

**“The Mystery of Apriority”
A priori and Time in Heidegger’s Thought**

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Abstract: The concept of *a priori* does not belong to Heidegger’s favourite or most familiar concepts. Unlike concepts such as, e.g., *Sein*, *physis*, *ousia*, *idea*, *aletheia*, etc., it is not given detailed discussions in his works. When it occurs – mostly in the 1920s – it has the usual meaning it has come to obtain in early modern philosophy ever since Kant. A characteristic occurrence of the term crops up in his main work: “‘A-priorism’ is the method of every scientific philosophy which understands itself.” (“Der »Apriorismus« ist die Methode jeder wissenschaftlichen Philosophie, die sich selbst versteht” (*Sein und Zeit*, p. 50 = *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, p. 490, note x). To claim that this concept does not rank in Heidegger’s innermost vocabulary is, however, not to claim that he totally ignored or overlooked it. On the contrary: Heidegger was well aware that this concept is closely related to two of his most central concepts or themes: those of time and – through it – to Being. – The paper proposes to explore these dimensions in subsequent steps. First it is shown that, in his critical confrontation of Husserl’s phenomenology, Heidegger appreciated very much Husserl’s efforts to reconstruct “the original sense of *a priori*” by disengaging it from the subject. Heidegger takes up and radicalizes Husserl’s effort to de-subjectivate this concept in claiming that *a priori* is a designation of being. Towards the end of the 1927 lecture course (=GA 24) Heidegger comes to expand on the theme more in detail. He says that the original sense of *a priori* in terms of “earlier” contains a clear reference to time; it is, therefore, a temporal determination. He claims that earlier than any possible “earlier” is time or temporality. This makes it possible to speak meaningfully about something such as “earlier” at all. Time may, accordingly, be called to be the “earliest” of everything that may come “earlier” – it is, indeed, the *a priori* of all possible *a prioris*, preceding these and making them possible. On the other hand, preceding all beings is being as such. Being is “earlier” than beings. From this perspective, Being is the absolute *a priori*. *A priori* is then both a temporal and an ontological concept. Time, however, understood in terms of its relation to being, is not to be accounted for by and in terms of the common concept of time in the sense of intratemporality. Philosophy as an *a priori* science is both an ontological and a temporal science, and that is what Heidegger’s main thesis according to which Being and Time belong together comes down to. – In subsequent parts of the paper a possible objection is examined at some length, namely, whether it is not a misunderstanding, on Heidegger’s part, to claim that “earlier” is always and in any case a “temporal” determination, whether, in other words, one could not – and indeed, should not – rather make a distinction between “temporal” and “logical” sequence or succession. This objection is countered with reference to the fact that, in order to reasonably formulate the dichotomy temporal–logical, one must

tacitly presuppose a restricted, that is, non-Heideggerian concept of time. A final dilemma emerges with regard to whether and to what extent Heidegger's assumption of his radically new concept of time can legitimately be linked to (or opposed to) traditional concepts of time – a dilemma pretty much the same as the ones regarding whether and to what extent his radically new concepts, e.g., of history and being, can be linked to, and derived from, a critical confrontation (=destruction) of the philosophical tradition. This dilemma is claimed to pertain to the linguistic dimension of philosophy (that is, of how, with what conceptuality a philosopher addresses or names his subject matter), and it seems hardly able to be overcome.

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I.

The concept of *a priori* does not belong to Heidegger's characteristic or favourite philosophical concepts. Although I am not aware that he ever criticized it I do not know of his ever discussing this concept in detail either – the way he did with several other central notions of philosophy (e.g. *physis*, *ousia*, *idea*, *aletheia*, being), which he tried to deconstruct taking them to their elements by means of the procedure characteristic to his approach known as phenomenological-hermeneutical destruction, then investing them with new meaning by appropriating them anew, winning them back.

The concept of *a priori* was used by Heidegger – mainly in the 1920s – not seldom and mostly as an obvious, philosophically accepted interpretative notion without greater emphasis¹ In his main work, *Being and Time*, this expression occurs approximately a dozen times (as an adjective; as other derived forms two-three dozen times), in most cases it appears in not too specific contexts. Though a footnote contains the significant statement that “‘A-priorism’ is the method of every scientific philosophy which understands itself”,² this committing statement on the one hand is formulated with self-evident obviousness, on the other hand, the word is put between quotation marks, which could be rendered approximately as: “That which is called ‘a-priorism’ (customarily in philosophy) is...” The use of quotation marks in other cases expresses a stronger distanciation, irony, or criticism; in the present case it presumably conveys a moderate distance. Heidegger seems to suggest that he used the expression more or less in the same sense as the philosophical tradition or contemporary philosophy does; although it was not his own expression and was a borrowing (presumably from Neo-

¹ GA 56/57, 36; GA 60, 21. – *Bibliographical note:* I refer to the complete works of Heidegger (*Gesamtausgabe*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1975 ff.) by using the abbreviation GA; this is followed by the volume number, and after a comma by the page number. – Other abbreviations: SZ = Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 15th edition, (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1979); BT = *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). If there are references to both the original German text and the corresponding English translation the German pagination and the English pagination are separated by a slash. For example: "SZ 10 / BT 30," "GA 20, 417 / 301f.," the number before the slash indicating the German edition, the one after the slash the English edition.

