy itself" (1995 [1929–30]: 56). Going through the vast gamut of Heidegger's writings one gets the impression that the philosopher has never addressed an audience without some explicit account of the activity in which he and his readers or listeners are engaging. Many of Heidegger's seminars – not only those that announce a metaphilosophical subject, such as *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* (2002c [1919]) or *Basic Questions of Philosophy* (1994 [1938]), but also those pursuing a particular philosophical topic such as *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (2004 [1920–1921]) or *The Essence of Truth* (2002a [1931–32]) – devote the first lectures, and at times the bulk of the course, to a detailed metaphilosophical exposition. The hallmark of the specifically Heideggerian continuity between metaphilosophy and philosophy – which foregrounds the figure of circularity as one of its distinctive features – is, probably, the methodological argument of *Being and Time* (2008 [1927]) that frames the pursuit of the question of Being as an analysis of the entity for which this question is posing an issue. These are, however, brief takes on the issue of circularity, punctuating the opening remarks of Heidegger's shorter public addresses that reveal the metaphilosophical moment as a *procedural necessity* in the *exercise* of philosophy. Too rudimentary to be taken as full-fledged methodological arguments, they are representative of the task Heidegger assigns to the much more detailed metaphilosophical parts of *Basic Questions*: "to attune our questioning attitude to the right basic disposition [*Grundstimmung*]" (1994 [1938]: 2). Such is the celebration of the hermeneutic circle as the "feast of thought" in the opening paragraphs of "The Origin of the Work of Art" (2002b [1935–36]). Such is also the koan-like answer given in the beginning of "Language" (2001 [1950]) to the objection that the apparently tautological claim that "language

itself is language” does not get one anywhere. “We do not want to get anywhere,” Heidegger says. “We would like only, for once, to get to just where we are already” (ibid.: 188).

The proposed reconstruction of Heidegger’s metaphilosophy — relying for the most part on a few seminars of the 1920s and the 1930s and *Being and Time* — aspires to flesh out the vision of philosophy underlying these enigmatic utterances, while bringing the motifs of circularity, attunement, and the exercise of questioning to a systematic coherence. The backbone of this metaphilosophical conception comprises four major theses: (1) Philosophy is actual in the *practice* of philosophizing, understood as an activity of intrinsic worth; (2) the essential procedure of philosophizing is clarification of experience; (3) the medium of philosophizing is conceptual knowledge; (4) the goal of philosophizing is non-conceptual. After presenting the first two theses in part one, I go on to focus on the meaning of — and the apparent tension between — the latter two theses. My argument is that in view of thesis (2), the structural relations between the conceptual and the non-conceptual elements in Heidegger’s metaphilosophy are best accounted for in terms of the duality of *understanding* (*Verstehen*) and *being-attuned* (*Befindlichkeit*) in the existential analytic. Parts two and three, accordingly, pursue a reading in the relevant passages of *Being and Time* and articulate their metaphilosophical implications with regard to the usually more provocative pronouncements of the seminars. On the basis of the model thus produced, part four discusses Heidegger’s conceptualization of the non-conceptual goal of philosophy in terms of a fundamental attunement, and briefly considers the theoretical importance of such metaphilosophical vision. This importance, I suggest, lies among other things in the demand this conception launches to consider philosophy against non-academic transformative practices, such as different kinds of meditation, which appear to be pursuing compatible goals by empathically non-conceptual means.

The Practice of Philosophizing

The first framing thesis of Heidegger’s metaphilosophy is best abbreviated by his oft-repeated claim: “philosophy is philosophizing” (2001a [1921–22]: 33). “Philosophy itself — what do we know of it, what and how is it? It itself is only whenever we are philosophizing” (1995 [1929–30]: 4). The “what and how” of philosophy lie in the experienced actuality of thinking, its authentic medium is the thought-thought — thinking as it exists here and now, enacted in

a “moment-focused reflection” (*augenblickliche Besinnung*) (1984a [1928]: 14). Philosophy is thus positioned as a *practice*: a cultivated activity or a mode of behavior. “We want to open this questioning here and now,” says Heidegger at the beginning of another seminar, “that is, not to talk about questions but to act questioningly” (2010a [1933–34]: 4).

Taken broadly enough, this is hardly an uncommon view. For example, the volume editors of *What is Philosophy?* (Ragland and Heidt 2001) attest in their introduction, tellingly titled “The Act of Philosophizing,” that one thing upon which the otherwise disagreeing contributors of the publication agree is “conceiving the essence of philosophy dynamically by focusing on the very activity of philosophy” (*ibid.*: 7). Such framing poses an alternative to the “theoretical” paradigm of philosophy — broad enough to accommodate the Hegelian absolute knowledge and the Quinian belief in the continuity of philosophy with empirical science — which conceives of its actuality and ultimate end in terms of a philosophical theory, that is, a set of (adequately argued for) true propositions. Heidegger’s confrontation with this paradigm never gets too detailed. His customary demarcation of philosophy from science — and usually, by the same gesture, from the construction of a worldview (understood as an outlook of the meaningful life and a system of guidelines for its pursuit)—sums up to an explicit rejection of just this notion: philosophy does *not* consist in “possession of information and doctrines” (1984a [1928]: 13), that is, it is essentially *not* a kind of propositional knowledge.¹

As much as other philosophers who have expressed this idea — Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, for example — Heidegger, of course, does not deny that philosophy operates with propositions or, indeed, that these propositions could be identified in their philosophical specificity with regard to their subject matter. Heidegger’s point is rather that the being of those propositions is philosophical in the essential sense only as much as they are put to work in an “actual performance” of philosophizing (1994 [1938]: 21). To extend Pierre Hadot’s (2020: 57) metaphor, which compares an ancient philosophical work to a musical performance, it may be said that identifying philosophy’s goal with a piece of theory would be similar to mistaking the written score for the *raison d’être* of music. Heidegger implies as much when, in a remarkable passage from *Phenomenological Interpretation of Aristotle* (2001a [1921–22]), he explains his emphasis

¹ For an illuminating account of early Heidegger’s metaphilosophical self-positioning against these two conceptions of philosophy, see Crowe (2006: 209–16).

