

## The Time of Being and the metaphysics of presence

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In Heidegger's 1962 essay "Time and Being" he anticipates the reader's question and asks, what prompted him to place time and Being together? He answers:

From the dawn of Western-European thinking until today, Being signifies the same as presencing. Out of presencing, presence speaks of the present. . . . Being is determined as presence through time.<sup>1</sup>

From the dawn of his own thinking as well, Heidegger has brought Being and time together, most notably by describing Temporality as "the meaning of Being" in *Being and Time*. As we will see, he thinks that, starting on a path of thought laid out by Greek philosophers, Western culture has taken Being as presencing in two senses: (1) "to be" signifies presence at some here and now, and (2) "to be" signifies something with which we could be involved or at home with in our everyday world.<sup>2</sup>

### 1. The metaphysics of presence

At least since the days of Plato and Aristotle, we have taken "to be" as signifying "to endure through time." Even the Forms and God are real in an eternal "now" which encompasses all worldly "nows." Something is not taken to be "really" real unless it *is* at some moment of time, that is, unless it has presence at some present. We might take this claim as an obvious truism. Of course, we say, for something to *be*, no matter what it is like, it must be *present* at some moment of time which was, is, or will be the present, even if its manner of showing up is very different from ordinary objects.<sup>3</sup> However, Heidegger argues that even the traditional characterization of Being as temporal, timeless, or supratemporal is a particular metaphysical interpretation which treats time as another thing we encounter like an object, as if it were a sort of container for things and events.<sup>4</sup> By pointing out that Western culture has taken Being as presencing, Heidegger suggests that our way of understanding the Being of what-is, that is, for example, the

Being of nature, history, language, and ourselves, is only one possible way of understanding Being and could be different.<sup>5</sup> Thus presencing is not simply the way things reveal themselves in any human being's present but only how they reveal themselves to Western Dasein.

We are so immersed in our own understanding of Being that we find it difficult, if not impossible, to imagine a radically different way of understanding things. Jorge Luis Borges, the great Latin American author of philosophical fantasies and perceptive literary criticism, mentions an alternative which helps to break the grip of presence upon us. Borges reports that "a certain Chinese encyclopedia entitled *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*" divided animals into:

(a) those that belong to the Emperor, (b) embalmed ones, (c) those that are trained, (d) suckling pigs, (e) mermaids, (f) fabulous ones, (g) stray dogs, (h) those that are included in this classification, (i) those that tremble as if they are mad, (j) innumerable ones, (k) those drawn with a very fine camel's hair brush, (l) others, (m) those that have just broken a flower vase, (n) those that resemble flies from a distance.

Michel Foucault comments that his book *Les mots et les choses* grew out of his laughter and astonishment at this taxonomy which demonstrates at the same time the "exotic charm of another system of thought" and "the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*."<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps the reason we resist accepting the taxonomy of the "certain Chinese encyclopedia" as an alternative way of categorizing animals is that it involves no enduring Being of what-is united across past, present, and future or specifiable in every "now." An animal could change categories moment to moment or fall into more than one of these "species" at once depending on its relation to the viewer, current activity, and so forth. Western science, both ancient and modern, is founded on the understanding of the Being of what-is as presencing. Things stay put in their nature, that is, are defined by it in our sense, no matter at what present moment we examine them. A dog has been, is, and will be one.

## 2. Mythological understanding and the beginning of philosophical thought

To glimpse what it would be like to take Being as something other than presencing, we need to think of cultures radically different from our own. Granting Heidegger his idea that our understanding of Being is determined by a Temporal framework, what would be an alternative to presencing? What

would it be like for Dasein to disclose Being oriented toward the past or the future? For the former way of understanding Being, we can look to the understanding of Being in societies immersed in a mythological – as opposed to the Greek ontological – view of the world.

In discussing the mythological tales of the Saulteaux natives of Canada, anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell comments: “On the whole, then, events that are believed to have taken place ‘long ago’ are not systematically correlated with each other in any well-defined temporal schema. They are discrete happenings, often unconnected and sometimes contradictory. Yet the past and the present are part of a whole because they are bound together by the persistence and contemporary reality of mythological characters not even now grown old.” He adds: such characters “in fact are actually more ‘real’ than distant human ancestors no longer remembered.”<sup>7</sup>

Notice that Hallowell’s comments betray his own commitment to the metaphysics of presence and the view that any radically different alternative must be untrue in some way when he describes mythological events as “contradictory” and “not systematically correlated” to a “well-defined temporal schema.” He defines the mythologically real in terms of the “persistence” and “contemporary reality” of things, our own standard for what makes anything real. However, the mythological view of reality makes its own complex, systematic correlations between the entities of its “once upon a time” past, the time-marking cycles of the stars and seasons, particular human experiences such as dreams and religious visions, and the daily practices they all guide, for example, hunting, planting, and migrating. As Heidegger comments about the understanding of Being in myth-oriented cultures: “The past as such shows itself to be the genuine and ultimate ‘why’ of all-which-is.”<sup>8</sup>

The different Temporal disclosure matrix of myth gives birth to a different view of ordinary time just as Heidegger’s account of the derivation of the everyday conception of time would seem to predict (SZ §81 and TB 11/12). Many mythological cultures regard time as cyclical and heteromorphic in contrast to our notion of a linear time made up of identical “nows.” Religious practices and visionary events happen in a sacred time that can invoke the mythological past into the present, starting the cycle of the seasons over again or telling people what they must do in everyday time. The present loops back to rejoin the reality of past rather than, as in our view, marching steadily into an unknown future. The rituals and royalty of a mythological culture get their authority from their participation in the sacred time, not from how well they help us cope with everyday life in the present.<sup>9</sup> Heidegger notes that “the fundamental mythological-religious relationship to time can accentuate a single temporal direction” and that examination of ancient Persian, Indian, Chinese, and Egyptian religions as well as Greek philosophy would reveal

different “feelings for” and conceptions of time (BRC 36/259). Although Plato’s and Aristotle’s conceptions of time may still exhibit the earlier cyclical view of time, Aristotle’s definition of time as the measure of motion allows the shift to the linear view after the uncoupling of the link between motion and the perfection of circles as well as philosophy’s encounter with Christianity.

