

Heidegger

Being and Time (1927)

Heidegger, Martin, and David Farrell Krell. *Basic Writings : From Being and Time (1927) to the Task of Thinking (1964)*. Rev. and expanded ed. [San Francisco, Calif.]: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993.

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Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) (30 years younger than Husserl) German
Studied theology, then philosophy, influenced initially and profoundly by Brentano's *On the Manifold Meaning of Being according to Aristotle* (at age 17). By his own account, this is the work that inspired his lifelong quest for the meaning of Being.

Heidegger completed his dissertation in 1916 at Freiburg University. Husserl arrived in 1916, and Heidegger became his assistant in 1919 when he was 30.

Heidegger and Husserl

Heidegger was not exactly Husserl's most faithful follower; he was not captivated by Husserl's work in transcendental subjectivity, as he preferred his earlier work *Logical Investigations*. But still consumed with the question of things themselves, Heidegger soon began to radically interpret Husserl's phenomenology.

In 1927, Heidegger published his most notable work *Being and Time*. The work was originally dedicated to Husserl, but due to personal strains and the political climate of the time, the dedication was removed. It was later restored after WWII.

His debt to Husserl cannot be overlooked. Not only is *Being and Time* dedicated to Husserl, but also Heidegger acknowledges in it that without Husserl's phenomenology his own investigation would not have been possible.

The study of being

Throughout his long academic career as a teacher and scholar (over 50 years), Heidegger was preoccupied with the question of being. The first formulation of this question begins as early as his high school studies during which he read Franz Brentano's book *On the Manifold Meaning of Being in Aristotle*. In 1907 the seventeen year old Heidegger asked: "If what-is is predicated in manifold meanings, then what is its leading fundamental meaning? What does being mean?" The question of being, unanswered by that time, becomes then the leading question of *Being and Time*.

Heidegger does not base his philosophy on consciousness as Husserl did. For him the phenomenological or theoretical attitude of consciousness, which Husserl makes the core of his doctrine, is only one possible mode of that which is more fundamental, which Heidegger refers to as *Dasien* or human existence.

Although he agrees with Husserl that the transcendental constitution of the world cannot be unveiled by naturalistic or physical explanations, in his view it is not a descriptive analysis of consciousness that leads to this end, but the analysis of human existence. Phenomenology for him is not a descriptive, detached analysis of consciousness. It is a method of access to this question of *being*.

Heidegger looks at many different modes in which we exist and encounter things. He analyses the structure of things not only as they are encountered in the detached, theoretical attitude of consciousness (like Husserl), but also in daily life.

Language

Heidegger placed an emphasis on language as the vehicle through which the question of being could be unfolded, and on the special role of poetry. While his later works discussed a wide range of subjects such as poetry, art, and technology, his philosophical preoccupation essentially remained on the question of being from the beginning to the end.

Looking at the long history of the meaning attributed to “being,” Heidegger notices that in the philosophical tradition it has generally been presupposed that being is at once the most universal concept, the concept indefinable in terms of other concepts, and the self-evident concept; in short, the concept that is taken mostly for granted.

And so he begins the essay with the necessity of the issue:

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And so, although we seem to understand being, its meaning is still veiled in darkness.

He continues on to say:

The formal structure of the question of Being:

The question absolutely *must* be formulated in order to insure that we are asking the right distinctive question that will uncover the pertinent answers. For every question is a seeking and every seeking takes its direction beforehand from what is sought. The meaning of being must therefore be available to us in some certain way. To uncover the facts, we need a distinct methodology: phenomenology.

Phenomenological Method

Heidegger radicalized the phenomenology of his teacher Edmund Husserl by applying the phenomenological method to study the nature of existence; and in doing so, gives phenomenology a new meaning. He conceives it more broadly, and more etymologically. Where Husserl applies the term “phenomenology” to a whole philosophy, Heidegger uses it to designate a method.

Since in *Being and Time* philosophy is described as “ontology” (the study of the nature of existence) and has as its theme Being, it cannot adopt its method from any of the actual sciences. *Being* is to be grasped by means of the phenomenological method.