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on philosophizing (*philosophieren*) as the essence of philosophy by drawing an analogy with *musizieren*: neither practice — in contrast to the disciplines that lack such a verb and about which one says, for example, “to pursue biology,” — is defined through the result or object of their pursuit, but they are genuinely realized in the pursuit itself (*ibid.*: 36). This is also the reason for Heidegger's later characterization of philosophizing as a unique kind of seeking that has the seeking itself as its goal. While in scientific research the findings are what matter and what give worth to the seeking that led toward them, in philosophy “to find does not mean to cease seeking but is the highest intensity of seeking” (1994 [1938]: 7). Philosophy is thus, for Heidegger, an activity of intrinsic worth.²

Such an understanding of philosophy is paradigmatically found in Aristotle, who conceived of it as “the pleasantest of virtuous activities,” which “alone would seem to be loved for its own sake” (*Nic. Eth. X*: 7, 1177b).³ It is thus not fortuitous that, beginning with the early seminar mentioned above, Heidegger customarily formulates his metaphilosophical position with recourse to Aristotle, and a short comparison between the views of two giants may be helpful in articulating Heidegger's. At the heart of the Heideggerian appropriation of Aristotle stands the essential relation between the ontological determination of philosophy with regard to its subject matter and its inherent value as “a preeminent existentiell phenomenon” (2001a [1921–22]: 42). Heidegger explicitly asserts the continuity between Aristotle's definition of the first philosophy — that is, for Heidegger, philosophy “in the genuine sense” (1984a [1928]: 10) — as “the science of beings *qua* beings” (*Meta. IV*: 1003a22) and

² My reading of Heidegger's metaphilosophy, centered on philosophizing as an activity of intrinsic worth, is closely related to Hadot's influential notion of “philosophy as a way of life” echoed in a few congenial readings of Heidegger, from which mine should be distinguished primarily in terms of emphasis. I wish especially to mention Benjamin Crowe's framing of Heidegger's early metaphilosophy as “ultimately motivated by a concern with the value of an authentic life” (2006: 208), and Timothy Rayner's argument that “Heidegger's philosophical work can be construed... in terms of a more or less formalized... practice... intended to transform the experience of being” (2007: 13). I focus on the internal constitution of this practice, saying almost nothing on the existential transformation that the adherence to this practice procures. Such an approach was suggested in John Taber's reading of *What is Called Thinking?*, which claims that in Heidegger's later thought — as it is typical to the work of other “transformative philosophers” — the “theoretical component” is subservient to the “practice in thinking” (1983: 106–07).

³ All quotations from Aristotle refer to the *Revised Oxford Translation* (Aristotle and Barnes 2014).

his own definition thereof as a fundamental ontology pursuing the question of Being. Reorienting this pursuit from the ontotheological foundation of the first cause to the cultivation of the “comportment towards beings in terms of their Being,” Heidegger foregrounds its perfectionist dimension by identifying it as necessarily also a *self-comportment* (2001a [1921–22]: 46).

Aristotle would undoubtedly agree with Heidegger’s claim that philosophizing is a “fundamental way of being human” (2010a [1933–34]: 140). Yet, Aristotle’s belief in philosophy as the highest fulfillment of human nature is, paradoxically, rooted in the theological kernel of his doctrine. The practice of philosophizing engages “the most divine element in us” (Nic.Eth. X: 1177a), whereas in *Metaphysics* one learns that the science of being qua being is divine in two ways: not only, since it is pursuing the utmost foundations of being, it must necessarily deal with “divine objects,” but it is also the science “which it would be most meet for God to have” (Meta. I: 2, 983a). These two aspects converge in Aristotle’s famous analysis of the divine, according to which the very being of the unmoved mover consists in thought that has itself as its content (Meta. XII: 9, 1074b33) — that is, we may understand, in the fullest exercise of this science. The highest being as the content of philosophy, then, determines the self-referential, “tautological” character of its authentic mode of being as the absolute actuality of self-contemplating thought.

While associating the fundamental way of being human with finitude rather than immortality (1984a [1928]: 10; 1998 [1929]: 99), Heidegger inherits the structure of ontological self-referentiality as the foundation of philosophical practice and the source of its inherent value. For it is implicit in the argument of *Being and Time* that Dasein’s having its own being as an issue not only determines its status as that which is interrogated (*ein Befragtes*) in the pursuit of the question of Being (2008 [1927]: 24–27) but also establishes this pursuit — beyond any theoretical results it may yield — as a necessary dimension of Dasein’s authenticity.

The excess of existential value over theoretical gain is closely related to another feature of Heidegger’s metaphilosophical thinking that strikes one’s eye as the most demanding of explanation: the recurring insistence on the preeminence of a non-conceptual element in the practice of philosophizing.⁴ The fact that it is music that, as we have seen, sets for Heidegger the paradigm of the immanent worth

⁴ Interestingly, Hadot characterizes the highest dimensions of Aristotle’s philosophical praxis as “an activity of thought which is non-discursive” (2020: 72–73).

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of the practice could have already suggested as much. Heidegger, of course, does believe that “philosophizing... must always proceed through a rigorous conceptual knowledge (*begriffliches Wissen*) and must remain in the medium of that knowledge.” Yet, as he adds in the very same passage, “this knowledge is grasped (*begriffen*) in its genuine content only when... the whole of existence is seized (*ergriffen*) by the root after which philosophy searches — in and by freedom” (1984a [1928]: 18). What is important for our purposes here is not Heidegger’s existentialist argument, positioning freedom as the ground of logic (logic assumes lawfulness, whereas the latter is meaningful only for freedom), but the description of the relation to the sought-for root of philosophy (whatever it may be) in terms of “being seized”—and indeed in one’s “whole of existence.” If there may be any doubts that such relation exceeds the conceptual grasp, the following passage should be considered:

In all genuine philosophy there is something in the face of which all description and proof, however brilliantly scientific, fails and sinks down into empty business. ...This indescribable and unprovable something, however, is crucial — and to come to this is what the whole effort of philosophizing is about. (2002a [1931–32]: 13)

As we shall see, Heidegger theorizes this “indescribable and unprovable” element of philosophy — as well as the non-conceptual “being-seized” at the heart of conceptuality itself — in terms of attunement (*Stimmung*). At the moment, however, I wish to relate the idea, to which these pronouncements are meant to be pointing, to an even more fundamental Heideggerian notion, which informs his work from the very beginning and in which his discourse of attunements is grounded. Heidegger often presents the goal of the philosophical procedure he is inviting his audience to share as undergoing an *experience* [*Erfahrung*] — rather than acquiring a definition or a theory — of the explored subject: for example, “undergoing an experience with language” (1992 [1957–58]: 73). Or, indeed, with regard to the matter of our current discussion, Heidegger says that his interpretation of the essence of philosophy as seeking that has the seeking itself as its goal “will, to be sure, have meaning for us only when we experience such knowledge in the labor of questioning” (1994 [1938]: 7).