Heidegger depicts the transition from mythological cultures to the metaphysics of presence as occurring in three steps. The society moved from nature myths to the intermediate stage of cultural myths, such as Homer’s stories, and then to an orientation toward tools and the famous Greek “discovery of mind” or “subjectivity.” He remarks:

The further process of the disclosure of “subjectivity” and its comportment is realized in the transition from nature myths to the culture myths, to finally the stage of manipulation of tools, which is more or less free from magic. At this stage of the process, the ontological context of things by itself becomes manifest as more independent in that man frees himself from magical bondage to things and, by stepping back from the world, it is possible for him to meet things objectively (BRC 37–38/261).

The “onto-logical” context that became manifest let the Greeks encounter the “logos” of the Being of things in the realm of everyday life: making and using tools, growing crops and breeding animals, building and maintaining temples and permanent dwellings, and so forth.

The Temporal orientation toward presencing at the basis of Western culture “determines primarily the timing of the timeliness (*Zeitigung der Zeitlichkeit*) of all dealings with the ready-to-hand” (BPP 308/438). The understanding of Being as presencing takes what-is as something with which we can deal, something here and now which we can literally grasp, turn to and fro, modify to suit our needs, and so forth. The new orientation toward the ready-to-hand which arose in ancient Greece is, according to Heidegger, a clear break from myth. For example, the determination of the important characteristics of human beings or of a particular culture now takes the tools and items of everyday use as paradigmatic rather than a wolf as the clan totem or Marduk as the slayer of Tiamat. In considering justice within the self and society, Socrates begins with a discussion of the function of horses and pruning hooks, not the behavior of Zeus or Odysseus, and then he proceeds to ask what the function of the soul is.

An “object-oriented,” that is, “objective,” ontological context does not exist for early civilizations where connections between things are made by myth and magic, not practical or everyday use. Of course, this does not mean that mythological cultures do not use tools or engage in activities to

acquire food and shelter, nor that we are the only culture whose view of reality is “objective” as contrasted with imaginary or arbitrary. It means that the practices of such societies were integrated by a very different framework of reality articulated by the mythological past and magical forces based on metaphorical similarities or spiritual energies, not the relationships between things viewed as ready-to-hand or present-at-hand (BRC 34/257–58). We think such connections are evanescent or fantastic because they seem to us to resist consistent manipulation and replication, two features essential to our Western notion of objectivity both of which indicate the priority of the present.

As early as *Being and Time* Heidegger commented, “Perhaps even readiness-to-hand and equipment have nothing to contribute as ontological clues in interpreting the primitive world and certainly the ontology of thinghood even less” (SZ 82). The world of present-at-hand things is far removed from the world of myth and magic that uses tools and rituals to invoke a dimension beyond, one that is hidden from view in a very different way than the way our involved use of tools lies behind the appearance of things as present-at-hand, that is, as discrete objects with determinate, enduring properties. How did the early Greek philosophers arrive at the understanding of objects as fundamentally present-at-hand after an initial (and, Heidegger thinks, original) recognition of the role of cultural practices and tool-use in the formation of an understanding of Being? That is another story. Philosophy, Heidegger says, “did not spring from myth. It arises solely from thinking . . . the thinking of Being.”<sup>10</sup>

### 3. From *Being and Time* to “Time and Being”

Scholars suggest that Heidegger’s essay “Time and Being” “defies critical understanding,” its impenetrable jargon leaving us “wandering in some imaginary country mapped in inexhaustible detail by a philosophical Tolkein.”<sup>11</sup> Heidegger forewarns us, however, that “the only possible way to preview the later thought on the destiny of Being from the perspective of *Being and Time* is to think through what was presented in [it] about deconstructing the ontological doctrine of the Being of what-is” (TB 9/9). Of course, *Being and Time* only offers sketchy introductory remarks about this “deconstructing.” Even though Heidegger admits he was not capable of treating the issue of the Temporality of Being adequately at this opening stage of his thinking, he still insists that the basic question addressed remains the same. The 1962 essay “Time and Being” is not the missing section of the early work but reflects on its question in a different vocabulary (TB 83/91).

What studying the structures of Dasein's involved activity and the timeliness (*Zeitlichkeit*) underlying it does not adequately clarify is the way the Temporality (*Temporalität*) of Being leads to Dasein's changing understanding of what-is.<sup>12</sup> Lacking understanding of this basic idea in Heidegger's thought, we cannot even fully understand the timeliness of Dasein, especially what authentic Dasein grasps in a "moment of insight."<sup>13</sup>

In Division Two of *Being and Time* Heidegger suggests obscurely that the ecstases of Dasein's timeliness let it "stand outside" itself by standing open to the "horizons" of the Temporality of Being. Especially surrounded by Existentialist-sounding terminology in Division Two, the term "horizon" misled many readers into thinking that Heidegger was simply offering an Existentialized version of Husserl's account of time-consciousness. However, the dimensions of the Time of Being which Heidegger distinguishes in the 1962 essay parallel those of Dasein's timeliness, as the horizons of Temporality presumably would have in the earlier projected analysis. With this important part filled in, the essay completes the analysis of the relation between Dasein and Being begun in the early work.