² SZ 50: “Der »Apriorismus« ist die Methode jeder wissenschaftlichen Philosophie, die sich selbst versteht.”

Kantianism and/or phenomenology¹), he had no particular objection against it. When he defined philosophy as an *a priori* science, more often than not he did not discuss in detail in what sense he used the concept of *a priori*, but this, in my opinion, is not enough ground for an objection; this would only be justified if this concept played a particular part in his thinking.

The claim that the concept of *a priori* does not belong among Heidegger's characteristic or more thoroughly discussed philosophical notions, that his attention was not concentrated on it for long, does not mean, however, that he completely neglected or ignored it. Heidegger was well aware that this concept could be naturally and closely connected with a central concept or theme of his thought: time (and through it with another characteristic theme of his thinking, Being). In the 1920s he did not fail to draw attention to this on several occasions. In what follows, I should like to dwell on the analysis and reconstruction of this correlation.

II.

Heidegger began to give deeper, theoretical-critical consideration to Husserl's phenomenology after World War I, and for approximately a decade, that is, until the publication of his main work, *Being and Time* in 1927 – and in a certain sense even in the years that followed after – it stood in the foreground of his efforts as a thinker. The most exhaustive, most thorough phase of this persistent intellectual confrontation with Husserl's phenomenology was beyond doubt the lecture course held on the concept of time in 1925, which was published as volume 20 of the Complete Works, and in which the critical analysis of Husserl's phenomenology covers almost two hundred pages under the title “preliminary part”. Heidegger discussed here “the original sense of *a priori*” as one of the basic discoveries of phenomenology, and he gave credit to phenomenology for detaching the concept of *a priori* from the subject, from cognition, whereby it was made possible for us to find the *a priori* both in the ideal (categorical) and in the real sphere.² In a short retrospect he alluded to the fact that in its original sense the notion means “earlier” (we call *a priori* in something that which is previous in or on it, this being a merely formal definition), and that only during early modernity (in Descartes, and in a more definite manner in Kant) did it acquire the meaning “earlier with regard to cognition”, namely, in the sense that it does not originate from empirical, inductive experience; the *a priori* (cognition) has thus been taking on the meaning of what is “independent of experience”.³ By having been linked to cognition, the *a priori*

¹ See, e.g., Edmund Husserl: *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Erstes Buch. *Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie*, neu hrsg. von Karl Schuhmann. 1. Halbband. Text der 1.-3. Auflage. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976 (= Husserliana, Band III/1), 8: “phenomenology must be here grounded as a science of essence, as an ‘a-prioristic’ or eidetic science” (“[...] die Phänomenologie hier als eine Wesenswissenschaft – als eine ‘apriorische’ oder, wie wir auch sagen, eidetische Wissenschaft begründet werden soll [...]”). Husserl at the same time mentioned somewhat later: because of the ambiguity and unclear vagueness the expressions *a priori*, *a posteriori* are charged with these days, and because of the dubious teachings with which they have been interwoven as the burdensome legacy of the past, if it is possible, he avoided using them (Ibid.).

² GA 20, 100 ff.

³ Even in Husserl, who in fact initiated the revision of the early modern usage of the concept we can encounter the “apriorische oder empirische” alternative; see Edmund Husserl, *Logische*

has come to be linked to the subject as well, and it is the priority of subjectivity characteristic to modern philosophy that in this association comes to the fore. Even nowadays, observed Heidegger, the *a priori* assumes a character which belongs specifically to the internal sphere.¹ Phenomenology, by contrast, has expanded the concept of *a priori*, and made it universal. The *a priori* in fact designates being (“*Titel des Seins*”), Heidegger affirmed meaningfully; it is “earlier” neither with respect to the order of cognition, nor to the order of being – it regards much rather the order in which the being of beings is structured (“*Aufbaufolge*”).²

The 1925 lecture course contains only a perfunctory note referring to the fact that “to clarify the meaning of” the *a priori* “it is necessary to understand exactly that which we are looking for – time”, and this is already revealed by the name (“earlier”), as this designation hides some kind of time sequence, order (“*Zeitfolge*”).³ Towards the end of the lecture course entitled *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, which was held two years later, in the same year when Heidegger’s main work was published, he discussed the relationship between the *a priori* and time openly and in some detail. Since according to the title of the first part of his main work (more exactly the second part of the title) time appears as “the transcendental horizon of the question of Being”, ontology – said Heidegger – is basically a temporal science, and *because* ontological statements are temporal statements, they are at the same time *a priori* statements as well.⁴ Now, by introducing the *a priori* into the ontological sphere, Heidegger may legitimately be claimed to have continued and in his own way also radicalized Husserl’s attempt to de-subjectivate the *a priori*. This recognition may help us to explain the brief allusion figuring in the above quoted note of the main work as well. If we have said above that when defining philosophy as an *a priori* science in his main work he did not discuss in detail in what particular sense he used the concept of *a priori*, now we can add to this the specification: Heidegger used the *a priori* notion in a decidedly ontological (that is not in the modern–Neo-Kantian) sense.