The ideal of a philosophical experience of particular phenomena (art, language, philosophy) stems from the general notion of *experience* as that to which philosophy is doubly committed: the object of

the philosophical inquiry and the medium in which the immanent result of this inquiry is being realized. As Heidegger puts it in another early seminar, “philosophy’s departure as well as its goal is factual life experience” [*faktische Lebenserfahrung*] (2004 [1920–21]: 11). Experience in this sense is the situated human existence permeated with mattering that phenomenology – in contrast to the depersonalized abstraction of “theoretical” philosophy – aims to keep alive in its “rigorous conceptual knowledge.” It is the idea of this continuity that we have captured as the second fundamental thesis of Heidegger’s metaphilosophy: philosophy is clarification of experience. Or in another early formulation, “philosophy itself is simply the explicit exposition and interpretation of factic life” (2014 [1922]: 163). The word *faktische* in these utterances points at what Heidegger will later call “average everydayness,” meaning that it is the experience as such and not some extraordinary or lab-modeled instances thereof with which the philosophical interpretation is continuous. The other side of this notion is that there is no human experience that is not potentially given to philosophical clarification: “philosophy remains latent in every human existence and need not be first added to it from somewhere else” (1984a [1928]: 18). Indeed, the very “question of Being is nothing other than the radicalization of an essential tendency-of-Being which belongs to Dasein itself” (2008 [1927]: 34). Hence, importantly, philosophy is clarification of experience not in the sense that experience – as a particular object of scrutiny – undergoes clarification in a process procured by a philosopher as an external agent. Philosophy rather *is* experience clarified, and it is as clarified – and in this sense transformed – that “factual life experience” constitutes the perfectionist goal of philosophizing. Hence the pathos of philosophy’s promise – to allow us “for once, to get just where we are already.”

If philosophy is experience clarified, then to understand the relation of the conceptual to the non-conceptual in Heidegger’s metaphilosophy we must follow Heidegger’s clarification of the relation between these elements in the constitution of experience as such. Heidegger undertakes such clarification in the most systematic manner when in *Being and Time* he analyzes the constitution of Dasein’s “there.” We shall, therefore, pursue in the following sections two excursions into the existential analytic, focusing on the fundamental structures of *understanding* and *being-attuned* (*Befindlichkeit*), in which, as I shall argue, the conceptual and non-conceptual dimensions of philosophizing are respectively grounded.

Understanding as an *Existential* and the Knowledge of the Essence

In *Being and Time*, the transcendental conditions of experience — theorized as “disclosedness of Dasein’s Being-in-the-world”—are characterized by equiprimordially of three “constitutive items” (2008 [1927]: 172): the fundamental structures (*existentialia*) of *understanding*, *being-attuned*, and *discourse*. For reasons to be discussed in the next section, Heidegger’s account stresses the duality of the first two. I do not follow Heidegger’s presentation order, however, and begin with understanding rather than *being-attuned*. For while the latter, as we shall see, is structurally prioritized in the model, it is an elaboration of the former that grounds the methodological argument of *Being and Time*: namely, that the pursuit of the question of Being “arises from the average understanding of Being in which we always operate and *which in the end belongs to the essential constitution of Dasein itself*” (ibid.: 28). Such a presentation order will allow us then to proceed from the more conspicuous aspects of Heidegger’s metaphilosophy to the more esoteric ones.

Understanding as a fundamental structure of Dasein’s “there” is manifested in the fact that Dasein, at every moment of its conscious existence, always already — involuntarily and, for the most part, implicitly — understands the situation in which it is “thrown.” Understanding is a primordial phenomenon in the characteristic Heideggerian sense, which implies that any particular lack or a failure of making sense (e.g., waking up after an accident in a state of amnesia or confronting an entirely incomprehensible object form another planet) is possible on the basis — or as a mode — of understanding as a constitutive dimension of experience. The world as an all-encompassing “circumspection of concern” is disclosed for understanding as a network of mutually determining elements of significance (ibid.: 187). Although the existential analytic pictures this domain in terms of assignment-relations between ready-to-hand entities, it is clear — and clearly evidenced in Heidegger’s later expositions of worldhood (e.g., in “The Origin” 2002a [1935–36]: 19–23) — that the elements of this network must involve the whole heterogeneous totality of “what is and what matters” (Thomson 2011: 43): from empirical concepts of material beings to abstract and normative ideas.

Of decisive significance for Heidegger’s metaphilosophy is the ensuing analysis of the internal “mechanics” of understanding —

how “the understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it” (2008 [1927]: 188) — in terms of *interpretation*: understanding something *as* something. The hermeneutic “as-structure” is evident when an entity is being theorized in a predicative statement, that is to say, when it is dismantled from the totality of the circumspection and posed as a present-at-hand subject of explicit scrutiny. But Heidegger’s stronger claim is that interpretation belongs to the constitution of *pre*-theoretical meaningfulness that precedes and conditions the possibility of assertion. In our engagement with practical environment, we always already understand beings as the beings they are: “when we have to do with anything, the mere seeing of the things which are closest to us bears in itself the structure of interpretation” (ibid.: 190). We never encounter a material entity that we then interpret as what it is — a house, a horse, a voice: beings are always already meaningful, interpreted as what they are. In his later period, Heidegger theorizes the everyday pre-ontological understanding of beings as “acquaintance with essences”: “We are acquainted with the ‘essence’ of the things surrounding us: house, tree, bird, road, vehicle, man, etc.” (1994 [1938]: 73).

Bringing this acquaintance to the highest clarity of articulation would be one way to define the conceptual aspect of the Heideggerian philosophizing: the “knowledge of the essence of beings” (ibid.: 56). Such identification entails a particularization of our clarification-of-experience thesis: there is continuity between the pre-theoretical implicit understanding of the world — that is, the notions tacitly informing ordinary existence — and the concepts rigorously formulated in philosophical discourse, which “have their ‘source’ in circumspective interpretation. . . wholly wrapped up in concerned understanding” (2008 [1927]: 201). Another metaphilosophical entailment of this model is that Heidegger’s procedures are primarily oriented to clarification of concepts — rather than, say, construction of theories or assessment of arguments. The paradigmatic Heideggerian questioning has the form of “What is (the essence of) X?” (art, thing, language, technology, Being). It is, minimally, in this sense that philosophy is for Heidegger an “essential thinking” (*wesentliches Denken*).