In various places in Divisions One and Two Heidegger anticipated the analysis of "Time and Being" that was supposed to follow. For instance, the section entitled "The Timeliness of Being-in-the-World and the Problem of the Transcendence of the World" (SZ §69) broached the issue of the Temporal structure of other domains of Being such as the ready-to-hand, the present-at-hand, and nature.<sup>14</sup> Chapter Five's discussion of Dasein's historicity adds the Temporality of works of art to this list by referring to the ruins of a temple as well as household gear found in museums and nature presenting itself as countryside, battlefield, or sacred site (SZ 378–80, 388). Heidegger insists that the history of the Being of what-is does not just accompany the "inner" history of the soul or even the "inner" history of Dasein (SZ 389). It is "unconcealed" to us in our dealings with things. Heidegger will tacitly fill in the notion of the Temporality of the Being of what-is in works of his middle period with such examples as the Greek temple articulating its culture's understanding of Being and "the thing thinging," that is, a thing such as the cross, crown, or book becoming the central source of significance in historical epochs of Being.<sup>15</sup> Dasein's Being as "ek-sistence" lets it stand open for the revelation of the Being of what-is in all domains of Being, including its own.

In the essay "Time and Being" Heidegger returns to the deeper issue and provides us with the vocabulary, however tortuous, to talk about the full Temporal framework. We can correlate its terms to the ecstases of Dasein's timeliness and begin to get a sense of their interconnection.<sup>16</sup>

Ecstases of the timeliness of Dasein	Having-beenness ( <i>Gewesenheit</i> )	Making-present ( <i>Gegen-wart</i> )	To-come ( <i>Zukunft</i> )
Dimensions of the Temporality of Being	What-has-been ( <i>das Gewesen</i> )	What-is-pre-sent ( <i>die Praesenz</i> )	What-is-to-come ( <i>die Zu-kunft</i> )

The existential analysis of *Being and Time* reveals structures found in any Dasein's Being, no matter whether it understands itself as rational animal, image of God, consciousness representing objects – or member of the wolf clan, that is, either ontologically or mythologically (see SZ 313). Similarly, the dimensions of Temporality indicate structures found in the Time of Being in general, the content of which is given by the particular historical epoch. For example, to the people of the Middle Ages, nature as *phusis* was What-has-been, nature as God's creation is What-is-pre-sent, and nature as quantifiable material is What-is-to-come. The interplay of these three dimensions is the subject of the next section.

On the existential level Heidegger focuses on Dasein's "everydayness" as a tool-using, social being in order to avoid the bias of any particular understanding of Being. He argues for the priority of the future dimension of Dasein's care-structure and timeliness precisely because of its own Being as an openness to Being.<sup>17</sup> As we will see, Heidegger places a parallel importance on the future dimension of the Temporality of Being.

#### 4. Nearing as the fourth dimension of the Time of Being

In mythological and Western cultures the orientation toward the past or the present indicates one way in which Being is "determined through time," the first sense distinguished at the beginning of this paper. However, this first description of the nature of the metaphysics of presence depends on notions of Dasein's timeliness and of time which both presuppose the other, more important aspect of the connection between Time and Being. This is the way in which the Temporality of Being holds together cultural practices and provides the stable background against which their changes are played out, letting Dasein be at home with things in its everyday activities. This is the Time described in *Being and Time* as the "meaning of Being." It makes possible Being as presencing.

In his essay "Time and Being" Heidegger describes the Time of Being as four dimensional (TB 15/16). The fourth dimension of Time, "nearing," brings together the other three dimensions to create a unified context for the understanding of Being, "gathering" and propagating it through the centuries

to create a culture, rather than just a collection of individuals living in close proximity, and a coherent existential world, rather than a jumble of individual perceptions and activities. Heidegger focuses on presencing as Western culture's particular way of nearing, but mythological cultures also require this sort of unification. Lacking a label from Heidegger's own vocabulary, I suggest that, in contrast and by analogy, we call the way they do it "pastting." Thus "presencing" and "pastting" are two different instantiations of nearing as the fourth dimension of the Time of Being.<sup>18</sup>

Given the density of Heidegger's language in "Time and Being," perhaps we should begin with one of his own illustrations of the phenomenon he is attempting to describe: the Temporal disclosing of past, present, and future as gathered together by presencing. He remarks about Nietzsche's insight into the Being of what-is: "Nietzsche uses 'nihilism' as the name for the historical movement that he was the first to recognize and that already governed the previous century while defining the century yet to come, the movement whose essential interpretation he concentrates in the terse sentence 'God is dead.'"<sup>19</sup> The "historical movement" is the movement of the history of Being, the history of the changing Temporal disclosure of the domains of what-is such as nature, language, space, and humanity itself. This remark also illustrates the timeliness of authentic Dasein. In a "moment of vision" Nietzsche discerned "what can be 'in a time'" by anticipating What-is-to-come while both "repeating" and making a "counter-claim" (*Widerruf*) against What-has-been (SZ 338, 385–386).

Nihilism was already showing up in the cultural practices of the nineteenth century, but Nietzsche's contemporaries clung to the reflective belief that God – not material wealth, nor national or individual power – gave purpose to everything. What-has-been as God's creation still had a hold on people, though many of their own activities "denied" this view "in practice" while they insisted on it "in theory." People still gave lip-service to the old beliefs, still attended church, and so forth, but it was evident from their daily life that the world was no longer the sacred place it was in the Middle Ages. As authentic Dasein, Nietzsche can articulate the change manifest in everyday dealings with what-is before the people caught up in them fully realize the difference. His philosophy is the lightning flash that disclosed the changing Being of what-is, but the thunder took a long time to reach the ears of the public (*das Man*). Once nihilistic practices take hold, once we "fall" to or are addicted to them, there is no returning to the Christian world of Middle Ages: God is dead.

The daily cultural practices in the wake of the Industrial Revolution also gave a glimpse of the technological domination of nature that was yet to come. Although Nietzsche's own understanding of the Being of what-is as



will to power may seem to suggest the essence of this subsequent epoch of Being, its full consequences were beyond his ken. Nihilistic practices treated what-is as objects without transcendent meaning or value but only pointed the way toward the technological view of things as simply raw material for arbitrary human purposes. In Heidegger's language, during Nietzsche's time the technological "enframing" of objects is still concealed in the future of Being as What-is-absent yet also presencing as possibility in What-is-to-come.

