

## HEIDEGGER AND THE QUEST OF FREEDOM

WILLIAM J. RICHARDSON, S.J.

*Fordham University*

WHAT CHARACTERIZES the age of Christian renewal is the quest of freedom. For man in our time has a deeper awareness than ever before of the mystery of his own liberty. The reason may lie in the historical moment itself; for it seems that at this stage of his development man is being invited to assume more and more responsibility for the direction of the evolutionary process out of which he himself has emerged. In any case, the Church herself feels the same stirrings in her own members; for in any given area of crisis in the postconciliar age—and most dramatically perhaps in the area of morality—the quest of freedom plays a significant, sometimes decisive, role. It is the purpose of these pages to raise the question as to whether the thought of Martin Heidegger can offer any light to that quest, no matter how trammelled with darkness that light may be.

To be sure, the question of freedom is not the specifically Heideggerian question. Still less is he concerned with the question of morality (and least of all a “new” one). Rather, as we all know, his question is the question of Being. But the Being-question itself brings Heidegger to grips with the notion of freedom time and again along the way, so that it is not a distortion for us to examine his thought under this aspect. And once we come to grips with the problem of freedom, surely the question of morality is not far away. Let us follow this general sequence of thought as we proceed.

The basic orientation of Heidegger’s effort at posing the Being-question is by now fairly common knowledge. How he came to the question he has made clear himself. At the age of eighteen, when he was at the academic level of about a college sophomore, a priest-friend gave him a copy of Franz Brentano’s doctoral dissertation *On the Manifold Sense of Being in Aristotle*, where “Being” translates the German *Seiendes* and the Greek *on*, both signifying “that which is.” He describes the experience in a familiar passage:

. . . On the title page of his work, Brentano quotes Aristotle’s phrase: *to on legetai pollachōs*. I translate: “A being becomes manifest (i.e., with regard to its Being) in many ways.” Latent in this phrase is the *question* that determined the way of

my thought: what is the pervasive, simple, unified determination of Being that permeates all of its multiple meanings? . . . How can they be brought into comprehensible accord?

This accord can not be grasped without first raising and settling the question: whence does Being as such (not merely beings as beings) receive its determination?<sup>1</sup>

The Being-question, then, was posed early. Heidegger goes on to list some of the forces that influenced him as he began to elaborate it. The first he mentions is Edmund Husserl:

Dialogues with Husserl provided the immediate experience of the phenomenological method that prepared the concept of phenomenology explained in the Introduction to *Being and Time* (§7). In this evolution a normative rôle was played by reference back to fundamental words of Greek thought which I interpreted accordingly: *logos* (to make manifest) and *phainesthai* (to show oneself).<sup>2</sup>

Husserl, then, supplied him with a method. But what he does not mention, yet what seems equally decisive for the young Heidegger, was the Husserlean experience that for a phenomenologist a "being" is that which appears, is present as meaningful to him. It would follow that the Being of such a being would be the process that *lets* such a being appear to the philosopher and be present as meaningful for him.

Another early influence, no doubt under the aegis of Brentano, was Aristotle—but in a rather unusual way: "A renewed study of the Aristotelian treatises (especially Book IX of the *Metaphysics* and Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*) resulted in the insight into *alētheuein* as a process of revealment, and in the characterization of truth as non-concealment, to which all self-manifestation of beings pertains. . . ."<sup>3</sup> In other words, there is evident even in these early years a correlation between Being, conceived as a process of revelation by which beings appear, and truth, conceived as a process of non-concealment. For by Being a being becomes revealed, i.e., the veil (*velum*) of obscurity that conceals it is torn aside (*re-*). In Greek, the word for concealment is *lēthē*, and privation is signified by an alpha prefix. When a being becomes re-vealed, it becomes un-concealed (*a-lēthes*), i.e., (for the Greeks) "true." Being, then, is conceived as a process by which non-

<sup>1</sup> M. Heidegger, Preface to W. J. Richardson, S.J., *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague, 1963) p. xi. Here and subsequently in these pages all translations are by the present writer unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xi-xiii.

concealment (*a-lēihei-a*: truth) comes about. By the same token the being in question may be conceived as "liberated" from concealment and Being (*alētheia*) a process of liberation, of making beings free. From the beginning of Heidegger's way, then, Being, truth (*alētheia*), and freedom are inseparably intertwined.

Once this basic insight is clear, it is easy to understand that the treatment of the problem of freedom will run parallel—at least by implication—to the problem of Being, and follow the same vagaries along the way. For the sake of clarity, then, let us examine the notion of freedom first in the early Heidegger (let us call him Heidegger I), then in his later period (Heidegger II), and conclude with some questions of our own.

## I

By Heidegger I, we understand the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and of those earlier works, prior to 1930, which share the same perspectives. Now there is, to be sure, a discernible conception of freedom in *Being and Time* (1927), but amid the welter of analyses there it remains in the oblique. Perhaps we can get to the heart of the problem more incisively if we begin with Heidegger's thematization of the problem of freedom in the much shorter (though hardly more readable) essay *On the Essence of Ground* (1929). There we find as explicit a statement as this: "...Transcendence to the World is freedom itself. . ."<sup>4</sup> For Heidegger I, then, transcendence and freedom are somehow one.

Heidegger is perfectly aware, of course, that his remark is startling, and he passes immediately to the defensive. The tradition conceives of freedom as one form or another of "spontaneity," i.e., as a type of causality by which the self initiates [something] of and by itself (*Von-selbst-anfangen*). This, however, is a purely negative conception of freedom, he claims, in the sense that the self is conceived as a cause whose causality is not determined by some other cause. To explain such a conception positively, one would have to explain ontologically (1) the nature of the self, and (2) the fundamental process-character (*Geschehenscharakter*) of its structure, in order to explain how

<sup>4</sup> "... Der Überstieg zur Welt ist die Freiheit selbst. . ." (M. Heidegger, *Vom Wesen des Grundes* [4th ed.; Frankfurt, 1955] p. 43; hereafter *WG*).

the self *can* initiate anything at all. Now “. . . the selfhood of the self that already lies at the basis of all spontaneity consists in transcendence. . . .”<sup>6</sup> What, then, is the nature of the self conceived as transcendence? In what does its process-character consist? By what right can this be identified with freedom?