Although, for reasons we shall immediately explain, all essences have an equal quasi-transcendental (1997 [1927–28]: 26) or, indeed, quasi-Platonic (2002a [1931–32]: 38) status — in the sense that they all precede and condition, in the manner of inconspicuous acquaintance, the meaningfulness of particulars as the beings they

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are (1994 [1938]: 59) — not all of them are of equal standing as objects of philosophical inquiry. Heidegger most empathically shares the traditional philosophical orientation toward the fundamental. These are not the empirical concepts which are being pursued in philosophical clarification, but rather concepts of two special kinds. First, these are the fundamental structures of experience (Being-in-the-world, understanding, etc.). Posed in *Being and Time* as the phenomena of phenomenology, they are defined — in paradoxical contrast to phenomena in the regular sense — as what “lies hidden” within what “shows itself” and belongs to it “so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground” (2008 [1927]: 59). Or else, philosophy may pursue basic concepts definitive of entire areas of being and grounding scientific domains: “for instance, history, Nature, space, life, Dasein, language, and the like” (ibid.: 29). The distinction between these two categories is constantly negotiated, for one of the distinctive operations of Heidegger’s thought consists in allotting a full-fledged ontological status to such seemingly regional — if not plainly empirical — concepts as art, technology, or, indeed, philosophy.

Whatever the objects of philosophizing would be, the analysis of the hermeneutic constitution of understanding in *Being and Time* explains why their pursuit is necessarily bound to the figure of circularity, which as early as in his first lecture course Heidegger already identified as “the expression of an essential characteristic of philosophy, and of the distinctive nature of its method” (2002c [1919]: 14). For if the pre-theoretical acquaintance with essences, which precedes the explicit theoretical interpretation, has itself a structure of interpretation, then “any interpretation which is to contribute understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted” (Heidegger 2008 [1927]: 194). Heidegger terms the phenomenon the “fore-structure of understanding” (ibid.: 194) As such, it is by no means specific to philosophy, but determines the character of any epistemic endeavor, which must always begin by projecting a preliminary understanding of its object. What is special to philosophy, on this account, is the explicit endorsement of the circular structure: “What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way. ...In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing” (ibid.: 195). But how does the endorsement of the circle come about?

From Heidegger’s more specific discussion of the issue with regard to the argument of *Being and Time* it may be concluded that the

fundamental metaphilosophical entailment of this endorsement is the very reorientation of the philosophical procedure from argumentation to clarification. For as Heidegger explains, positing the entity concerned with the question of Being as the one to be investigated in the pursuit of this question is not circular in any fallacious way for the simple reason that the procedure involves no derivation: “such ‘presupposing’ has nothing to do with laying down an axiom from which a sequence of propositions is deductively derived.” The procedure is rather of “laying bare the grounds” of what has been presupposed in the question “and exhibiting them” (*aufweisende Grund-Freilegung geht*) (Ibid.: 27–28). The ideas are projected and clarified – shown (“exhibited”) rather than proven.

The philosophical routine so described is related to the fact that Heidegger customarily accompanies the metaphilosophical imperative “Embrace circularity!” with a version of the phenomenological maxim “To the things themselves!” (Ibid: 50). This is hardly surprising, for since the justification of the philosophical content could not be produced in terms of logical derivation, then – as Heidegger explains, turning to the methodological issue again at the end of *Being and Time* – the investigated phenomenon should be allowed to “decide of its own accord” whether what has been projected in terms of its “formal aspects” (i.e., the constitutive essential dimension) proves to be clarificatory indeed (ibid.: 362). In “The Origin,” for example, the endorsement of circularity drives the pursuit of the essence of art “to approach an actual work and to ask it what and how it is” (2002b [1935–36]: 2).

Another facet of the two imperatives’ conjunction is that the awareness of the fact that an inquiring encounter with an entity is conditioned by its provisional understanding dictates the critical dimension of the philosophical procedure. The endorsement of circularity demands of us not “to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to . . . [be] working out these fore-structures in terms of the things [*Sachen*] themselves” (Heidegger 2008 [1927]: 195). (Hence the place of *Destruktion* in Heidegger’s project, somewhat downplayed in my presentation.) For example, “being attentively present in the domain of things [*Dinge*]” (2002b [1935–36]: 7) enables Heidegger, again in “The Origin,” to reject the inadequate preconception of the thing (*Ding*) as the bearer of properties.

But what exactly are the “things” (*Sachen*) we should turn to when investigating the subjects Heidegger finds most proper for philosoph-

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ical inquiry? Art, to be sure, is the paradigmatic domain where an ontological insight is bound to an experience of a particular. Hence an actual artwork helps Heidegger to explore not only the essence of art but also an array of other phenomena, such as “reliability,” through an encounter with a Van Gogh in “The Origin,” or the essence of language in “Language” by way of interpreting a Georg Trakl poem. Yet, the metaphilosophical conception of “the experience of things themselves” relevant for Heideggerian philosophizing at large must shift the focus from the exemplary kind of approached things to the self-reflective immediacy of the one experiencing them. Whatever is the object of the philosophical investigation — a particular domain of experience (e.g., art) or a fundamental structure of experience as such (e.g., Being-in-the-world) — it is the individual experience of the self-interpreting Dasein — an entity the being of which is “in each case mine” (2008 [1927]: 68) — through which this investigation must take place. This experience determines the existentialist pathos pertaining to the peculiar mode of justification Heidegger assigns to the products of this activity: “the proofstone of philosophical truth consists solely in the loyalty the philosophizing individual has to himself” (1984a [1928]: 17). At the same time, as much as justification implies a horizon of public validity, this notion opens up an often--overlooked interpersonal dimension of Heidegger’s metaphilosophical vision: “The knowledge of the essence must be accomplished anew by each one who is to share it; it must genuinely be co-accomplished” (1994 [1938]: 78). From this perspective, the propositional content on which the practice of philosophizing bears — such as, indeed, the edifice of *Being and Time* — should be understood, beyond any theoretical value it may possess, as an invitation to experience, a demand for a certain experience to take place. That is to say, the meaning of philosophizing as a practice of intrinsic worth lies not only in perfectionist self-comportment (say, the quest for authenticity) but also a movement toward the possibility of sharing a new world (or, better yet, sharing the world anew). The fact that this world is not fully (not objectively) pregiven is underscored by Heidegger’s remark that the act of philosophizing lets “that which is to be interpreted *put itself into words for the very first time*” (2008 [1927]: 362). The knowledge of the essence must assume the paradoxical form of “productive seeing” (*Er-sehen*) (1994 [1938]: 77), which, while articulating the concepts inconspicuously operative in pre-theoretical understanding, engages the more primordial dimension of worldhood, out of which their reconceptualization may be co-accomplished.