Also consider a simpler, more familiar example taken from the beginning of the modern epoch rather than the end: Descartes and Galileo did not just invent the idea that the essential characteristics of things could be translated into numbers. The cultural practices, particularly in the economic realm, had already started to treat things as mathematically quantifiable. For example, the medieval barter system, which exchanged quality for quality, for example, tanned hides for grain, was displaced by the increasing use of money which translated goods into numerical quantity. Changes in basic cultural practices dealing with the Being of what-is – in this example, nature and number – prepared the ground for the subsequent authentic insight into the Being of what-is "unconcealing" itself in this new way.

Heidegger asserts the priority of the Temporal disclosure of the Being of what-is by claiming that only because ontological propositions are Temporal propositions "can and must they be *a priori* propositions." He adds: "we recognize Being only later or maybe even not at all" (BPP 324/461–62). "The Greek thinkers already knew this when they said: that which is earlier with regard to the arising that holds sway becomes manifest to us only later."<sup>20</sup> The Being of what-is must already show up in a mathematical or nihilistic way in our everyday dealings with what-is before the great thinkers could have their insights. Metaphysics was not invented in ancient Greece as just a game of thought or flight of fancy; nor is metaphysics only manifest in the thought of philosophers. We have lived the metaphysics of presencing for 2500 years by responding to its unconcealment of the Being of what-is.

Now we can see the aptness of translating Heidegger's term "*Zeitlichkeit*" as "timeliness." Authentic Dasein's insight into Being is "timely" because it is "in time with" the changing manifestation of the Being of what-is in Western culture. When Heidegger makes such obscure assertions as "Timeliness times (*Zeitlichkeit zeitigt*) itself as the future making-present as having-been" we should remember the verb "*zeitigen*" means "to ripen" or "to mature" in ordinary language (SZ 350). It conveys an image of Dasein developing the potentialities laid out by the understanding of Being launched by Plato and Aristotle. This does not mean the history of Being is predetermined nor, even more obviously, that Dasein has no creative role in the process but rather

that the history of Being and the history of Dasein are bound together in reciprocal dialogue. The Being of what-is unconceals itself in our changing ways of dealing with things and our tacit understanding of ourselves; authentic Dasein makes the change explicit.

Presencing is the fourth dimension of Time because it is a distinctive way the cultural past, present, and future are held together; the future and past make their “presence” known along with the present, and thus presencing provides a distinctive kind of historical continuity. Heidegger suggests both the past and future dimensions of the nearing of Western culture – that is, in the jargon of “Time and Being,” What-has-been and What-is-absent but yet What-is-to-come – have “a manner of presencing and approaching which does not coincide with presencing in the sense of the immediate present. . . . Not every presencing is necessarily a present” (TB 13/14). Similarly, in pastting the mythological divinities and founding events are as real and effective in the present and future as they are in the past, but pastting creates a different sort of history by a different sort of gathering.

Heidegger says presencing holds on to What-has-been but as a “denial” and to What-is-to-come but as a “withholding.” He adds that this sort of nearing unifies in advance the ways in which What-has-been, What-is-to-come, and the present reach out toward one another. In doing this, nearing “preserves what remains denied in What-has-been, what is withheld in What-is-to-come” (TB 16/16). Heidegger describes our particular form of nearing as keeping “open What-is-to-come out of the future by withholding it in the coming of the present.” Nearing as presencing also “preserves what remains denied in What-has-been” (TB 15/16). This denial, then, should not be thought of as a complete rejection but, as Heidegger’s own German term “*Verweisen*” suggests, as an exile from the understanding of Being with which we were formerly familiar or at home. Thus, while the future dimension of the Temporality of presencing contains concealed possibilities which lay out the path that our understanding of Being may follow, the dimension of What-has-been is not put behind us as something over and done. Dasein’s understanding of What-is-to-come encompasses where we have been or come from, even when Dasein is no longer “there.” For example, the cultural practices of ancient Greece and medieval Christianity remain profoundly influential even though we no longer live or are at home with them.

The sort of “denying” and “withholding” involved in presencing are distinctive to historical happening – the happening of the Dasein of Western culture.<sup>21</sup> Heidegger thinks that mythological cultures do not happen “historically” in his technical sense and thus have no past to deny or future to withhold. Heidegger claims that the “ek-sistence of historical man begins when the first thinker takes a questioning stance with regard to the uncon-

cealment of what-is.” Such questioning, he adds, occurs in an “unmeasurable time” which opens up a world for every measure.<sup>22</sup> The Greeks experience what-is as What-presences (*das Anwesende*), whether at the present or not (AF 36–37/349). Heidegger says “we must discuss what sort of essence the Greeks think for Being” when they “experience coming forth (*Hervorkommen*) and departure (*Weggang*) as the basic trait of What-is-to-come” (AF 31/343). Only after human beings came to see themselves as historical in this particular way did they “define” themselves by a concept such as “rational animal” which marks off a type in a functional view of the world (IM 141–2/108).

Mythological cultures, however, seem to endure through past, present, and future with no change precisely because they take What-has-been as the source of all meaning. The Time that opens up their world leads to quite a different measure, but the “why and how” of the mythologically real and its structures can be explained in the general Heideggerian framework. The mythologically real discloses itself through Dasein’s timeliness in its own “moment of vision” oriented toward the past and Dasein’s thrownness (BRC 43/267–268). Such cultures reiterate the past without being exiled from it, and the past is what comes toward them from the future. Heidegger’s Eurocentric theory suggests ancient Egyptian, Native American, and Australian cultures continued in the same routines for thousands of years because the Time of Being in their cultures did not hold new future revelations within itself, as did the presencing that articulated the culture of ancient Greece. Thus, in Heidegger’s terminology, they seem to be missing the dimension of What-is-to-come, something which presencing as the fourth dimension of Time maintains in the way it establishes the other three dimensions.