“Transcendence” is not a specifically Heideggerean word. Aside from *On the Essence of Ground*, we find it thematized in his own name only in the closing section of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, where Heidegger’s purpose is to make clear to the reader the close relationship between his own problematic (already developed in *Being and Time*) and that of Kant, at least as he understands Kant.<sup>6</sup> As he reads Kant, the purpose of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was not to construct a theory of knowledge but to lay the foundation for metaphysics (i.e., the *metaphysica specialis* of the Leibniz–Wolff tradition). Insisting on the finite character of human knowing, according to which the knower does not create the objects of his knowledge but must receive them, Kant probed the a priori (i.e., pre-experiential) conditions of possibility of this knowing. Now if, for the finite knower, the givenness of beings-to-be-known is itself conceived a priori, then there must be built into the structure of the knower himself a pre-experiential comprehension of their structure as beings, i.e., of their Being, which may be conceived as a sort of domain or horizon within which these beings *can* be encountered and known. This a priori horizon of encounter is what Heidegger in Kant’s name calls “transcendence.”<sup>7</sup> Heidegger’s own explanation can hardly be improved upon:

A finite knowing essence can enter into comportment with a being other than itself which it has not created, only when this already existing being is in itself such that it can come to the encounter. However, in order that such a being as it

<sup>6</sup> “. . . Die Selbstheit des aller Spontanität schon zugrunde liegenden Selbst liegt aber in der Transzendenz. . . .” (*ibid.*, p. 44; Heidegger italicizes whole).

<sup>6</sup> M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. J. Churchill (Bloomington, Ind., 1962) pp. 209–55.

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger finds his warrant in Kant’s explanation of the word “transcendental”: “. . . I call that knowledge transcendental which concerns itself in general not so much with objects as *with our manner of knowing objects insofar as this must be a priori possible. . . .*” (I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. R. Schmidt [Hamburg, 1952] B 25; Kant’s italics).

is can come to an encounter [with a knower], it must be "known" already by an antecedent knowledge simply as a being, i.e., with regard to its Being-structure. . . . A finite [knower] needs [a] fundamental power of orientation which permits this being to stand over in opposition to it. In this original orientation, the finite [knower] extends before himself an open domain within which something can "correspond" to him. To dwell from the beginning in such a domain, to institute it in its origin, is nothing else than the transcendence which characterizes all finite compartment with beings. . . .<sup>8</sup>

How Heidegger justifies his interpretation of Kant's endeavor need not concern us here. At the moment it is important only to see how the word "transcendence," thus understood, is transposed into his own problematic. ". . . Man is a being who is immersed among other beings in such a way that the being that he is not as well as the being that he is himself have already become constantly manifest to him. . . ." So far, this is nothing but what in Kant he calls "transcendence." But he adds immediately: ". . . This manner of Being [proper to] man we call existence. . . ."<sup>9</sup> For Heidegger I, if transcendence and freedom are one, so too are transcendence and existence.

In *Being and Time* "existence" is described as the Being of *Dasein*.<sup>10</sup> *Dasein*, of course, is the name chosen by Heidegger to designate the nature of man insofar as he is characterized before all else as endowed with a special comprehension of Being that permits him to discover and name beings as what they *are*. Existence, thus understood, is later on written as ek-sistence, to suggest more clearly its fundamental

<sup>8</sup> "Ein endlich erkennendes Wesen vermag sich zum Seienden, das es selbst nicht ist und das es auch nicht geschaffen hat, nur dann zu verhalten, wenn dieses schon vorhandene Seiende von sich aus begegnen kann. Um jedoch als das Seiende, das es ist, begegnen zu können, muss es im vorhinein schon überhaupt als Seiende, d.h. hinsichtlich seiner Seinsverfassung, 'erkannt' sein. . . . Endliches Wesen bedarf dieses Grundvermögens einer entgegenstehenden Zuwendung-zu. . . . In dieser ursprünglichen Zuwendung hält sich das endliche Wesen überhaupt erst einen Spielraum vor, innerhalb dessen ihm etwas 'korrespondieren' kann. Sich im vorhinein in solchem Spielraum halten, ihn ursprünglich bilden, ist nichts anderes als die Transzendenz, die alles endliche Verhalten zu Seiendem auszeichnet. . ." (M. Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* [2nd ed.; Frankfurt, 1950] pp. 69-70).

<sup>9</sup> ". . . Der Mensch ist ein Seiendes, das inmitten von Seiendem ist, so zwar, dass ihm dabei das Seiende, das er nicht ist, und das Seiende, das er selbst ist, zumal immer schon offenbar geworden ist. Diese Seinsart des Menschen nennen wir Existenz. . ." (*ibid.*, p. 205).

<sup>10</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (London, 1962) pp. 32, 67.

nature. In other words, by reason of its Being *Dasein* stands (-*sistit*) outside of (*ek-*) itself and toward Being, the lighting-process by which beings are revealed. We may add, too, that in the phenomenological analysis of *Being and Time* Being reveals itself as the horizon of the World, so that *Dasein's* openness towards Being can be described as to-be-in-the-World. In any case, it becomes perfectly clear that whatever the justification of its Kantian antecedents, transcendence for Heidegger means the same thing as existence, *Dasein*, and to-be-in-the-World: it designates *Dasein's* structural comprehension of Being by reason of which *Dasein* can pass (-*scendit*) beyond (*trans-*) all beings, including itself, to the Being of beings by which they are revealed to it. It is this passage that characterizes *Dasein* as a self and accounts for the fact that its fundamental structure is not that of a substance but of a process (*Geschehen*). So far, so good. But by what right is such a process called freedom?

Before we can understand this clearly, we must review the essential elements of the phenomenological analysis of *Dasein* as it develops through *Being and Time*. In the briefest possible terms, we may say that the phenomenological analysis reveals *Dasein* to be transcendence that is finite, whose ultimate meaning is time.