Being-attuned and the “What and How” of Experience

Heidegger theorizes this dimension in the existential analytic as another fundamental structure of Dasein’s “there,” which he dubs *Befindlichkeit*. There is no consensus yet regarding the most adequate English rendering of the term — translated alternately as state of mind, attunement, disposition, or disposedness, among other versions — and I will allow myself to make my own modest suggestion.⁵ The word *Befindlichkeit* derives from the German everyday greeting “*Wie befinden Sie sich?*” which literally asks “How do you find yourself?” and is analogous to the English “How are you doing?” Heidegger’s idea is that what these questions ask about is a particular ontic realization of the ontological structure of always already “finding oneself” in a certain way. Such “finding oneself,” as usually explained, amounts to the fact that as much as Dasein always already understands, it is always already affected. “In every case Dasein always has some mood” (*gestimmt ist*) (2008 [1927]: 173): bored, sad, terrified, solemn, or something not verbalized yet, but belonging to this order. Heidegger’s dominant word for mood is *Stimmung* — the common translation of which as “attunement” successfully maintains its musical connotations. Since, phenomenologically, always already having a mood (*gestimmt sein*) — that is, being attuned in a certain way — is precisely what *Befindlichkeit*, as an *existentiale*, means, I suggest the English Heideggerianism *being-attuned* as the most adequate rendering of the term. And the last semantic emphasis required for our discussion. Returning to the etymology of *Befindlichkeit* we may shift the focus from the “finding” unique to the German idiom to the “how” it shares with analogous greetings in many other languages. For Heidegger’s phenomenological insight here may be aptly phrased thus: there is constitutively a “how” to our experience that is irreducible to any particular object thereof, or, we may say, to any cognized “what.” “Attunements are the ‘how’ according to which one is in such and such a way” (1995 [1929–30]: 67).

Heidegger stresses time and again the equiprimordiality of understanding and being-attuned, as well as the fact that the two are intertwined and never totally separable one from the other. “An attunement always has its understanding (*Verständnis*), even if it keeps it suppressed. Understanding (*Verstehen*) always has

⁵ For the up-to-date discussion of the possible translations, favoring “disposedness,” see Slaby (2021).

its mood" (2008 [1927]:182 — translation modified). At the same time, Heidegger believes in a particular phenomenological priority of being-attuned: "The possibilities of disclosure which belong to cognition," Heidegger says, "reach far too short a way compared with the primordial disclosure belonging to moods" (ibid.: 173). My argument is that, understood as experience clarified, the practice of philosophizing maintains a structural relationship between the two equiprimordial dimensions of experience. Indeed, the asymmetrical duality of the two is abbreviated in the formulaic expression "what and how," which Heidegger frequently uses to designate his quests' aims. We have already heard the suggestion to pursue the essence of art by interrogating a particular work as to "what and how it is" (2002b [1935–36]: 2), and the metaphilosophical question put in very similar terms: "Philosophy itself... what and how is it?" (1995 [1929–30]: 4). As early as *Phenomenological Interpretation of Aristotle* (2001a [1921–22]) Heidegger uses the formula to explain his notion of the philosophical definition: "determination of the object in its 'what' and in its 'how'" (ibid.: 16). In "On the Essence of Ground," Heidegger equates the "what-being and how-being" with the ontological constitution of any possible object — the constitution of the very being of beings (1998 [1929]: 103). And again, in the *Essence of Truth*, where the pre-theoretical acquaintance with essences is thought of in Platonic terms, Heidegger says that "the seeing of the idea [is] the understanding of what-being and how-being, in short of being" (2002a [1931–32]: 38). The last two instances clearly use the expression in reference to what we have discovered in our previous excursus as the task of understanding, which Heidegger, at times, explains solely in terms of the "what" ("... the 'idea' is the whatness, and the latter is the essence" [1994 [1938]:]). And yet the knowledge of the essence could not be reduced to the "what" of an entity defined in its presence-at-hand (2008 [1927]: 200), but must — as Heidegger puts it in his discussion of truth in *Being and Time* — "communicate entities in the 'how' of their uncoveredness" (ibid.: 266). The priority of being-attuned to understanding, as we shall see, comes about in that fact that the "how" not only supplements the "what" as another necessary aspect of experience, but is immanently operative *within* the "what" itself.

Before we fill in some further detail into this picture, however, a word must be said in defense of what might appear as its interpretative flaw. I have intentionally excluded from our description of Heidegger's model the third constitutive element of experience in *Being and Time* — discourse (*Rede*), which complements the as-struct-

ture and affectivity of the first two *existentialia* with Dasein's essentially linguistic existence. This decision is guided by Heidegger's text itself, which, while speaking of discourse as "equiprimordial with being-attuned and understanding" (ibid.: 203), more often presents it as a feature by which the two other *existentialia* are "characterized equiprimordially" (ibid.: 172, 208). Being-attuned and understanding both disclose the world as a realm of significance, and to significance there essentially belongs the possibility of being brought to explicit articulation. And while the ambiguous placement of discourse in the analytic, evolving as it were from the discussion of assertion as an "extreme case" of interpretation (ibid.: 203), suggests its continuity with understanding, Heidegger equally stresses the somewhat surprising discursivity of the non-conceptual being-attuned: "The intelligibility... which goes with a state of mind — *expresses itself in discourse*" (ibid.: 204). There is therefore no need to inscribe discourse as the third element of Heidegger's metaphilosophical model. As much as philosophizing involves linguistic articulation and communication of propositions, it employs the possibility which belongs to the fundamental structure of discourse. This possibility underlies — and, in this sense, indifferent to — the distinction between the "what" and the "how" as well as Heidegger's prioritization of the latter in both experience and philosophizing.

This precedence of being-attuned to understanding can be summarized in three interrelated points, which we shall follow in our further look at the relations between the two *existentialia*: wholeness, mattering, and receptivity.