If the *a priori* means “earlier” or “former”, explained Heidegger in somewhat greater detail in his lecture of 1927, then – provided “earlier”/“former” is a “*time determination*”⁵ (since “earlier”, “former” obviously means “earlier” *in time*, “former” *in time*) – that which is *earlier* than the “earlier” – that which precedes the “earlier”, and thus makes it thereby possible – is nothing else than time itself. That which “is earlier than any possible earlier”, that which makes the earlier possible (i.e., that which makes

Untersuchungen, Erster Band, *Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, Fünfte Auflage (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1968), 33. See *Ibid.*, 62: “Kein Naturgesetz ist *a priori* erkennbar, ist selbst einsichtig begründbar. Der einzige Weg, ein solches Gesetz zu begründen und zu rechtfertigen, ist die Induktion aus einzelnen Tatsachen der Erfahrung”, where the *a priori* is similarly opposed to the “Erfahrung”. See also *Ibid.*, 178: “Es ist ein wesentlicher, schlechthin unüberbrückbarer Unterschied zwischen Idealwissenschaften und Realwissenschaften. Die ersteren sind apriorisch, die letzteren empirisch.”; 238.: “[...] und zwar *a priori*, ohne jede Rücksicht auf die empirische Besonderheit des menschlichen Erkennens in seinen psychologischen Bedingtheiten [...]”.

¹ See for example Husserl’s characteristic expression: “Bewußtseinsapriori”; *Ideen*, Husserliana, Band III/1, 135.

² GA 20, 101 ff.

³ GA 20, 99.

⁴ GA 24, 461 / 324.

⁵ For what follows see GA 24, 461 ff. / 324 ff.

it possible for there being something such as “earlier” or “later” at all) is in fact time. Without time there is no *a priori*, or we could also say, interpreting Heidegger’s words: time is the *a priori* of the *a priori*. That which precedes any earlier or later whatsoever is nothing else than time – of course, time understood in its ontological and not in its vulgar or subjective sense.¹ Time is earlier compared to any possible earlier, it is earlier than any possible earlier, because it is the basic condition of the possibility of any earlier, time is therefore the earliest.² If we understand the *a priori* ontologically, then from this perspective the first or the earliest is Being. As Heidegger formulated a year later: “Being is earlier than beings; this ‘earlier than’ is a distinguishing ‘feature’ [...]. Being is earlier-than, is that which is essentially ‘earlier’; it belongs to what is prior, in the language of later ontology: *a priori*.”³ If the *a priori* is a character of Being, and if the *a priori* is at the same time a time determination, but time is related to Being, then there is an inner relationship between the *a priori* and temporality, he added.⁴ The 1927 lecture course in this respect formulates in a way that recalls the complaint referring to the forgottenness of being elaborated on in the first pages of the main work: “Being has the character of the prius which the human being, who is familiar first and foremost merely with beings, has forgotten. The liberation of the fettered cave dwellers from the cave and their turning around to the light is nothing but a drawing oneself back from this oblivion to the recollection of the prius, in which there lies enclosed the enabling of understanding being itself.”⁵ The recollection of this forgotten earlier is therefore *anamnesis*, remembrance. What it should come down to, Heidegger claims, is “to penetrate further into the *mystery of apriority* [die Rätsel der Apriorität]”,⁶ but this was no more undertaken by the lecture – the former quotation must have been said during one of the last classes, probably during the very last. At a former stage of the temporal interpretation Heidegger made this unexpected remark: “We are not well enough prepared to penetrate into this obscure region.”⁷ It may be a legitimate claim to say that this statement could have been uttered with equal right at the end of semester related to the “*mystery of apriority*”.⁸

¹ Heidegger emphasized even in the 1960s that: “Ever attempt which tries to consider adequately the relationship between Being and time by means of the common and approximate notions of the time and Being concepts, soon will get entangled into the inextricable mesh of little thought-out relations.” [*Zur Sache des Denkens*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1976), 2.: “Jeder Versuch, das Verhältnis von Sein und Zeit mit Hilfe der landläufigen und ungefähren Vorstellungen von Zeit und Sein hinreichend zu denken, verstrickt sich alsbald in ein unentwirrbares Geflecht kaum durchdachter Beziehungen.”]