*Dasein* is transcendence. This appears from the close analysis of what it means to-be-in-the-World. First Heidegger examines the World and discovers it to be not simply a horizon within which beings are encountered but a matrix of relationships within which they have meaning. Then he examines what it means to-be-in such a World. Fundamentally it means to disclose the World, and by reason of this disclosure beings within the World are disclosed to *Dasein*. Heidegger finds three components of this disclosure of the World through *Dasein's* In-being. The first he calls "com-prehension," not in any intellectual sense but as a seizure (-*prehendere*) by *Dasein* in and as itself (*cum-*) of the pattern of meaningfulness that the World supplies. The second he calls "the ontological disposition" (*Befindlichkeit*), that component of *Dasein's* structure by which it is affectively disposed to other beings, responds to them, reverberates with them in all its various moods. Finally, the third component of *Dasein's* In-being in the World Heidegger calls "logos" (*Rede*). By this he understands that element in *Dasein* by reason of which *Dasein* can articulate its presence in and to

the World through language. This complex structure by which *Dasein* is in-the-World is what the phenomenological analysis discovers in transcendence. We should add here perhaps that Heidegger insists that *Dasein* is never a solitary in the World. It ek-sists with other *Daseins* (*Dasein* is *Mitdasein*), and this interlacing structure is the basis of all empathy.

Be that as it may, transcendence is finite, i.e., it is limited by many different kinds of "not." To begin with, *Dasein* is not its own master—it does not create itself but finds itself as a matter of fact in the World. Heidegger calls this *Dasein*'s "thrownness." Furthermore, *Dasein* is not independent of other beings but is related to them and in this reference depends on them to be what it is. Again, this referential dependence goes so deep that *Dasein* tends to become absorbed in other beings, becomes fallen among them ("fallenness") to such an extent that it tends to be oblivious of its openness to Being, to forget its true self. In its everyday condition, *Dasein* is normally victim of this fallenness, caught up in the throes of what everybody else says and does. Heidegger discerns this condition graphically as a subservience to "everybody else" (*das Man*).

Another kind of "not" that marks the finitude of *Dasein*'s transcendence is the fact that Being itself, when considered in terms of beings, can only be experienced as not-a-being, Non-being (*Nichts*). But the deepest "not" of all is the fact that *Dasein* cannot be forever, it is destined to die. So deep is this negativity of death that its sign is upon *Dasein* from the beginning—not as an event still to come but as already circumscribing the finite *Dasein*. As soon as it begins to *be*, it begins to be *finite*, and the supreme finitude that circumscribes it from the beginning is death. From the first moment of ek-sistence, then, *Dasein* is Being-into-death. The sum total of all these different types of finitude Heidegger calls "guilt." Because it is finite and inasmuch as it is finite, *Dasein* is ineluctably guilty.

Such, then, are the ingredients of the self as finite transcendence. Thrown among beings, it is open to their Being, yet trammled with finitude, i.e., guilt. But how are these elements experienced in their unity, as pertaining to a single self? It is here that Heidegger

describes the phenomenon of anxiety as revealing the true nature of the self. Anxiety is a special mode of the ontological disposition, an affective, nonrational attunement within us. It is different from fear, because fear is always an apprehensive response to something—like a dentist's drill—a being. But in anxiety the self is not anxious about any one thing but about no-thing in particular, about nothing! Yet not absolutely nothing, rather about "something" quite "real" that is still not a thing like other things, nor is it situated here nor there nor anywhere. Anxiety reveals *Dasein* as exposed to "something" that is no-thing and no-where. At this moment the things that have a "where" around us seem to slip out of our grasp, lose their meaningfulness. We are no longer at home among them. We are alienated from them, as we say—we are alienated, too, from "everybody else," from *das Man*, with all that they do and say. We discover that there is another dimension in life than the everyday one, a new horizon of which we are ordinarily unaware, yet within which and toward which we truly ek-sist, whether we call this horizon simply the Nothing (*Nichts*), the World, or even Being itself. Through the phenomenon of anxiety, then, the self becomes aware of itself as a unified whole—related to beings within the World, yet open to Being, the World as such—aware, too, of the possibility of accepting the fact that this is what it is (finite transcendence), or of running away from the truth, refusing to know anything except what "everybody else" knows. In other words, the phenomenon of anxiety reveals to *Dasein* the possibility of choosing to be authentic or not.

But anxiety as such goes no further. It reveals *Dasein* to itself but as such it does not call upon *Dasein* to make the choice to be true to itself. Yet there is such a voice that calls to *Dasein* out of its very depths—a voice that invites *Dasein* to be liberated from the thralldom of "everybody" and accept itself as finite transcendence, as openness to Being, shot through, as it is, with ontological guilt. This, for Heidegger, is the voice of conscience. To heed this voice means to say "yes": yes to its own transcendence—that is, to the fact that it will always be alienated from "everybody" to the extent that its true abode is not simply the level of beings alone but the domain of Being itself; yes to its own finitude, not as if this meant blind surrender to a tragic fate but simply a



tranquil resignation to the fact that it is no more than it is. *Dasein* says "yes" to itself by what Heidegger calls the act of "resolve" (*Entschlossenheit*), the moment when it achieves authenticity.

*Dasein* is finite transcendence, whose ultimate meaning—i.e., the ultimate source of its unity—is time. As transcending ek-sistence, *Dasein* is always coming to Being, i.e., Being is coming to it. This coming is *Dasein*'s future. But Being comes to a *Dasein* that already is. This condition of already-having-been is *Dasein*'s past. Furthermore, Being as it comes to *Dasein* renders all beings present as meaningful to *Dasein*. This presence is *Dasein*'s present. Future-past-present, these are the components of time. What gives unity to *Dasein*, then, is the unity of time. To achieve authenticity precisely as temporal, *Dasein* must accept itself as essentially temporal—yes, and as historical, too.

There is much more to say, of course, but we must stop here if we are going to say anything about the question of freedom. In what sense does Heidegger maintain that to be truly authentic is to be truly free? In the sense that to be one or the other is to be true. What, then, does he mean here by truth?