The meaningfulness of understanding, as we have already explained, operates with structurally related elements within a "referential totality of the manifold relations" (ibid.: 236). The meaningfulness disclosed in an attunement, in contrast, is of "Being-in-the world as a whole" (ibid.: 176). Heidegger's phenomenal evidence for this ontological claim would consist in the observation that an existential situation's particular "how" — which must not necessarily be conceptualized in such roughly cut terms as fear or grief — colors the world in a single hue that precedes the outlines of the beings encountered within it. "The world as this 'how as a whole' already underlies every possible fragmentation of beings..." (1998 [1929]: 111). The "whole" is prioritized in Heidegger's thought in many ways, specifically as the object of philosophical questioning, identified as "beings as a whole" (1995 [1929–30]: 9) or "Being as a whole" (1984b [1936]: 11). From this follows the precedence of being-attuned in Heidegger's conception of philosophy: it is this

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dimension of experience from which the possibility of a defragmented – or rather pre-fragmented – access to the being of beings is opened up. An exemplary realization of this possibility is the role of anxiety in discovering “the primordial totality of Dasein’s structural whole” (2008 [1927]: 235).

The wholeness of the “how” disclosed in being-attuned not only precedes but also motivates the distribution of the “what” operative in understanding. This is so as much as the primordial affectivity of *Befindlichkeit* is one with the immediacy of Dasein’s “finding oneself” in a certain way: its always-already “has been delivered over to itself” (ibid.: 234, 134)—that is, *thrownness* — and having itself thus as an issue. This defines mattering as the most primordial frame of access to within-worldly beings. In this sense, as Jan Slaby nicely puts it, it is the “‘ground floor’ dimension of intentionality” (2021: 242). The “each time a whole” of an attunement discloses the world as a realm of existential involvement, underlying the pre-theoretical acquaintance with essences. The conceptual disclosure of what beings are is conditioned by the fact that these beings already compel us within a “how” of a particular existential situation. The affectivity of being-attuned, therefore, enables the conceptual work of understanding. Playing on the literal meaning of the German word “concept” (*Begriff*)—as we have already seen him do in an earlier passage — Heidegger expresses this idea while addressing specifically the role of being-attuned in philosophy:

We are dealing with a conceptual comprehension and with concepts of a primordial kind. ...Above all, however, we shall never have comprehended these concepts [*Begriffe*] and their conceptual rigor unless we have first been gripped [*ergriffen*] by whatever they are supposed to comprehend. The fundamental concern of philosophizing pertains to such being gripped, to awakening and planting it. All such being gripped, however, comes from and remains in an attunement [*Stimmung*]. (1995 [1929–30]: 6–7)

Finally, being-attuned stands for what might be recognized as the most fundamental paradigm of Heidegger’s thought — receptivity, prioritized in a variety of ways over different forms of subjective spontaneity. In the mattering of things that “grip us” the initiative, so to say, is essentially on their side. “Existentially,” Heidegger says, “being-attuned implies a disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us” (2008 [1927]:177 — translation modified). This becomes especially clear

if we attend to the musical dimension of *gestimmt sein* (which also means “being in tune”), for the tuning of a musical instrument does imply something like “disclosive submission” to an externally set pitch.⁶ *Stimmung* is thus closely related to the audial metaphor of “answering a call,” different versions of which pervade Heidegger’s thought: the call of conscience, the call of what calls thinking, the challenge of destiny, and so on. As Michel Haar summarizes this notion in the light of Heidegger’s later thought, “*Stimmung* is understood as... response... to the *Stimme* (voice) of being. ...That mood is ‘called’ by the ‘voice’ means only in fact that its origin is not human subjectivity, but the world, or rather being itself” (1992: 160). Using yet another audial metaphor, Heidegger concludes his exposition of being-attuned in *Being and Time* with the following remark regarding its methodological significance for the very project of the existential analytic (and, inferentially, philosophy):

Being-attuned... not only characterizes Dasein ontologically, but, because of what it discloses, it is at the same time methodologically significant in principle for the existential analytic. Like any ontological interpretation whatsoever, this analytic can only, so to speak, “listen in” to some previously disclosed entity as regards its Being. (2008 [1927]:178–79 — translation modified)

Philosophy is conceptual knowledge, but since concepts are manifestations of beings, the “rais[ing] to a conceptual level of phenomenal content” (ibid.: 179) such as takes place in philosophy must submit itself to the gripping power that first makes the beings available for — and demanding of — conceptual clarification. In this sense, philosophical knowledge consists ultimately in the essential experience of the being disclosed in the concepts, whereas such experience, as we have seen, has the primordial mattering of an attunement at its ground level. Hence, philosophical disclosure of a being must not only articulate its conceptual content (“what”) but “awaken” the “how” out of which this content emerges. Philosophizing, to be sure, is a conceptual practice, but conceptuality — to paraphrase Heidegger’s famous dictum about technology — is in its essence “nothing conceptual.” The goal of philosophizing, therefore, lies beyond any of its discursively articulated achievements. This is so — as we shall immediately see — in more than one sense.

⁶ In his discussion of attunement apropos the Nietzschean rapture, Heidegger uses the expression “pitch of the attunement” (1979 [1936–37]: 105–06).

The Fundamental Attunement and the Ultimate Goal of Philosophy

The more-than-conceptual whole of experience determines philosophy twice — as its origin and as its goal: as the phenomenological dimension at which it discloses its objects and as the existential transformation (i.e., experience clarified) that it brings about. Both aspects can be thought of in terms of the priority of being-attuned we have sketched, and both aspects may be referred to as “the “how” of philosophy” — an apt phrase that Benjamin Crowe (2006) chooses as the title for his discussion of Heidegger's early metaphilosophical position — although the phrase's meaning will be different in two cases. In the first aspect, this is the “how” of the beings that philosophy brings to conceptual clarification from within their essential experience. Remember that for Heidegger the knowledge of the essence as such is the knowledge of the “what and how” — and not only the “what”—of a pursued phenomenon. This is especially clear when the subject of the philosophical analysis is an attunement (such as anxiety) but is equally so for any theorized entity. In the second aspect, however, what is at issue is the “how” of philosophizing itself, which by no means coincides with the “how” of the phenomenon, philosophically explored. The attunement of the analysis of *Angst* is not itself *Angst*; and the attunement of the analysis of “profound boredom” in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* — despite the meticulousness of its hundred and fifty pages — is not boredom! If there is a particular “how” that pertains to philosophizing as such, then it would be the very “indescribable and unprovable something” that defines for Heidegger the ultimate goal of his practice. Heidegger seems to be saying that much, theorizing the phenomenon in terms of a “fundamental attunement” (*Grundstimmung*):

All essential thinking demands that its thoughts and utterances be newly extracted each time, like an ore, out of the fundamental attunement. If the fundamental attunement is lacking, then everything is a forced clatter of concepts and of the mere shells of words. (2012 [1938]: 19 — translation modified)

But what *is* the fundamental attunement of philosophy? Heidegger defines it alternately as restraint (*Verhaltenheit*) and wonder (*Erstaunen*). Let us briefly sketch what Heidegger says about those.