We can now see that Heidegger’s discussion of nearing as presencing seems to leave us without a neutral or general term for the Temporal future. “What-is-to-come” and other terms from “Time and Being” such as What-is-coming-towards (*die Ankunft*) and What-is-approaching (*die Ankommen*) have a specific sense within this form of historicity. But pasting gives What-has-been the dominant role, and the Temporal possibilities of the present and future are “overwhelmed” by the force of the mythological past (BRC 43/267). Heidegger contrasts the two forms of culture:

A genuine beginning, as a leap, is always a headstart in which everything to come is already leaped over, even as something concealed. The beginning already contains the concealed end. The genuine beginning contains nothing of the captured neophyte character of the primitive. Because the primitive lacks the bestowing, grounding leap and headstart, it is always futureless. It is not capable of releasing anything more from itself because it contains nothing more than that in which it is caught.<sup>23</sup>

Thus Heidegger thinks that in a mythological culture the future is What-is-absent in quite a different way than the withholding of What-is-to-come. Nonetheless, the future retains an existential priority: primitive Dasein projects its everyday activities in a way that limits its future to the possibilities of the past, having no vision of what could be, only what has been. To reiterate his verdict: such cultures have not asked the question of Being.

In “Time and Being” Heidegger applies the term “What-is-absent” (*Abwesen*) to both What-has-been and What-is-to-come, leaving it with an indefiniteness that we can use (TB 13/14). We can commandeer it as a neutral term for the future dimension of Temporality, thus allowing the contrast:

Dimensions of the temporality of Being	Nearing as the fourth dimension of Time		
	What-has-been	What-is-pre-sent	What-is-absent
Dimensions of the temporality of presencing	What-has-been as denial	What-has-presence as the Being of what-is	What-is-to-come as withheld
	Nearing as presencing		

Just as Heidegger offers us general terms for the ecstases of Dasein’s timeliness as well as specific terms for the authentic and inauthentic modes of them, now we can have three general terms for the Temporal matrix of Being and three labels for their specific mode of nearing in presencing. We could invent other terms for their specific mode in pastting, but we would be going beyond Heidegger and would need a deeper, less parochial discussion of mythological cultures (and non-Western cultures in general) than this paper can provide.

## 5. The appropriation

As instantiations of the fourth dimension of time, presencing and pastting are holistically different ways of structuring the Time of Being. However, the primordial Time which determines Being as presencing – the Time that is the meaning of Being – is not the mysterious “it” of one of Heidegger’s favorite expressions, “it gives Being.” Heidegger says: “What determines both time and Being in what is proper to them, that is, in their belonging together, we call the Appropriation” (TB 19/20).

Now that we have concrete ideas of what Heidegger means by presencing and the Time of Being, his notion of the Appropriation will not seem quite

so obscure. Indeed, if he had gone on to discuss Temporality as the meaning of Being in the framework projected in *Being and Time*, the plausible next question could have been, what is the meaning of this primordial Time, that is, what makes it possible? The answer would be the Appropriation.

Heidegger may have only glimpsed this deeper level and may not have been prepared to push the investigation of *Being and Time* back to it when he sketched out its project. He does later say that the “relations and connections constituting the essential structure of the Appropriation” were not worked out until 1936–38 (TB 43/46). However, we should take this description of what “constitutes” the Appropriation quite literally: the Appropriation is not an “it,” not some kind of thing even in the loose sense of an event in time, as Heidegger’s term “*Ereignis*” suggests in ordinary language. The Appropriation is indeed a matter of certain “relations and connections,” and these were at least adumbrated in the published portion of *Being and Time*. In it Heidegger expressed the hope that the investigation of the historicity of the question of Being would lead us to raise – and perhaps answer – it anew.<sup>24</sup>

Heidegger’s notions of Appropriation and the complementary (but seldom discussed) Expropriation (“*Enteignis*”) refer us to Heidegger’s notion that Western civilization has kept “moving” in a way no other civilization has (TB 22–23/23).<sup>25</sup> We may be inclined to think of any society’s history or, in Heidegger’s technical vocabulary, its “happening” (*Geschehen*), as just a joint product of circumstance, accident, and invention, as if certain fortuitous geographical conditions and technological discoveries carried the momentum of social change, for example, the development of iron and other metals, steam power, the compass, etc. Yet China had printing, gunpowder, steel, pistons, and power looms hundreds of years before the West did, and their use remained isolated and restricted and the culture relatively changeless.<sup>26</sup> Heidegger’s notion of the way a culture’s Appropriation configures its understanding of the relationship between Time and Being does not really explain why Western culture has been different but rather directs our attention to the “relations and connections” that have made this movement not just possible but, he thinks, inevitable.

Why has our culture embarked on this course? On the one hand, Heidegger seems to say there is ultimately no answer to this question. Yet he does indicate one important factor: during the history of Being as presencing in Western culture, philosophy or the written word in general has been the primary vehicle for the insight into the Being of what-is. The Appropriation “rules as the destiny of Being. Its history comes to language in the words of the essential thinkers.”<sup>27</sup> Heidegger maintains we are bound to the characterization of Being as presencing from the time of its unconcealment as “something which can be said, that is, can be thought” (TB 7/6). And this starts with the pre-

Socratic philosophers. Heidegger also insists that the significance of this thought is not just that it “can be said,” but, more importantly, written.<sup>28</sup> Mythological cultures are oral cultures. Literacy pushed out orality in ancient Greece at the same time the metaphysics of presence pushed out myth. If language is the “house of Being,” then the one built by orality is very different than the one built by literacy – at least in Western culture.<sup>29</sup> In regard to a later epoch of Being, Heidegger darkly declares, “It is no accident that the invention of the printing press coincides with the inception of the modern period.”<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps the focus on presence is a result of expressing the insight into Being in words, particularly the words of the Greek language with its copula verb and the fruitful ambiguity of the word “*on*” or its encryption in the alphabetic system of writing. Perhaps, as well, this notion of reality is intimately tied to Greek philosophy’s reflective stance toward things which gradually transposes an original insight about the epistemological role of the ready-to-hand into a system of categorization that takes the present-at-hand as the model for every sort of Being. Or it may be tied to other aspects of Greek culture: democracy as conversation, the popularization and formalization of the use of money, or the famous “Greek discovery of form” apparent in its art. In any case, Heidegger insists we would be mistaken if we thought the Being of what-is means, for all time, the presencing of what-is-present (WICT 235–6/143).