We say that a statement is true when it expresses a judgment that is conformed to a situation of fact—in other words, when the judgment so judges a situation to be as it *de facto* is. But what guarantees this "so . . . as" relationship? Is it not the discovery by *Dasein* that the situation is as it is judged to be? More fundamental than conformity is this process of discovery of beings as they are, in their Being. But this process in *Dasein* which discovers the Being of beings—what is it but the comprehension of Being in *Dasein*—in other words, *Dasein*'s ek-sistence, transcendence itself?

This process of discovering, which is *Dasein*'s transcendence, is the origin of truth as conformity, i.e., original truth. That is why Heidegger can say that *Dasein* is "in the truth." But *Dasein*'s transcendence is finite, it is permeated by a multiple "not." For that reason the coming to pass of truth—truth in its origin, original truth—is likewise pervaded by a "not." Consider, for example, that aspect of *Dasein*'s negativity which we called "fallenness," i.e., *Dasein*'s built-in drag towards beings that propels it towards inauthenticity by inclining it to become a slave of "everybody" (*das Man*) and forget its privilege of transcend-

ence. The process of original truth, too, is fallen among beings. This means that the discovery of beings is always somehow askew. They are discovered, to be sure, but always inadequately and drop back immediately into their previous hiddenness. For *Dasein* to apprehend a being (*ergreifen*) is simultaneously to misapprehend it (*vergreifen*); to uncover (*entdecken*) is to cover up (*verdecken*); to discover (*erschliessen*) is to cover over (*verschliessen*). This condition of undulant, inescapable obscurity Heidegger calls "untruth." "... The full ... sense of the expression '*Dasein* is in the truth' says simultaneously '*Dasein* is in the untruth' . . ." <sup>11</sup> And why? Because transcendence is finite.

Clearly, then, the coming to pass of finite transcendence is the coming to pass of truth in its origin. Now if *Dasein* achieves authenticity through that gesture of self-acceptance that is called "resolve," then resolve must be also the eminent mode of truth—but also of untruth. In other words, if by resolve *Dasein* accepts the finitude of transcendence, it simultaneously consents to the finitude of truth. "... [*Dasein*] is simultaneously in truth and untruth. This applies in the most 'authentic' sense to resolve as authentic truth. [Resolve] authentically makes untruth its very own. . .," <sup>12</sup> i.e., accepts the inescapable finitude of the transcendence which is the basis of truth.

But to do this is to become free. How? In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger uses two formulae with regard to the achieving of freedom. He speaks of "laying free" and of "becoming free." What he means by "laying free" becomes clear when we recall what he means by phenomenology. As we saw, it means *legen* (to let-be-seen) *ta phainomena* (beings whose nature it is to appear). But why should we have to make a special effort to let-be-seen these beings, unless these beings, in appearing as what they are, somehow conceal themselves as what they are? The effort to let them be seen, then, is an effort to liberate them from the obscurity that enshrouds them as what they are—to let them be free in truth. In truth! Recall what we know of the finitude of original truth, namely, that *Dasein* is in the untruth. As a result, the beings that *Dasein*

<sup>11</sup> "... Der volle existenzial-ontologische Sinn des Satzes: '*Dasein* ist in der Wahrheit' sagt gleichursprünglich mit: '*Dasein* ist in der Unwahrheit' . . ." (M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* [9th ed.; Tübingen, 1960] p. 222; hereafter *SZ*).

<sup>12</sup> "... Erschlossen in seinem 'Da,' hält es sich gleichursprünglich in der Wahrheit und Unwahrheit. Das gilt 'eigentlich' gerade von der Entschlossenheit als der eigentlichen Wahrheit. Sie eignet sich die Unwahrheit eigentlich zu. . ." (*SZ*, pp. 288-89).

illuminates by reason of its comprehension of their Being-structure are so contaminated with negativity of this illumination that they conceal themselves as they reveal themselves. To let them be seen as what they are means to liberate them as far as possible from this concealment, in order that they may be manifest as what they are in truth. Truth must be wrested (*abgerungen*) from them; they must be torn away (*entrissen*), robbed (*Raub*) from concealment in order that they may be manifest as what they are in truth. This is the sense Heidegger gives to the alpha prefix in *alētheia* here. It suggests the privation of, or liberation from, concealment. To lay something free, then, means to liberate it from obscurity—to let its truth come-to-pass.

What, then, does it mean to become/be free? The terminology Heidegger reserves to *Dasein* itself. As a matter of fact, the expression is used in two ways, and we might see in them two successive moments of the process by which *Dasein* lays its self free. The first moment of freedom occurs when *Dasein* is startled out of the complacency of its everyday absorption in beings and realizes for the first time that by its comprehension of Being it passes beyond these beings (including itself) to the process that lets them be (manifest). This occurs in the moment of anxiety when all beings seem to slip away from *Dasein* and leave it exposed to the “something” that is no-thing, the horizon of the World. In this moment *Dasein* has been laid free, liberated from the obscurity that had hitherto held captive the structures of its own transcendence. In this moment *Dasein*'s existence is wrested from (alpha prefix) the concealment (*lēthē*) that held it prisoner; it is then clearly a moment of truth (*alētheia*).

But only the first moment of truth, for it is only the first moment of freedom. “Anxiety,” says Heidegger, “reveals in *Dasein* . . . [its] being-free-for [*Freisein für*] the freedom of choosing its self [*die Freiheit des Sich-selbst-wählens*] . . .”<sup>18</sup> In other words, this first moment of freedom makes possible a second moment in which it can choose to accept its self as transcendence that is finite, or to refuse its self by trying to run away from the awesome privilege of transcendence in yielding to the seduction of being one with “everybody else.” In other words, it is free to choose between authenticity and inauthenticity.

<sup>18</sup> “Die Angst offenbart im *Dasein* das *Sein zum eigensten Seinkönnen*, das heisst das *Freisein für die Freiheit des Sich-selbst-wählens und -ergreifens*. . . .” (*SZ*, p. 188).