Heidegger's interpretation of restraint is itself multifaceted. It is “terror in the face of what is closest and most obtrusive, namely

that beings are, and awe in the face of what is remotest, namely that in beings, and before each being, Being holds sway” (1994 [1938]: 4). This ontological affectation has a historical aspect of a “creative shock” in the face of the specifically modern “abandonment of Being” (2012 [1938]: 38) or “the concealment of the essence of Being” (1994 [1938]: 4), and an apparently more universal one — as an attunement “open to the uniquely uncanny fact: that there *are* beings, rather than not” (ibid.: 3). It is specifically in this aspect that restraint, in Heidegger’s later period, feeds in into the key notion of “releasement” (*Gelassenheit*): “letting be” as the appropriate human stance toward Being, which abandons “willing” as the paradigm of subjective comportment and determines the essence of philosophizing as “a resolute openness to the essential occurring of truth” (2010b [1944–45]: 93). Indeed, the two notions merge and figure in the *Country Path Conversations* (1944–45) as “restraint of releasement” (*Verhaltenheit der Gelassenheit*) (ibid.: 93–94)—a term that seems to be capturing something akin to “disclosive submission,” which determines, as we have seen, the ontological centrality of being-attuned in Heidegger’s model of experience. If so, restraint as the fundamental attunement of philosophy is the “highest attunement” (1994 [1938]:3), also as much as it exemplifies the very essence — or, say, the most important existential implications — of the ontological structure it ontically fulfills.

The fundamental attunement of wonder is the discovery of astonishment, amazement, and marvel, elicited normally by what stands out as unusual and unique, within “everything in its usualness” (1994 [1938]: 150). Heidegger not only discusses wonder — *thaumazein* (*θαυμάζειν*) — as determining the Greek beginning of philosophy, but also the one his own philosophizing aims to awaken. His recourse to philosophy’s founding fathers on this matter is exemplary of his strategy of their “phenomenological interpretation.” For while Aristotle has indeed followed Plato in believing that “it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize” (Meta. 982b11),⁷ for him, this inquiring attunement results in knowledge, which is a different and “better state” (Meta. 983a13–21). For Heidegger, conversely, wonder *is* the attunement of metaphysical knowledge, the mode of being of philosophy itself. “To say philosophy originates in wonder means philosophy is wondrous in its essence and becomes more wondrous the more it becomes what it really is” (1994 [1938]: 141). And, perhaps unsurprisingly,

⁷ Cf. “...wondering: this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else” (Theat. 155d) (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997: 173)

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Heidegger's analysis shows this attunement to have the same ontological reference as the one he assigns to restraint and believes to be the essential content of philosophizing (within a variety of possible emphases): "What alone is wondrous. . . : the whole as the whole, the whole as beings, beings as a whole, that they are and what they are, beings as beings" (ibid.: 146). Even more empathically than with restraint, the fundamentality of wonder as an attunement is derived from wholeness that has defined in *Being and Time* the phenomenon of being-attuned as such: "insofar as this attunement turns to the whole and stands in the whole, it is called a fundamental attunement" (ibid.: 145 – translation modified).

How do wonder and restraint relate, then? For Heidegger, the two correspond to two moments of the ontological narrative of the West that he calls "the history of being": wonder defines the moment of the "first beginning" in Greece, whereas restraint is the fundamental attunement of the "other beginning," which is hoped to salvage humanity from the technological understanding of beings in the future, and for which Heidegger, from the mid-thirties onwards, understands his philosophy to be paving the way (2012 [1938]: 37–38). Hence, restraint is presented in the opening sections of *Basic Questions* as the fundamental attunement of "futural thinking" and there are commentators interpreting it as no less than "the preparatory attunement for the return of the gods to the earth" (Bambach 2021: 651–52).

Uncommitted as I am to the doctrine of the history of being – the criticism as much as an adequate presentation of which falls beyond the scope of this essay – I tend to view restraint and wonder as two synchronous aspects of the very same metaphilosophical model we have constructed on the basis of the early, phenomenological Heidegger. After all, openness to the mystery of being and marveling at the unusualness of everything usual are not too far from one another and seem to be desirable modes of experiencing reality beyond any "preparatory" functions. Indeed, they might be thought of as essential virtues of a philosophical way of life, if there is one. In keeping with my initial emphasis, however, I wish rather to focus for a moment on the manifestation of the two attunements – or virtues – in the actuality of philosophizing.

From this perspective, I believe, primacy should be given to wonder, understood as the excitement that lends the philosophical practice its intrinsic worth and orients the procedures of its exercise. Importantly, this excitement is consistent with any possible philosophical subject (to the paradoxical point of "How wonderful,

profound boredom!”) and defines the practice of philosophizing at a more primordial level than an affirmation of — or a controversy between — any particular doctrines. This is most noticeable in philosophical pedagogy (especially at the 101 level so important to Heidegger), where the teacher’s best efforts are invested not in affirming or refuting the philosopher she presents, but in eliciting fascination with his ideas — such that would allow them to penetrate the “so what?” firewall of ordinary consciousness. Wonder, as a philosophical *Grundstimmung*, is the affective soil on which, for example, both the Cartesian argument and its Heideggerian criticism become alive for the actuality of thought. Restraint, on this account, is a necessary condition to cultivate philosophical wonder. Letting go of your preconceptions and allowing an other’s thought to freely unfold — proves to be instrumental for discovering wonder that has motivated it and, paradoxically, for clarifying these very preconceptions. To philosophize, Heidegger suggests in the passages introducing restraint, we must “invest everything — everything without exception — in... questioning” and renounce the belief “we possess our reputed truths” (1994 [1938]: 3).