Therefore, we need to restate the question of the meaning of being. Being is essentially different from a being, from beings. Using the phenomenological method, Heidegger ventures to answer the general question of being, but *first* of the very particular kind of entity, that which is the human being – he calls this Dasein. (He is basically narrowing his scope, to pinpoint the absolute most important aspect of being, and to formulate the question with complete clarity).

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(51) “A science’s level of development is determined by the extent to which it is capable of a crisis in its basic concepts.”

But First: Analysis of Dasein

(Being) Dasein

The starting point of philosophy for Heidegger is not consciousness, but Dasein which he describes as a particular kind of being. Dasein is that being which we ourselves are, and is distinguished from all other beings by the fact that it makes issue of its own being.

In everyday German language the word “Dasein” means life or existence. The noun is used by other German philosophers to denote the existence of any entity. However, Heidegger breaks the word down to its components “Da” and “Sein,” and gives to it a special meaning which is related to his answer to the question of who the human being is.

Da-sein, it is the site “Da” for the disclosure of being “Sein.”

Human existence is the site for the revealing of *being*.

Next, Heidegger writes about how this Dasein will become accessible and ultimately contemplated interpretation? He says on p.59 that we look to the world around us:

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Next on the agenda: the way that time/temporality figures into the inquiry if existence:

(Time) Temporality

Heidegger further attempted to access being (Sein) by means of phenomenological analysis of human existence (Dasein) with respect to its temporal and historical character.

Heidegger's fundamental analysis of Dasein points to temporality as the primordial meaning of Dasein's being. (this reminds us of Husserl's work)

Heidegger says that Dasein is essentially temporal and its temporal character is derived from 3 part structure:

(from: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/heidegge/>)

1. Dasein is **potentiality** for being; it projects its being upon various possibilities. Existence represents thus **the phenomenon of the future**.
2. Next, Dasein always finds itself already in a certain spiritual and material, historically conditioned environment; in short, in the world, in which the space of possibilities is always somehow limited. This represents the **phenomenon of the past** as having *been*. (this reminds us of Husserl's views on memory)
3. Finally, Dasein exists in the midst of beings which are both in existence and not in existence. The encounter with those beings, 'being alongside' or 'being with' them, is made possible for Dasein by the presence of those beings within the world. This represents the **primordial phenomenon of the present**.

Accordingly, Dasein is not temporal for the mere reason that it exists "in time," but because its very being is rooted in temporality: the **original unity** of the future, the past and the present.

Temporality cannot be identified with ordinary clock time. It is the phenomenon of original time. It is a movement through a world as a space of possibilities. The 'going back' to the possibilities that have been (the past) and their projection in the resolute movement 'coming towards' (the future) in the moment of existence, which both take place in 'being with' others (the present), provide for the original unity of the future, the past, and the present which constitutes authentic temporality.

Hence, it harmonizes itself towards the future by always coming back to its past; the past which is not merely past but still around as having *been*. But in this "going back" to what it has been which is constitutive together with "coming towards" and "being with" for the unity of Dasein's temporality, Dasein hands down to itself its own historical "heritage," namely, the possibilities of being that have come down to it.

Because Dasein is authentically temporal, it is also authentically historical. The repetition of the possibilities of existence, of that which has been, is for Heidegger constitutive for the phenomenon of original history which is rooted in temporality.

Heidegger's Legacy

Heidegger believes the human being is the unique being who possesses the character of openness toward *being*. But men and women can also turn away from being, forget their true selves, and thus deprive themselves of their humanity. This is, in Heidegger's

view, the situation of contemporary humans who have replaced authentic questioning concerning their existence by ready-made answers served by ideologies, mass media, and overwhelming technology. (This was 1927)

(51) "A science's level of development is determined by the extent to which it is capable of a crisis in its basic concepts."

Being aware that there is a deficiency in the dogmatic; that which has been "given" to us as fact, things we may take for granted - in these areas there are many discoveries to be made.