If it chooses to be inauthentic, it becomes a slave to the world of "everybody." If it chooses to be authentic, then, and only then, does it become authentically free. This happens, as we saw, when *Dasein* heeds the voice of conscience, calling it to achieve its self. ". . . In comprehending this voice," says Heidegger, "*Dasein* is attentive to the most characteristic potentiality of its existence. It has [thereby] chosen its self."<sup>14</sup> This choice is its resolve. In it *Dasein* liberates its self unto its self, achieves its self in authenticity, becomes authentically free.

For the early Heidegger, then, freedom is conceived fundamentally as achievement—achievement of the self. In all this the essential is to see that the primary sense of freedom is liberation in the sense of *alētheia*, the coming-to-pass of truth; that this comes-to-pass through the structure of *Dasein* as transcendence, ek-sistence, openness to Being-as-such; that *Dasein* itself brings the process to fulfilment when it achieves authenticity through the gesture of resolve.

Do we have the right to transpose any of this into terms of morality? As far as Heidegger is concerned, absolutely not. He conceives his question about Being (and about man only insofar as man has a built-in comprehension of Being) as far more radical than any question about the "oughtness" of human acts. We catch the spirit of his enterprise when we recall his insistence upon how Kant's three classic questions (1. What can I know? 2. What ought I to do? 3. What can I hope for?) are ultimately reduced to the fourth, which is the most fundamental of all: What is man [and, indeed, in his finitude] ?<sup>15</sup> In raising a question about the Being of finite *Dasein*, then, Heidegger feels that he is getting deeper than the ethical problem as such. This viewpoint comes sharply into focus when he is dealing with the question of *Dasein*'s guilt. Though this notion normally appears in the context of morality, for Heidegger it expresses *Dasein*'s ontological "indebtedness," i.e., the sum-total of its finitude, and nothing more. But as such, it remains an ontological condition of possibility for moral action:

. . . This essential condition of being guilty is in an equally original way the existential condition of possibility for "moral" good and evil, i.e., for morality as such and its possible matter-of-fact derivations. Morality cannot be what deter-

<sup>14</sup> ". . . Das Dasein ist rufverstehend hörig seiner eigensten Existenzmöglichkeit. Es hat sich selbst gewählt" (*SZ*, p. 287; Heidegger's italics).

<sup>15</sup> See *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 214, 224.

mines the original condition of guilt, because [morality] already of itself supposes [guilt].<sup>16</sup>

At best, then, Heidegger himself is dealing here only with the ontological structures that will be operative in any moral life, and these only insofar as they are part of the process of transcendence. But once this is said, is it possible for someone else who starts with a different experience—whether philosophical or religious—to legitimately utilize these Heideggerean structures to articulate his own experience, without claiming that the result is Heideggerean in any way other than that of inspiration?

If so, then all that is implied in the concept of authenticity might be very helpful. Fundamentally this means a free acquiescence to the finitude of truth which comes-to-pass through transcendence. Does this suggest a possible new way of speaking about conformity to moral law, or more specifically to so-called “natural” law, that would be correlative with the achievement of human liberty rather than a restriction of it? If by “natural” law we understand, grossly speaking, the law for man’s action inscribed in his “nature,” the “nature” of man in Heideggerean terms (*Wesen*) is obviously existence, transcendence, i.e., the finite process of original truth. As transcendence, *Dasein* is project of the World and therefore of its own potentialities as to-be-in-the-World. But the potentialities are constricted because transcendence is thrown into the matter-of-fact situation in which it finds itself. Thus “thrown,” *Dasein* is given over to itself to be. Truth (*alētheia*), therefore, though illuminated through *Dasein*, is nonetheless *given* to *Dasein* to accomplish through its gesture of free acceptance. May we find here the ingredients of law-as-norm, whereby the law to be accomplished is essentially the process of *alētheia* and therefore precisely *as* law also liberation?<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> “. . . Dieses wesenhafte Schuldigsein ist gleichursprünglich die existenziale Bedingung der Möglichkeit für das ‘moralisch’ Gute und Böse, das heisst für die Moralität überhaupt und deren faktisch mögliche Ausformungen. Durch die Moralität kann das ursprüngliche Schuldigsein nicht bestimmt werden, weil sie es für sich selbst schon voraussetzt” (*SZ*, p. 286).

<sup>17</sup> In this context the following text, markedly Kantian in tone, is worth more attention than we can give it here: “. . . In diesem transzendierenden Sichentgegenhalten des Unwillen geschieht das Dasein im Menschen, so dass er im Wesen seiner Existenz auf sich verpflichtet, d.h. ein freies Selbst sein kann. . .” (*WG*, p. 43).

Again, may we find some way of speaking about law-as-command, whereby the imperative character of the moral ought finds its foundation in the ecstatic nature of ek-sistence itself as drive-toward-Being? In this sense conscience, as the existential component called "logos," would let-be-seen by the self the finite process of *alētheia* as the self, and by this very fact call from *Dasein* on its ontological level to *Dasein* on the ontic level, lost in the distractions of *das Man*, and summon it to be true to its self—both ontic and ontological at once. Such a conception would allow us to reconcile the altereity of command with the autonomy of freedom.

All of this should, of course, be spelled out in greater detail, but perhaps enough has been said to indicate at least the direction in which one might move in order to use Heideggerean structures to articulate a non-Heideggerean experience. To get a more complete picture, however, let us move on to a consideration of the Heidegger of the later years. Since we have seen that the problem of freedom is inseparable from the problem of truth, we may safely allow the evolution of the notion of truth to guide us through the turning in Heidegger's way.

## II

After *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger meditated more and more on Being as a process of *alētheia*, and in 1930 he gave for the first time his lecture *On the Essence of Truth*. What strikes him now is this: if Being is the process of *alētheia*, then *lēthē* ("velation," if you will) must somehow antecede the privation of itself, the *a-lētheia* (*re-velation*). As a result, Being begins to be conceived now as possessing a certain priority over *Dasein*, a kind of spontaneity by reason of which it reveals itself to *Dasein*. With this experience the so-called "later" Heidegger emerges.