² The following passage of the main work refers implicitly to the relationship between the *a priori* and time: “»Früher« als jede daseinsmäßige Voraussetzung und Verhaltung ist das »Apriori« der Seinsverfassung in der Seinsart der Sorge”. (SZ 43a. §., 260.)

³ GA 26, 184 / 146.

⁴ GA 26, 189.

⁵ GA 24, 465 / 326f.

⁶ GA 24, 465 / 327. (My italics I. M. F.)

⁷ GA 24, 443 / 312.

⁸ It will be useful to support the analyses of the lectures of 1927 and 1928, summed up only in great lines and illustrated by short quotations, with longer quotes in the original language. See GA 24, 463: “Weil das ursprünglich Ermöglichende, der Ursprung von Möglichkeit selbst, die Zeit ist, zeitigt sich die Zeit selbst als das Früheste schlechthin. *Früher als jedes mögliche Früher* irgendwelcher Art ist die *Zeit*, weil sie Grundbedingung für ein Früher überhaupt ist. Und weil

If we look back to the main work from here, we arrive to a closer understanding of what Heidegger meant when he defined philosophy as an *a priori* science. Considering the above discussed analyses of the lectures it becomes clear that the entire work, *Being and Time*, consists of *a priori* analyses; the quoted characterization is hence self-characterization. Glancing back at the end of the 1927 lecture course, Heidegger said by expressions he used in the lecture such as “already before”, “already always”, etc. (“immer schon”, “vorgängig schon”, “im vorhinein”, “zuvor schon”) (these expressions, let us add, occur similarly often, so that they have become philosophical common knowledge as expressions characteristic to Heidegger’s thinking and language): “In using all of these temporal, really Temporal. terms we have in mind something that the tradition since Plato calls the *a priori*, even if it may not use the very term itself.”¹

III.

The conference the original version of this paper was presented at had as its subject the history of Hungarian philosophy, in the self-characterization of which often figures the – in fact underrating, belittling – belief that the Hungarian language is not quite suitable for philosophy. The latent temporal determination of Being is a central thesis and constant incentive to Heidegger’s philosophical path; this determination being described by Heidegger with the concept of *Anwesen*, *Anwesenheit*. To translate *Anwesen* is of course a laborious task, and the Hungarian language is no more able to cope with it than any other foreign language. But it is not, however, completely unsuitable, I believe, to represent the expression’s dimensions of meaning, their multitude and interconnectedness – at any rate, it is far less unsuitable than several other languages. Seeing the persistently repeated thesis of the Hungarian language’s unsuitability for philosophy it would be all the more important to dedicate at this point some space (or should we say, some time), in the form of a brief excursus, to the problem of rendering in Hungarian the Heideggerian issue of time.

The explanation of the concept *Anwesenheit*, as well as of the verbal *anwesen*, *west... an*, expressing for Heidegger the temporal determinedness of Being, may be based on the notions similar in form *Ankommen*, *Ankunft*, *kommt ... an* (a hypothesis I have had several occasions to discuss with German colleagues, and though it was not

die Zeit als Quelle aller Ermöglichungen (Möglichkeiten) das Früheste ist, sind aller Möglichkeiten als solche in ihrer Ermöglichungsfunktion vom Charakter des Früher, d.h. apriori.” (Emphases from the original.) Cf. also GA 26, 184: “Sein ist früher als das Seiende; dieses ‘früher als’, das dem Sein zugesprochen wird, ist eine ausgezeichnete ‘Bestimmung’ [...] Sein ist früher als, ist das wesenhaft ‘Frühere’, es ist von früher her, in der Sprache der späteren Ontologie: *a priori*. Alles ontologische Fragen ist ein Fragen nach dem und ein Bestimmen des ‘Apriori’. – ‘Früher als’, das ist doch offenbar eine Zeitbestimmung: Kein früher ohne Zeit. Früher als jedes mögliche ‘Früher als’ ist aber die Zeit! Mithin: wenn Sein próteron, a priori ist, dann steht es in einem ursprünglichen Zusammenhang mit Zeit. Allerdings, was hier ‘früher’, d.h. was Zeit besagt, bleibt dunkel – und völlig rätselhaft, wenn man mit dem vulgären Zeitbegriff auszukommen versucht.” See also GA 21, 414.: „Das Dasein ist je schon früher das, als was es de facto jeweils ist. Früher aber denn jedes mögliche Früher ist die Zeit selbst, die es macht, daß Dasein so etwas wie Möglichkeit seiner selbst sein kann.” „[Das Schon] ist eine temporale Bestimmung, die jeder Zeit und Seinsfaktizität des Daseins zukommt. Das Schon ist die Indikation des Apriori der Faktizität”.