In “Time and Being” Heidegger argues that we must carefully distinguish two different senses of the phrase “transformation of Being” (TB 35/38). On the one hand, there are the various “transformations” of Being in the history of Being as presencing, that is, the “epochal” stages of metaphysics with their different conceptions of the Being of what-is. On the other hand, there is the transformation of Being itself or of Being as presencing which would send us out of the metaphysics of presence. In Heidegger’s later work the leap for which he calls is as radical as that of the primordial beginning which launched Western culture on the path of metaphysics.

I leave the reader with one final thought, a question really. Heidegger says the current epoch of technology “could be understood as a continuation of the will to power, thus as an extreme formation of Being. However, at the same time it is the first form of the Appropriation itself” (TB 53/57). This new first form of Appropriation may send us into a radically new understanding of ourselves and our world. If pasting and presencing have run their course, might the Janus-faced, as Heidegger calls it, orientation of the technological understanding of Being point us toward the next Temporal dimension against which Being will be displayed? Is “futuring” the next type of nearing? And

electronic communication the medium from which the new house of Being will be built?

Without trying to determine whether Heidegger's worst fears or best hopes will be realized, we can briefly consider the features of our world that suggest we are moving in new Temporal direction. First, we can note that the notion of "objectivity" which entered with the metaphysics of presencing seems to be leaving with its disintegration. Although Heidegger thinks philosophy ends by dissolving into the individual sciences, their academic proponents as well as a sizeable portion of the public increasingly view all truths as only partial, inevitably limited by their advocate's personal point of view, or outright fabrications built to defend us from the chaos of reality. Truth as correspondence is a relic from another time, and truth as unconcealment lets the unfathomable Nothing peep through the facade of the once secure knowledge we criticize.

Reflective thinking is increasingly conducted in the realm of abstract possibility, detached from our familiar surroundings, and thus it "slips out of its element," the element which enabled metaphysics to grasp our understanding of Being as a holistic way of dealing with things (LH 220/318). Our surroundings themselves are also increasingly "possibilized" as old paradigms for basic human behavior dissolve into a multitude of free-floating choices of sexuality, family role, and job. We no longer take our bearings from social roles and practices laid out by history and tradition; our self-understanding, narratives, and perceived needs are now shaped by television, movie characters, and events that never were, are, or will be. Talk shows and tabloids hold up the bizarre and atypical as ways to be. The electronic web of the internet lets us become the disembodied minds that philosophers identified us with for millennia, and we can play different persona at will. Heidegger occasionally suggests that a work of art, not propositional language, will usher in the next understanding of Being, but he would shudder to think this work was television and computer screens with their particular images and icons, just as he shuddered at television antennae sprouting from the roofs of peasant huts in the Black Forest.

However, unlike the mythological characters which inhabited a "now" which is an eternal "once upon a time," our images and roles are fleeting and judged by novelty. Contemporary Dasein seems to live inconstantly ahead-of-itself in the ecstatic realm of sheer Being-able-to (*Sein-können*), detached from the hold of What-has-been. Instead of the mythological past overwhelming the future, preventing change and novelty, the contemporary future seems to overwhelm both the past and the present. Tools and technological devices are obsolete before we have a chance to become familiar and at home with them, and we do not really understand how they work even when we can use

them. We eagerly await What-is-absent as what is not yet even conceivable. In Western culture, the past is no longer a constant point of reference from which we retrieve new ways of looking at things but a burden from which we try to free ourselves. The future is not What-is-to-come or What-is-coming-toward but an empty Temporal potentiality in which we must invent ourselves and our world. How we respond to this invitation will determine whether nihilism wins our Being or we enter the new first form Appropriation.

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## Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, "Time and Being," *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, (Harper and Row, New York 1972), 2; *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1969), 2. My translation may vary slightly, but, as with other quoted texts, significant differences will be noted. Further references to this essay and Heidegger's discussion of it in the book's seminar transcript and postscript are included in the text in parentheses with the initials "TB." In citations of works by Heidegger giving two page numbers, the page of the English translation precedes that of the German edition.
2. Heidegger's term "*Anwesen*" is etymologically analogous to the Greek "*parousia*," Aristotle's "second substance." The Greek term "*ousia*" has come to be translated as "substance," but, Heidegger argues, in pre-philosophical speech it meant "real estate" or "premises," that is, familiar territory, as does "*Anwesen*." Moreover, "*das Anwesende*" means "those present" as in a place at a particular time, providing Heidegger with a word that connotes both (1) and (2). See Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph S. Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 61; *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953), 46. Another reference to this work will be included in the text in parentheses with the initials "IM." For an explanation of the use of the technical term "Temporality" and the capitalization of "Time," see note 12.
3. See *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 38–40; *Sein und Zeit*, twelfth edition (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1972), 17–19. Since the pagination of this edition of *Sein und Zeit* is given in the English translation's margins, further references to this work will be only to the page or section of the German edition and will be included in the text with the initials SZ.
4. See Heidegger's *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 306; *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, Vol. 24, *Gesamtausgabe* (1975), 434. Further references to this book will be included in parentheses in the text with the initials BPP.