In this new phase, what is to be said of Being? It reveals itself as *Alētheia* in beings and as beings, but because of itself Being is not a being, it hides itself in beings too. As a result, every manifestation of Being is finite, i.e., is constricted within the finite beings that it lets appear. Every revealment, then, is at once a concealment of the rich plentitude of Being, and this phenomenon of simultaneous revealment-concealment Heidegger calls "mystery." In this spontaneous disclosure of itself in beings to *Dasein*, Being is said to "send" (or "e-mit") itself (*sich schickt*), and *Dasein* is at the same time "com-mitted" (*Schicksal*)

to the process. This process of e-mitting-com-mitting, taken as a correlation between Being and *Dasein*, is called "mittence" (*Geschick*), which, of course, is always a finite phenomenon. Now what characterizes any given epoch of history is precisely the way Being reveals itself (and conceals itself, too, for of course the mittence is finite) in beings at a given time. In other words, every epoch is determined by a finite mittence of Being. For example, the epoch of Absolute Idealism was characterized by the finite mittence of Being to Hegel; our own epoch is characterized by what Heidegger calls the mittence of "technicity" (*Technik*). At any rate, these epochs (mittences: *Geschick-e*) taken together constitute inter-mittance (*Ge-schick-te*), which is to say history (*Geschichte*), i.e., Being-as-history.

What now of *Dasein*? It is the *Da des Seins*, the There of Being among beings through which Being reveals itself. Being has need of its There, so that the revelation can take place. *Dasein*'s task is simply to let Being reveal itself in the finite mittence, to let Being be. Sometimes the revelation of Being to *Dasein* is conceived as a "call" or "hail" to *Dasein*. *Dasein*'s task is, then, to "respond" to that call, to "correspond" with it, to "tend" Being in beings as the "shepherd" of Being, to acquiesce to its own commitment in the e-vent of Being's self-revelation. It is this acquiescence of *Dasein* to Being-as-revelation that Heidegger now calls "thought"—"foundational" thought.

There can be no question of elaborating here the conception of foundational thought. We must restrict our attention to the question of freedom and its implications for morality. We can situate the problem best if we first see clearly that the question that preoccupies the later Heidegger is no different from the question of Heidegger I: What is the meaning of Being? The difference between the two is simply this: in the early years Heidegger approaches the question through an analysis of *Dasein*; in the later years he tries to think Being for itself and from itself. Our question about freedom, then, comes down to this: How is the conception of freedom, already articulated in *Being and Time*, transformed in the later period and in particular with reference to the nature of foundational thought?

Recall that Being (*Alētheia*), revealing itself in finite mittence, conceals itself as well. This self-concealment (which again is itself concealed in a type of compound concealment) is called "mystery" and

is a first type of non-truth (i.e., limitation) intrinsic to truth itself. Another type of non-truth is called "errance" (*Irre*), i.e., the self-concealment involved in *Alētheia* is such that it even beguiles *Dasein* into forgetfulness of the mystery, makes beings themselves seem to be what they are not. Now for *Dasein* to correspond to Being (*Alētheia*) in terms of this double negativity, it must discern Being (*Sein*) from merely seeming-to-be (*Schein*). This discernment Heidegger calls a "scission" (*Scheidung*), but just such a scission is a "de-cision" (*Entscheidung*) of thought. Of such a nature was the effort at thought among the Pre-Socratics, such must be the structure of foundational thinking.<sup>18</sup> But this acquiescence to the coming-to-pass of *Alētheia* in all of its negativity—what is this but the gesture of resolve by which, according to *Being and Time*, authenticity is achieved?<sup>19</sup> Indeed! And Heidegger himself is very explicit about the point. ". . . The essence of thinking [is] . . . resolve unto the presencing of truth."<sup>20</sup> We infer, then, that it is by foundational thinking that *Dasein* achieves its authenticity and thereby becomes authentically free. Here only the focus has changed. When authenticity is conceived as the result of foundational thinking, there is less emphasis on it as the achieving of the self than upon the aspect of responding to a hail or the accepting of a gift. We will find the same emphasis transposed into a different key in the conception of freedom. Let us see this more in detail.

To begin with, since Being is *Alētheia*, the originating process of revealment-concealment, it is itself by the same token *the Free* (*das Freie*), and each epochal mittence constitutes in its own way the freedom in which *Dasein* finds itself.

Freedom permeates [*verwaltet*] the Free in the sense of something lit-up, i.e., revealed: To the coming-to-pass of revealment, i.e., of truth, freedom stands in the closest and most intimate relationship. [And] all revealing is inseparable from a hiding and concealing. What has been concealed, however, and continues to conceal itself is the Source of all liberation, Being-as-mystery. All revealment comes from the Free, goes toward the Free, and brings [*Dasein*] into the Free. The freedom of

<sup>18</sup> See M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. R. Manheim (New Haven, 1959) p. 110.

<sup>19</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 111-15.

<sup>20</sup> "Dann wäre das Wesen des Denkens, nämlich die Gelassenheit zur Gegnet, die Entschlossenheit zur wesenden Wahrheit" (M. Heidegger, *Gelassenheit* [Pfullingen, 1959] p. 61).



the Free consists neither in the license of the arbitrary nor in restriction by mere laws. Freedom is what conceals [itself] in lighting up [beings]. In this lighting-process there waits that veil that conceals the process by which all truth comes-to-presence, and [at the same time] lets the veil itself shine forth as doing the concealing. Freedom is the domain of mittance that at any given moment sets revelation on its way.<sup>21</sup>

If Being, then, is the supremely Free, sending itself in finite (i.e., self-concealing) mittance of freedom to man, how conceive the freedom of man? “. . . Man becomes free for the first time precisely insofar as he becomes an attendant of the domain of mittance and thereby someone attentive [to its hail] . . .”<sup>22</sup>—in other words, insofar as he acquiesces to the epochal revelation of *Alētheia*. This revelation is addressed to him as a hail—not imposed upon him as a constraint (*Zwang*) but bestowed as a gift that before all else liberates him unto the fulness of his power. “. . . Being, insofar as it emits itself to man . . . first liberates men into the Free of the essential potentialities of any given commitment.”<sup>23</sup> Thus rendered free, he *can* (freely) respond to the hail.