¹ GA 24, 461 / 324.

unanimously approved, it was neither unanimously rejected), all the more, as Heidegger himself, with reference to Being, sometimes connected the *Anwesen* and the *Ankommen*.¹ Now, *Ankommen* can be translated to Hungarian by two verbal forms – besides others –, “megjön” and “eljön”. “Megjön” – this means: it has come and it is here. This is not simple being here (eternally), being present: who has come („megjött”), is not simply here (as if s/he had ever been here) – but s/he is here by having come, having arrived. S/he is here, because s/he has come, or in other words: s/he has come *and* s/he is here. Because of this, on the other hand, it cannot be true that s/he is no longer here, that s/he came, but s/he has already left. (If I ask: “Has the guest come?” and the answer is affirmative, then I presume that s/he is still there, and I enter the room to greet him/her. If I look for him/her in vain, because s/he has already left, then I presume I did not receive the adequate answer to my question, which in this case ought to have been the following: “Yes, s/he arrived, but s/he was here only for a short while, s/he has already left.”) This dynamics – a process and a result at the same time – working in the verb “megjönni”, I believe, is adequate (if not to translate exactly, at least) to convey the approximate meaning of Heidegger’s concept *Sein als Anwesenheit* and the dynamics of “west an”, “kommt an” lying in this.

The “megjön”–“eljön” pair in Hungarian is able to express, beyond this, extremely slight differences or nuances in meaning. We say for example: “megjött a tavasz” (spring has arrived), on the other hand it is usually said: “eljött az ősz” (autumn has come). Though grammatically the opposite would also be correct, however, our using these expressions more or less means that we are glad of spring’s arrival, while we are resigned to the coming of autumn (“az idén is eljött az ősz” – “autumn has come this year as well”). The first lines of Petrarca’s sonnet entitled *Zefiro torna* have been translated by György Sárközy in this way: “A szép időt a langy szél visszahozta, s *megjött* családja is, füvek, virágok, csicsergő fecskék, bűgő csalogányok...” (The good weather has been brought back by the gentle wind, and his family, herbs, flowers, twittering swallows and cooing nightingales *have come*...). The expression “megjött a tavasz” refers to an event which happens once; it is more emphatic than “eljött”. Of course, who has come (“eljött”), is also here, as well as the person who has come (“megjött”), but the latter’s coming (“*eljövetel*”), and his/her resulting presence seems nevertheless more emphasized.

Let us select some further examples. “Örülök, hogy *eljöttél*” (I am glad you have come), I say to a visitor (and not: *megjöttél*, which means: you have arrived). “Megjöttek a vendégek” (the guests have arrived), “megjöttek a konferencia résztvevői” (the participants of the conference have arrived) – could have been said here, in this

¹ See Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), 23: “Denn erst der Mensch, offen für das Sein, läßt dieses als Anwesen ankommen.” Ibid. 62: “Sein west hier in der Weise eines Überganges zum Seienden. [...] Ankunft heißt: sich bergen in Unverborgenheit [...]” (In the same place the expression “sich bergende Ankunft” appears twice more, then four times “Ankunft” figures without the attribute; see also ibid. 66.). However, for us the most important occurrence is on page 65, where “Ankunft” is followed by “Anwesen” in brackets, thus: “[...] insofern wir an [...] Übergang (Transzendenz) und Ankunft (Anwesen) denken”. The expressions figuring between parentheses can be understood as the synonyms, explanations of the preceding words. See also GA 60, 102. o.: „Im klassischen Griechisch bedeutete *parousia* 'Ankunft' (Anwesenheit) [...]”. Cf. also *Identität und Differenz*, 68: “Eines kommt im anderen an” (see now GA 11, 71 ff.).

guest-house an hour ago; while “Eljöttek a vendégek, a konferencia részvevői” in itself, grammatically would not be incorrect, but it would mean something completely different, and it would be probably misleading to express ourselves thus. [The organizers of the conference, however, are glad that the participants have come (*eljöttek*) to the conference.] Then: “*Megjött Rómából*” (S/he has come back from Rome = has come back, because s/he lives here, or because s/he started from here), and “*eljött Rómából*” (S/he has come from Rome – to visit us, as s/he stays, lives there). “*Megjöttek a gyerekek*” (The children have come – home; they live with us), and “*eljöttek a gyerekek*” (The children have come – to visit us; they are grown up and live apart from us). “*Megjött*” (not always, but) in most cases is an event happening only once; “*eljött*” can be an event happening only once, but also one of several occurrences. Concerning the letter, the check, the parcel, the present we say: it has come (“*megjött*”, and not: “*eljött*”). Santa Claus has arrived (“*Megjött a Jézuska*”), but: Christmas has come (“*eljött a karácsony*”). On the other hand: “*Eljött az ideje annak...*” (not: *megjött* – The time has come for...). “*Hetente kétszer eljött hozzánk*” (He would come to us twice a week), “*Gyere el gyakrabban*” (Come more often) – in these cases it would be out of the question, it would be grotesque to use “*megjön*”. If we say “*megjött a városból*” (s/he has come from town), this is equally adequate as: “*eljött a városból*” – nevertheless, there is an important difference in the meaning (in the first case s/he “has arrived home”, in the second “s/he has come for a visit” is the implicit meaning).¹ The verbs “*megérkezik – elérkezik*” (to arrive) can express partly similar, partly different rich nuances of meaning.