But I can easily imagine an account that would prioritize restraint over wonder, which threatens to dissolve into idle curiosity without the baseline of solemn awe Heidegger’s restraint leads. And, of course, the sensitivity to the historical exigency answered by the positing of restraint as a cure to the late modern understanding of beings may be central to some equally valid reconstructions of Heidegger’s metaphilosophy. As far as the aims of the current study go, the specificity of the philosophical fundamental attunement is secondary to the idea that the *raison-d’être* of philosophy should be described in such terms. To sum up one last time, what we have discovered as the core of Heidegger’s metaphilosophical outlook: the ultimate goal of philosophy lies in a fundamental attunement — that is, a particular mode of a more-than-conceptual world-disclosure — fully realized and systematically cultivated in the conceptual practice of philosophizing.

I wish to conclude by pointing at an important cluster of further issues raised by this metaphilosophical outlook. If the ultimate end of philosophy lies beyond the conceptual medium of its practice, then what kind of necessity its relation to this aspect may be said to possess? Is it possible that other practices are more efficient in achieving the same fundamental attunements Heidegger associates with philosophy? Specifically, one cannot help thinking here of Eastern meditative practices (taken as broadly as to include the variety

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of Buddhist meditation, yoga, qigong, and tantra), which frequently describe their agendas in terms akin to releasement and wonder (e.g., “the experience of awe and wonder... becomes part of our everyday experience” — Carmody 1996: 83), while explicitly distancing themselves from conceptuality — often treated as a major obstacle in their pursuit. An influential *Thiền* (Zen) master Thich Nhat Hanh, for example, speaking of his (rather Heideggerian) habit “to walk alone on country paths,” says that practicing it “in mindfulness” — a master notion of Buddhist meditation interestingly equated with *Gelassenheit* in a recent study (Chrstopher 2018)—we discover “an infinite wonder... enabling us to enter the world of reality” (Nhat Hanh 1987: 12). This reality, as the guru further explains, “transcends every concept” and hence the practitioner is warned not to get entrapped in pursuing the notion of such transcendence as a philosophical doctrine (ibid.: 56).⁸ Could it be then of any existential benefit — not to say importance — to philosophize, if the ultimate goal is to reach reality beyond conceptual grasp? Or is it just not the same goal and not the same wonder?

The consideration, or even the adequate posing, of these questions — to be sure — is a matter for another study. It is, however, among the results of the current one that Heidegger's metaphilosophy launches a demand and provides the conceptual basis for it. As much as the scientific view of philosophy is committed to defining the discipline with regard to other areas of positive knowledge, its understanding as a transformative practice cultivating “a fundamental way of being human” demands situating it among other — for the most part non-academic — practices that claim a similar status (and whose understanding of ultimate human ends,

⁸ Of special interest might be a more specific comparison to the practice of meditative questioning, as described by Batchelor (1996), which, as she attests, “fosters wonderment and openness,” and whose salient common features with Heideggerian philosophizing make the differences all the more instructive. The practice involves silently asking the question paradigmatic for Heidegger's practice, “What is this?” — without, however, specifying its object. Very similarly to what Heidegger says about philosophizing, the exercise of this meditation “goes against our usual tendency to ask a question in order to receive or find an answer,” but demands persisting with questioning as a goal in itself. Yet the “questioning orientation” this practice develops does not generate — or rest upon — such intellectual treasures as Heidegger's “acting questioningly” involves. To the contrary, “teachers suggest locating the questioning in the belly, so that the question does not go to the head, become over-intellectual”; the point of “coming back to the question” here is “mindfulness of the specific experience of this current moment” (ibid.: 43).

of course, may differ as well-being and enlightenment). Note how unsimilar is this task to the one pursued in the vast literature exploring the intersections and parallels of Heidegger with Buddhist and Taoist thought.⁹ For the task at stake here is not of comparative philosophy (co-thinking different philosophical traditions), but precisely of *meta*-philosophy in a most genuine and empathic sense: the imperative of philosophy — in the name of which I take Heidegger to be viably speaking — to position itself with regard to non-philosophical, yet, arguably, not less essential (and possibly competing) human endeavors. Heidegger rudimentarily sanctions such a task, at the formal level, when he places philosophy alongside politics and art as one of the “few essential ways” in which truth happens (2002b [1935–36]: 32). Art, which sets the context of articulating this multiplicity and defines *poiesis* rather than *praxis* as its common denominator, was, for Heidegger, *the* essential other of philosophy (as much as political action may be said to have taken such role in Aristotle’s metaphilosophical account). And it is in relation to — and appropriation of — which he was modeling his own practice of thinking: from the early comparison to music, we have witnessed, to the centrality of Friedrich Hölderlin’s poetry for his later restraint-oriented thought. It may be a significant trait of the current epoch — call it New Age, as it is the closest we have to “the other beginning” — that Eastern meditative practices, which were not among practical options for Heidegger himself, may be definitive for his heirs’ existential landscape, pressing them with the most exigent metaphilosophical challenge.

The reconstruction of Heidegger’s metaphilosophy we have undertaken contains the premises of the possible Heideggerian answer to this challenge. While articulating the non-conceptual goals of philosophy that put it on common ground with meditation or yoga, Heidegger’s metaphilosophical vision has the resources to defend the necessity of its intellectual medium. These resources are most highly concentrated in the ties we have exposed between Heidegger’s metaphilosophy and the existential analytic, which establishes understanding as an always-already parameter of Being-in-the-world. For while, as we have shown, there is indeed priority to being-attuned in the constitution of experience, an attunement — as fundamental as it may be — “always has its understanding, even if it keeps it suppressed” (2008 [1927]:182). Unlike the practices that discover the infinite wonder of being in superseding the conceptual

⁹ Among the most recent and especially illuminating ones I wish to mention: Nelson (2024), Jenkins (2018), and Ma (2008).

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dimension of experience, for philosophy — the crystallization of a fundamental attunement is premised on this dimension's immanent clarification. "Only he who knows how to correctly say the sayable can bring himself before the unsayable" (2002a [1931–32]: 71) — answers the philosopher to the mystic. In contrast to most meditative practices, Heidegger believed that "releasement toward things and openness to the mystery... flourish only through persistent, courageous thinking" (1966 [1955]: 56). Whether he was right or wrong, I hope our study has shown that — at least potentially — Heidegger's metaphilosophy has not only the ability to snatch philosophy's perfectionist promise from its dissolution in academic knowledge production, but also the power to carve a unique place for philosophy among transformative practices. Philosophy is a practice of intrinsic worth, for which rigorous conceptual knowledge forms not an obstacle but an authentic medium.

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