. . . The hail brings our essence into the Free, and this in so decisive a manner that what calls us to thought gives [us] the freedom of the Free in order that what is free in a human way can dwell there. The originating essence of freedom conceals itself in the hail that gives to mortals [the task] of thinking that which above all else is to be thought [i.e., Being (*Alētheia*) itself] . . .<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> “Die Freiheit verwaltet das Freie im Sinne des Gelichteten, d.h. des Entborgenen. Das Geschehnis des Entbergens, d.h. der Wahrheit, ist es, zu dem die Freiheit in der nächsten und innigsten Verwandtschaft steht. Alles Entbergen gehört in ein Bergen und Verbergen. Verborgener aber ist und immer sich verbergend das Befreiende, das Geheimnis. Alles Entbergen kommt aus dem Freien, geht ins Freie und bringt ins Freie. Die Freiheit des Freien besteht weder in der Ungebundenheit der Willkur, noch in der Bindung durch blosse Gesetze. Die Freiheit ist das lichtend Verbergende, in dessen Lichtung jener Schleier weht, der das Wesende aller Wahrheit verhüllt und den Schleier als den verhüllenden erscheinen lässt. Die Freiheit ist der Bereich des Geschickes, das jeweils eine Entbergung auf ihren Weg bringt” (M. Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* [Pfullingen, 1954] pp. 32-33; hereafter *VA*). Compare *ibid.*, p. 258; *Über den Humanismus* (Frankfurt, n.d.) p. 30; *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen, 1959) p. 197.

<sup>22</sup> “. . . Denn der Mensch wird gerade erst frei, insofern er in den Bereich des Geschickes gehört und so ein Hörender wird, nicht aber ein Höriger” (*VA*, p. 32).

<sup>23</sup> “. . . Weil Sein, indem es sich zuschickt, das Freie des Zeit-Spiel-Raumes erbringt und in einem damit den Menschen erst ins Freie seiner jeweils schicklichen Wesensmöglichkeiten befreit” (M. Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund* [Pfullingen, 1957] p. 158; hereafter *SG*).

<sup>24</sup> “. . . Das Geheiss bringt unser Wesen ins Freie und dies so entschieden, dass Jenes,

Briefly, then, Being (*Alētheia*) for the later Heidegger is itself the Free, and each of its mittences constitutes a domain of freedom in which *Dasein* is first liberated unto the power freely to accept the gift of Being's revelation. The freedom of *Dasein* consists in that gesture of acquiescence to (foundational thought of) the revelation by accepting its gift with gratitude. In this sense Heidegger describes this supreme moment of thinking as thanking (*Danken*).<sup>25</sup>

If we were to appreciate the full import of this freedom as Heidegger conceives it, we would have to follow his own analysis of authentic response to a mittance of Being such as he described it, for example, in "The Question about Technicity," where he himself reflects on the mittance that constitutes our own epoch of Being-as-history, i.e., technicity.<sup>26</sup> But this would take us too far afield. Instead, let us stop here and attempt to consolidate our gains by returning to the problem of morality.

Heidegger II is no more concerned with morality than Heidegger I, and he has a chance to articulate his attitude on the matter very explicitly in the *Letter on Humanism*, when one of the three questions that had been posed to him by Jean Beaufret dealt with the problem of Ethics: "How can one render more precise the relation between ontology and a possible Ethics?"<sup>27</sup> Ethics, in the sense of a separate philosophical discipline, first appeared on the scene with Plato, Heidegger claims, when Being ceased to be experienced as the revelation-concealment of *Alētheia*, after the manner of the great Pre-Socratics (who spoke of it rather as *physis*), and was considered rather an Idea. Not only was the genuine sense of Being, then, forgotten, but

was uns in das Denken ruft, allererst Freiheit des Freien gibt, damit menschlich Freies darin wohnen kann. Das anfängliche Wesen der Freiheit verbirgt sich im Geheiss, das den Sterblichen das Bedenklichste zu denken gibt. . ." (M. Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken?* [Tübingen, 1954] p. 153). See also *ibid.*, p. 97. Compare *SG*, pp. 44, 157, 158.

<sup>25</sup> *WD*, pp. 85, 93, 94.

<sup>26</sup> M. Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," *VA*, pp. 13-44. The texts cited in notes 21 and 22 above were taken from this essay.

<sup>27</sup> M. Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus* (Frankfurt, n.d.) pp. 38-46; hereafter *HB*. It is impossible here to enter into the treatment of morality in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 196-99, although a fuller study than is feasible here would demand a consideration of these pages. For a succinct but comprehensive (and thoroughly competent) résumé of the ethical problem in Heidegger, see the admirable work of Reuben Guilead, *Etre et liberté: Une étude sur le dernier Heidegger* (Louvain, 1965) pp. 119-25.

the original sense of *ēthos*, too, for this signified to the early thinkers "sojourn" in the presence of emerging *physis*. Thus the tragedies of Sophocles would articulate a more original meaning of *ēthos* than is to be found in all of Aristotle's lectures on Ethics.<sup>28</sup> Be that as it may, we can see how Heidegger situates his own problematic with regard to Ethics as a philosophical discipline:

. . . If, according to the fundamental meaning of the word *ēthos*, the name "Ethics" is supposed to say that it meditates upon the sojourn (*Aufenthalt*) of man, then that type of thought which thinks the truth of Being as the originating element of man [conceived] as an ek-sistent being is in itself the original Ethics. . . .<sup>29</sup>

In such a perspective we can go even further. If we grant that foundational thinking is "in itself the original Ethics," then we may also say that Being in its mittences is likewise the original Moral Law that Ethics normally meditates.