We can end this excursus with the following remark: Hungarian language may not be able to translate by a single word the temporal character of Being presumed by Heidegger – there being a similar difficulty in the other languages as well –, but to render the idea is, however, in its power, it is not an insurmountable difficulty for it; we could also say: it is not deficient in linguistic means to this effect.

IV.

It is, however, time to face an objection which might legitimately be raised against Heidegger’s considerations reconstructed above. According to this, two things are here – probably unacceptably – mixed, merged; two things which ought to be differentiated. For we use the word “earlier” basically in different meanings. It is one thing to say about something that it is earlier in time, and another to say that it is earlier not temporally, but from another point of view, for example “logically.” Thus it is a common practice in introductory classes of logic to state that the premises precede the conclusions, to which it is added with ritualistic pedantry that “of course, not in time, but ‘logically’”.

This objection could be answered from Heidegger’s point of view by pointing out that the objection keeps in view a certain concept of time; a concept of time which is opposed to the notion of “logical”, that is, the objection is tacitly based on, relies on, and works with the dichotomy temporal–logical. It is only from the horizon of a non-

¹ I have taken the last example from the 4th volume of *A magyar nyelv értelmező szótára* (The Explicative Dictionary of the Hungarian Language) (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1961), 1082. The following opposition is very eloquent: “*megjött az új munkatárs*” (the new colleague has come – has begun working with us) – “*eljött az új munkatárs*” (the new colleague has come – over from the other building, s/he paid us a visit).

Heideggerian time conception, called by Heidegger vulgar, that objections against time understood in terms of the *a priori* of the *a priori* can be formulated. The rigid differentiation, distinction between temporal and logical, is however, according to Heidegger, problematic, moreover, untenable. The temporal and the logical, from Heidegger's point of view, are not situated on the same level; therefore they cannot get into opposition with or exclude one another. The former, as the highest definition of human Dasein essentially precedes the latter – this means that it does not exclude it, but (as something derivative) it includes it in itself. As Heidegger explicitly formulated it at one point in the *Being and Time*: “the ‘logic’ of logos is rooted in the existential analytic of Dasein”.¹ And Dasein is in the final analysis time. Thus, we could say: *time precedes logic*, compared to this, it is *a priori*; in other words, time is the *a priori* of logic.²

From Heidegger's phenomenological-hermeneutical perspective, logic is rooted in the *logos*; Greek ontology is claimed to have oriented from the beginning the structure of logos to the statement, the apophantic *logos* – its gaze was mostly directed to this, while it neglected other forms (for example request, demand, wish) of the *logos* (as speech) –, and thus it gave life to a certain, still extant “logic” and an ontology (and last but not least, a grammar) correlated to it. Thus it becomes understandable why – as Heidegger wrote at the end of the Introduction of his main work – fundamental ontology lacks “usually not only words, but first of all ‘grammar’”.³ Whatever the linguistic difficulties of expounding on fundamental ontology and existential analytic may be, from Heidegger's point of view it is certain that: the (logical) “proposition” (and then any kind of its transformation into a calculus) originates, in an existential-ontological sense, from “interpretation” and “understanding”, which are, on their part, the fundamental modes of being of human Dasein. This then accounts for the claim that “the ‘logic’ of logos is rooted in the existential analytic of Dasein”. Heidegger's investigation in the later part of the book – within the framework of the existential concept of science differentiated from the logical one – is therefore directed to “the ontological genesis of the theoretical approach”.⁴ Analyzing this, Heidegger formulated some statements very important for our reasoning: “The as-structure [i.e. the as-structure of understanding – I. M. F.] is ontologically rooted in the temporality of the Dasein.” “The ‘as’ – like understanding and interpretation in general – is rooted in the extatic-horizontal unity of temporality”.⁵

The relationship between the *a priori* and time has an important role in Kant too. According to Kant time and space are the *a priori* form of sensibility, the twelve categories are also *a priori* – not “in time” of course, but as conditions of possibility: conditions which are beyond (or hither) experience, preceding it and making it possible. But Kant also operates with a well defined concept of time. This is, though *a priori*,

¹ SZ 160 / BT 203. Heidegger approaches the essence of language from the direction of *discourse*; and this is nothing else than the tuned-understood Being-in-the-World “getting to speak”.

² See to this GA 24, 185: “earlier” must not be understood logically or ontically. (Cf. *ibid.*, 186.)

³ Heidegger, SZ 39 / BT 63.