5. I use the phrase “the Being of what-is” as a translation of “*das Sein des Seienden*” in order to avoid the standard pluralization of “*Seiende*” as “entities” or “beings.” In Heidegger’s analysis “what-is” refers to a “domain” of Being which can be an area of study such as “history, nature, space, life, Dasein, language, and the like” (SZ 9), not individual entities such as cats or hammers. The mythological cultures I describe below have an understanding of all these domains of what-is that is very different than the one found in Western culture.
6. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1970), xv. The quotation from Borges can be found in “The Analytic Language of John Wilkins,” in *Other Inquisitions*, trans. Ruth L. C. Simmes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), 103.
7. Irving Hallowell, “Temporal Orientation in Western Civilization and a Preliterate Society,” *Culture and Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1955), 232.
8. Heidegger’s remark is made with reference to Ernst Cassirer’s account of mythological cultures. See his “Book Review of Ernst Cassirer’s *Mythical Thought*” in *The Piety of Thinking*, trans. James Hart and John Maraldo (eds.) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 35–36; “Ernst Cassirer, Philosophie der symbolischen Formen, 2. Teil: Das mythische Denken,” Anhang II., *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, Vol 3, *Gesamtausgabe*, W-F. von Herrmann (ed.) (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1991), 259. Further references to this book review will be indicated in the text by the initials “BRC.” While part of Heidegger’s discussion simply describes Cassirer’s conclusions, he appears to endorse this claim himself. Heidegger’s disagreement with Cassirer is directed at his neo-Kantian assumption that the mythological view of reality is a construction of consciousness, not a result of Being-in-the-world.
9. Mircea Eliade argues that all “archaic” cultures view time and reality in this way. See *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. R. Willard Trask (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), e.g., 10 and 20.
10. Heidegger, “The Anaximander Fragment,” *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 40; “Der Spruch des Anaximander,” *Holzwege*, Vol. 5 of the *Gesamtausgabe*, Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (ed.) (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), 352. This work will be referred to in the text by the initials “AF.” For an explanation of Heidegger’s story, see my “Heidegger and the Beginning of Metaphysics,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 19, no. 1 (January 1988): 34–50, and “Ontology, the Ontological Difference, and the Unthought,” *Tulane Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 32 (1984): 95–102.
11. See Peter McCormick, “A Note on ‘Time and Being,’” *Philosophy Today*, XIX (Summer 1975), 99. For a similar criticism see John D. Caputo’s “Time and Being in Heidegger,” *Modern Schoolman*, L (May 1973), 335.
12. I change the usual translation of “*Zeitlichkeit*” to make the distinction between the characteristics of Dasein and those of Being graphically sharp. I follow the etymology of Heidegger’s own terms, translating the Germanic “*Zeitlichkeit*” as “timeliness” and the Latinate “*Temporalität*” as “Temporality,” keeping its traditional translation’s capital “T” to help the reader and emphasize the connection between Temporality and Being. I also capitalize “Time” when referring specifically to the Time of Being. However, since all German nouns are capitalized, Heidegger’s vocabulary makes no such discrimination in its uses of “*Zeit*,” and consequently, I will leave it uncanceled in direct quotations. The appropriateness of the use of the English word “timeliness” for Dasein’s *Zeitlichkeit* will become apparent in the following discussion.
13. In the context of my analysis, timeliness in general and its inauthentic modes (forgetting, waiting-towards or falling, and awaiting) as well as the authentic modes (repetition, moment of insight, and forerunning death) need a reinterpretation which I cannot provide here. For a comparison of Heidegger’s early use of the term “*Augenblick*” (moment of vision) with Aristotle’s notion of phronesis which suggests an insight into cultural practices, not just one’s own life, see Theodore Kisiel’s discussion in *The Genesis of ‘Being and Time’* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 282 and 286. For an

analysis of Heidegger's conception of the historicity of Dasein that uses the notion of the "*Augenblick*" in a way similar to the one implied in this paper, see Michael Allen Gillespie, *Hegel, Heidegger, and the Ground of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), Chapter Five, in particular 157–58, 162, 164. Also see my own discussion of the moment of vision, repetition, and death in "Dasein, Existence, and Death," *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 28 (Spring 1984): 52–65.

14. In this section Heidegger does provide preliminary names for the dimensions of Temporality of Being: the future as the "for-the-sake-of itself" (*Umwillen seiner*), the past as the "before-when" (*Wovor*), and the present as the "in-order-to" (*Um-zu*) (SZ 365). Since this terminology is dropped after the early works and our goal is to understand the later essay "Time and Being," I avoid adding more jargon to our discussion.
15. Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, and Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (ed.) (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 41–43; "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," *Holzwege*, 27–29, and "The Thing," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 182; "Das Ding" in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, fourth edition (Pfullingen: Neske, 1978), 175. Further references to the first essay will be indicated by the initials "OWA."
16. For the discussion of the ecstases of Dasein's timeliness, see SZ §65 and §68. Although "*Gegenwart*" literally means the present time, Heidegger frequently hyphenates the term to emphasize Dasein's activity as a "making-present" or "waiting-towards," both of which expressions are sometimes substituted for Heidegger's German word by Macquarrie and Robinson. For the terms for the past and future dimensions of the Time of Being, see "Time and Being," 13/13. For the technical term for the present dimension of the Time of Being I have chosen "*die Praesenz*" or "What-is-pre-sent," the word which is used for this Temporal horizon in early works still occupied with articulating the general structures of Dasein (see BPP §21). "*Anwesenheit*" or "presence" is used for this dimension in the later essay, but, as we will see below, we need a word which can apply to both mythological and Western cultures. "What-is-pre-sent" emphasizes that Dasein always finds itself in a world and also graphically connects the Temporal present with Dasein's making-present. I capitalize the English phrases for the Temporal dimensions to accentuate their role as technical terms and their connection with Being as well as to avoid confusion with the technical terms for the ecstases of Dasein's timeliness, for example, Dasein's "*Gewesenheit*" or having-beenness in contrast to the "*Gewesen*" of Being which includes the past of other domains of what-is besides Dasein, e.g., nature and language. This point is embedded in translations implying "What-is-" as a prefix rather than simply (and awkwardly) "The-has-been" and "The-to-come." In the 1962 essay Heidegger also uses "*die Ankunft*," "*Auf-uns-Zukommen*," and "*die Ankommen*" to refer to the future Temporal dimension, but I pick "*die Zu-kunft*" for parallelism and simplicity. For further discussion of an apt name for the future dimension, see the end of part IV below.
17. Even before the time-oriented re-interpretation of Dasein's Being, *Being and Time* tacitly or explicitly emphasizes the existential priority of the future. See (a) the structure of significance and the worldhood of the world in which the futural for-the-sake-of-which "signifies" the other aspects eventually correlated with the past and present (§18, especially 87); (b) the nature of Dasein's Being as understanding and Being-able-to (§31, especially 144); (c) the antecedents of interpretation as fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception (§32, especially 150); and (d) Dasein's care-structure as ahead-of-itself-already-in-a-world in its immediate involvement with what concerns it (§41, especially 191–92). See also the order of discussion of the Temporal horizons implied in note 14: future, past, then present.
18. The isomorphism between three of the dimensions of the Time of Being and those of the timeliness of Dasein is already laid out in the table in section III, but there is another parallel here. Nearing as the fourth dimension of Time correlates with discourse as an existential structure of Dasein. Although discourse is initially treated as on a par with the existential structures of situatedness (*Befindlichkeit*) and understanding, in Division Two's time-oriented re-interpretation falling and the moment of vision are correlated with the present ecstasis, situatedness with the past, and understanding with the future. Discourse