Only insofar as man, ek-sisting in the truth of Being, is an attend-ant [*gehört*] of Being, can come the dispensation of those intimations which are to become law and rule for man. To "dispense" in Greek means *nemein*. The *Nomos* is not only law but more originally the dispensation of Being hidden in [its] mittance [to *Dasein*]. Only this dispensation is capable of meshing man with Being. Only such a mesh can sustain and bind [him]. Otherwise, all law remains no more than the artifact of human reason. More essential than all rule-making is [the fact] that man sojourns in the truth of Being. . . .<sup>30</sup>

For Heidegger II, Being, then, is conceived not only as *Alētheia* but as *Nomos*—and eventually as *Logos*, too. We must be content here merely to indicate the fact and remark that whether as *Alētheia*, or *Nomos*, or

<sup>28</sup> *HB*, p. 38

<sup>29</sup> "Soll nun gemäss der Grundbedeutung des Wortes *ēthos* der Name Ethik dies sagen, dass sie den Aufenthalt des Menschen bedenkt, dann ist dasjenige Denken, das die Wahrheit des Seins als das anfängliche Element des Menschen als eines eksistierenden denkt, in sich schon die ursprünglich Ethik. . . ." (*HB*, p. 41).

<sup>30</sup> "Nur sofern der Mensch, in die Wahrheit des Seins ek-sistierend, diesem gehört, kann aus dem Sein selbst die Zuweisung derjenigen Weisungen kommen, die für den Menschen Gesetz und Regel werden müssen. Zuweisen heisst griechisch *nemein*. Der *nomos* ist nicht nur Gesetz, sondern ursprünglich die in der Schickung des Seins geborgene Zuweisung. Nur diese vermag es, den Menschen in das Sein zu verfügen. Nur solche Fügung vermag zu tragen und zu binden. Anders bleibt alles Gesetz nur das Gemächte menschlicher Vernunft. . . ." (*HB*, pp. 44–45).

*Logos*, Being (the Free) is always mittent in character, i.e., reveals-conceals itself in epochs of history, and the foundational thinking (i.e., original Ethics) in man that responds to Being-(*Nomos*)-as-history is essentially a historical thought (Ethics).

### III

Let us now summarize and conclude. We are asking if the thought of Martin Heidegger can help us in our own quest of freedom in an age of Christian renewal. More specifically, can he help in any way to think the problems of morality, especially a "new" morality? We have followed a sinuous path, attempting to trace the essential elements of his conception of freedom. The key to his insight is the realization that freedom is essentially not some power or faculty in man but the process of *Alētheia* which liberates from concealment. In the early years this is identified with the process of transcendence and comes to its fulness by the gesture of resolve through which authenticity is achieved. In the later years, after the focus has shifted from *Dasein* to Being itself, this process is essentially a gift from Being, conceived now as the Free, to which *Dasein*, already the ek-sistent There of Being (the Free), responds. The response is acquiescence to this mittence in all of its finitude, i.e., to the epochal revelation of *Alētheia* that conceals itself even as it reveals itself, and corresponds to what for Heidegger I was resolve. It is clear that Heidegger is not at all concerned with the problem of morality as such. In both periods he is concerned only with Being and Being-structure. We have already raised the question as to whether or not the ontological structure of *Dasein* discerned by the phenomenological analyses of the early period might suggest new approaches to the ontology of the moral life. Let us conclude with some questions about the later period.

If the freedom of *Dasein* is the gift of Being (the Free), do we not have a way of reconciling a genuine freedom of *Dasein* with the alterity of its Source? And if this Source is Being-as-dispensation (*Nomos*, Law), then would we not accomplish by the same correlation a reconciliation of the freedom of *Dasein* with its cor-response with Law? For Law would be given to *Dasein* as making claim to be accepted, but given as gift—gift precisely of original freedom to be

freely accepted in authentic response. Again, if *Alētheia* (the Free) is not only *Nomos* (Law) but *Logos*, do we not have a new way perhaps of thinking the delicate relationship between Law and conscience? For conscience itself is the existential component called "logos" (*Rede*) in *Dasein*, itself the There of *Logos* (Being), so that Being (*Logos*) would utter its call to *Dasein* through the voice called "logos" in *Dasein*, i.e., its conscience. Furthermore, since *Dasein* always finds itself "thrown" (and, indeed, by Being, whose There it is) into a complex of concrete possibilities which might legitimately be called its "situation," through which the revelation of *Logos* is filtered, would we have the right to conceive of *Logos-as-Law* (*Alētheia*) revealing itself through logos-as-situation in logos-as-conscience, hailing *Dasein* to achieve authenticity in terms always of a particular concrete situation? Would such a perspective help us to articulate a morality that would be validly "situational" without at the same time being utterly Law-less? Again, if Being—*Alētheia*, the Free, Law, *Logos*—reveals itself in mittences that constitute as such epochs of history, then may we find in the preoccupation with the problem of freedom that marks our own epoch, perhaps the sign of a mittance of Being in its own right? If so, then would we find in the Being-structures of Martin Heidegger a way of thinking the ontological dimension, i.e., the dimension of Being-as-history, of a purely ontic phenomenon, i.e., the evolutionary process itself? In that case Heidegger might help us come to grips philosophically with such problems as the historicity of human "nature" as such, of the "law" of man's "nature," indeed of truth itself. What relevance such structures might have in coming to grips philosophically with such a problem as the shifting attitude among Roman Catholics towards birth control (to take but one obvious example) is evident.

With questions such as these we are, of course, way beyond Heidegger and in a realm of experience where he would feel out of place. But after we have tried to be faithful to his experience, we have a right to ask if this experience can help us be faithful to our own, i.e., as Christians. Such a question is our own way of achieving resolve in the presence of *Alētheia* in our own time. For to resolve, Heidegger tells us, means to will-to-know, where "knowing" has the sense he finds in the Greek *technē*, i.e., of standing within the revelation of

the Being of beings. To will-to-know in this sense means to question. "...Questioning is the willing-to-know that we have just explained: resolve unto the power to take a stand in the manifestation of beings. . . ."<sup>21</sup> In other words, the very raising of the questions we have posed here is one way of achieving authenticity. And the question itself is quest.

<sup>21</sup> "... Fragen ist das oben erläuterte Wissen-wollen: die Entschlossenheit zum Stehenkönnen in der Offenbarkeit des Seienden. . ." (M. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* [Tübingen, 1953] p. 17).



#### Copyright and Use:

**As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.**

**No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)' express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.**

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

#### About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.