⁴ See *Ibid.*, 68b. §., 356 ff.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 359: “Die Als-Struktur gründet ontologisch in der Zeitlichkeit des Verstehens”. See *ibid.*, 360: “Das »Als« gründet wie Verstehen und Auslegen überhaupt in der ekstatisch-horizontalen Einheit der Zeitlichkeit” (emphasis in the original). (See BT 411: „Like understanding and interpretation in general, the ‘as’ is grounded in the ecstatico-horizontal unity of temporality.”)

“subjective”. Heidegger’s concept of time, on the other hand, is different from all traditional concepts of time, it is more radical than any of them (he called them “vulgar”), a concept related to existence, a concept “from” which we understand existence. We understand it from time – this means: time is that which in a certain sense makes existence possible (of course, it does not precede it, they are rather born at the same moment – the late Heideggerian term *Ereignis* refers to this belonging together).

The comparison with Kant deserves more detailed discussion. – If according to our former formulation, from Heidegger’s perspective, time precedes logic, and compared to it is *a priori*, in other words, if time is the *a priori* of logic, then in Kant’s case the situation is in a certain sense the reverse. The *a priori* in Kant seems to precede time, as it were, for, though time as the “pure form of sensibility” is “given *a priori*”,¹ it is given as a “form of inner intuition”, as “the subjective condition under which all intuitions can take place in us”.² Time is of course *a priori* in Kant too in the sense that it precedes “simultaneity or succession”,³ but it does not refer at all to things in themselves; “time is therefore merely a subjective condition of our (human) intuition [...], and in itself, outside the subject, is nothing”,⁴ “it does not adhere to the objects themselves, rather merely to the subject that intuits them”,⁵ it refers “to objects only so far as they are considered as appearances, but do not present things in themselves”.⁶ Time cannot be determinant in Kant with respect to the order of beings or of Being, because it has no access to the things in themselves, it is only the principle which orders the world of phenomena by the human ability of cognition. In this sense, of course, *a priori* – as Kant understood it – is independent of experience, precedes it, and makes it possible. Nevertheless, one could claim from Heidegger’s perspective: Kant overlooked the fact that categories understood in terms of concepts of pure understanding, or the concept of the condition of possibility itself, tacitly presuppose a time determination – a determination not to be accounted for on the basis of his (subjective *a priori*) time conception. According to Kant experience is made possible by time, but experience gives access only to the world of phenomena. Kant must therefore have latently presupposed and used another “time”-concept as well, not only that which he expounded on in his transcendental aesthetics. Heidegger’s objection in fact refers to the Kantian distinction between sensibility and understanding as the two stems of cognition – stems that “may perhaps arise from a common but to us unknown root”.⁷ Kant, as Heidegger formulated, had “a focus on the not original essence of time”, and because of this “Kant has to contest the temporal character of the ‘principle of contradiction’”.⁸

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. Paul Guyer, Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) B46–47.

² Ibid., B49.

³ Ibid., B46: “Zugleichsein oder Aufeinanderfolgen”.

⁴ Ibid., B51.

⁵ Ibid., B54.

⁶ Ibid., B56.

⁷ “...daß es zwei Stämme der menschlichen Erkenntnis gebe, die vielleicht aus einer gemeinschaftlichen, aber uns unbekannten Wurzel entspringen, nämlich Sinnlichkeit und Verstand” (B29). Heidegger criticized this and tried to go beyond it in his book on Kant; see GA 3, 187.

⁸ Heidegger GA 3, 195. See *Critique of Pure Reason*, A152=B192: “the principle of contradiction, as a merely logical principle must not limit its claims to temporal relations”.

All these considerations are related to the above mentioned possible objection claiming: “it precedes it (of course, not in time, but) ‘logically’”. Kant – as has been outlined above – might have had no difficulty to agree with this thesis, for on his view “all our cognition begins with experience”, and “as far as time is concerned, [der Zeit nach] then, no cognition in us precedes [geht ... vorher] experience”, yet “it does not on that account all arise from experience”¹ (that is, we could add, originates “logically”) – for experience is made possible only by time. It is worth noting that Kant tacitly relied on two time concepts: a subordinate concept and one which goes beyond this and is more general; however, what he explicitly investigated and accounted for was merely the first concept. The entire apparatus of pure reason discussed by him in his main work, so far as it *precedes* (and makes possible) experience (and cognition through experience) – and is thereby non-experiential or independent from experience (*a priori*) – from Heidegger’s point of view contains at the same time a temporal definition. Nevertheless Kant discussed time explicitly as only one element or part of this apparatus. He called *a priori* cognitions “those that occur *absolutely* independently of all experience”,² and by this he connected the concept of *a priori* to the subject.