- is given the status (if not the name) of a fourth dimension of timeliness which “articulates” the other three. (See, for example, *Sein und Zeit*, 349).
19. Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volume Four, Nihilism*, trans. Frank Cappuzi and (ed.) D. F. Krell. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982, 4; *Nietzsche II*, third edition (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), 32–33.
  20. Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (ed.) (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 22; “Die Frage nach der Technik,” *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 26.
  21. In *Sein und Zeit* (384) Heidegger contrasts “*Geschehen*” as the general sort of human happening with the historicity (“*Geschichtlichkeit*”) specific to the Dasein that raises the question of Being.
  22. Heidegger, “On The Essence of Truth,” *Basic Writings*, 128–29; “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit,” *Wegmarken*, Vol. 9, *Gesamtausgabe* (1976), 189–90.
  23. OWA 76/64. In a later marginal note Heidegger connects this “genuine beginning” with the *Ereignis*: “*der Anfang ereignishaft zu denken als An-Fang*.” He also connects it with nearing in TB 15/16.
  24. Hans-Georg Gadamer thought that the content of Heidegger’s lectures in 1919 indicated that he already had at least a sketch of the map that would lead to his famous “*Kehre*.” In them he referred to the “worlding” of the world and used the expression “es er-eignet sich.” See Theodore Kisiel’s discussion of this point in *The Genesis of ‘Being and Time’*, 16. For Heidegger’s comments see SZ 20–21.
  25. Again, there is a isomorphism between these terms and those describing Dasein. The “*Ereignis*” which gives Time and Being parallels the “*Erschlossenheit*” or disclosedness of Being by Dasein. “*Enteignis*” parallels authentic Dasein’s “*Entschlossenheit*” or resoluteness; it also suggests the “*Entscheidung*” or decision about Being which arises out of Dasein’s questioning and moves us from one understanding of the Being of what-is to another. In a later marginal note on page 189 of his copy of *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger seems to equate the “not-at-home” character of uncanniness or anxiety with *Enteignis*. See the Appendix of the fourteenth German edition of *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1977), 443.
  26. Joseph Needham, the great historian and interpreter of Chinese science argues that “the widespread belief that traditional Chinese culture was static or stagnant turns out to be a typical Occidental misconception. It would, however, be fair to use the terms homeostatic or cybernetic, for there was something in Chinese society which continually tended to restore it to its original character. . . . It is truly striking to see how earth-shaking were the effects of Chinese innovations upon the social systems of Europe when once they found their way there, yet they left Chinese society relatively unmoved.” Needham’s investigations as well as those of Benjamin Nelson and other contemporary scholars suggest that China had its own Appropriation at about the same time as the Greeks but one that posited a very different relation between Time and Being, one emphasizing balance and organic unity rather than conflict and divisions. For example, Derk Bodde comments that if the Mohist ethico-religious tradition had not been overcome by Confucianism in around two hundred B.C., “China’s entire subsequent sociopolitical development would have been profoundly different. In particular, it is conceivable that a mechanistic (as opposed to an organismic) kind of science might have developed, perhaps in the end not too unlike that which eventually arose in Western Europe.” See Needham, *Science in Traditional China* (Cambridge and Hong Kong: Harvard and the Chinese University Presses, 1981), 120–121, and Derk Bodde, *Chinese Thought, Society and Science* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 169.
  27. Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” trans. Frank Capuzzi *Basic Writings*, first edition, David Farrell Krell (ed.) (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 215; “Brief über den Humanismus,” *Wegmarken*, 335. Further references to this work will be indicated by “LH.”

28. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray and Fred Wieck (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 17–18; *Was Heisst Denken?* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1961), 52. Another reference to this work will use the initials “WICT.”
29. See Heidegger, “A Dialogue on Language,” *On the way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 5; “Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache,” *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), 90. For an intriguing discussion of the difference between the oral and literate phases of Greek culture and also the development of philosophical thought from the viewpoint of a Classics scholar, see Eric Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) and “The Alphabetization of Homer,” *Communication Arts in the Ancient World*, Havelock and Jackson P. Hershbell (eds.) (New York: Hastings House, 1978): 3–22.
30. Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. Andre Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 85; *Parmenides*, Manfred Frings, (ed.) Vol. 54 of the *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1982), 125f.