These few short remarks may be sufficient to demonstrate that the opposition or separation of time and logic is untenable for Heidegger. According to him, “temporally precedes” and “logically precedes” are not two different, separable issues: the latter is in fact a particular, derivate case of the former.³ “If the ‘subject’ gets conceived ontologically as an existing Dasein whose Being is grounded in temporality” – we read in *Being and Time* – “then one must say that the world is ‘subjective’. But in that case, this ‘subjective’ world, as one that is temporally transcendent, is ‘more objective’ than any possible ‘object’.” – The denomination “‘more objective’ than any possible object” by which the world rooted in the temporality of the Dasein, and thus in fact time is characterized – as a basically first condition of possibility, as the condition of possibility to the appearance of the being inside the world –, makes obvious the interpretation that it refers to an absolute first “*a priori*”.⁴

¹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, B1.

² *Ibid.*, B3.

³ Aristotle differentiated several meanings of “earlier” (“earlier” in space, time, according to motion, according to ability, according to order, according to cognition, in the latter case for understanding for example the general and the part, for sensory perception the particular and the whole are earlier, etc.; see *Met.*, 1018b9–1019a14, *De Cat.*, chapter 12, a14–a35, *Anal. post.* I, 2, 71b33–72a5), but for us these meanings are not relevant. From this list of meanings only a few have become important for posterity [see H. Schepers, “A priori / a posteriori”, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, hg. Joachim Ritter, 1st volume (Basel: Schwabe und Co., 1971), 462 and the following column]. Heidegger, who on account of his scholastic educational background was familiar with Aristotle, obviously was mostly aware of this. The lecture of 1925 within a brief survey on the history of the concept refers to the fact that this history reaches back to Plato; a year before Heidegger mentioned that Aristotle had used “earlier” not only in a temporal sense, but also as an object. Hence Heidegger must have been in sympathy with Husserl’s efforts to break with the Modern Age tradition which connected the *a priori* one-sidedly to cognition, to subjectivity (see GA 20, 99 ff., and note 3 on page 13–14, as well as GA 18, 3.)

⁴ BT 418 (= SZ 69. §., 366: “Zu fragen ist: was ermöglicht es ontologisch, daß Seiendes innerweltlich begegnen und als begegnendes objektiviert werden kann? Der Rückgang auf die ekstatisch-horizontal fundierte Transzendenz der Welt gibt die Antwort. – Wenn das »Subjekt« ontologisch als existierendes Dasein begriffen wird, dessen Sein in der Zeitlichkeit gründet, dann

One of the fundamental insights made by Heidegger on his path towards *Being and Time* might be summed up as follows: Being has been interpreted in the philosophical tradition with regard to such concepts as “presence”, “eternal being”, etc. Worthy of attention is thereby that Being is latently given temporal determinations, and that time functions at the same time as an index for delimiting the different spheres of beings (temporal, timeless, and trans-temporal beings¹). The philosophical tradition has

muß gesagt werden: Welt ist »subjektiv«. Diese »subjektive« Welt aber ist dann als zeitlich-transzendente »objektiver« als jedes mögliche »Objekt«.”)

¹ Cf. SZ 18 (= LI 109–110). It is worth quoting Heidegger’s argumentation in the original language and in somewhat more detail: “Die »Zeit« fungiert seit langem als ontologisches oder vielmehr ontisches Kriterium der naiven Unterscheidung der verschiedenen Regionen des Seienden. Man grenzt ein »zeitlich« Seiendes (die Vorgänge der Natur und die Geschehnisse der Geschichte) ab gegen »unzeitlich« Seiendes (die räumlichen und zahlhaften Verhältnisse). Man pflegt »zeitlosen« Sinn von Sätzen abzuheben gegen »zeitlichen« Ablauf der Satzaussagen. Ferner findet man eine »Kluft« zwischen dem »zeitlich« Seienden und dem »überzeitlichen« Ewigen und versucht sich an deren Überbrückung. »Zeitlich« besagt hier jeweils soviel wie »in der Zeit« seiend, eine Bestimmung, die freilich auch noch dunkel genug ist. *Das Faktum besteht: Zeit, im Sinne von »in der Zeit sein«, fungiert als Kriterium der Scheidung von Seinsregionen.* Wie die Zeit zu dieser ausgezeichneten ontologischen Funktion kommt und gar mit welchem Recht gerade so etwas wie Zeit als solches Kriterium fungiert und vollends, ob in dieser naiv ontologischen Verwendung der Zeit ihre eigentliche mögliche ontologische Relevanz zum Ausdruck kommt, ist bislang weder gefragt, noch untersucht worden.” (Emphasis is mine I. F. M.) It will not be useless to quote from the second next paragraph as well, because it not only completes the former considerations, but at the same time it points out the central difficulty around which Heidegger’s intellectual efforts revolved for decades: “Wenn Sein aus der Zeit begriffen werden soll und die verschiedenen Modi und Derivate von Sein in ihren Modifikationen und Derivationen in der Tat aus dem Hinblick auf Zeit verständlich werden, dann ist damit das Sein selbst – nicht etwa nur Seiendes als »in der Zeit« Seiendes, in seinem »zeitlichen« Charakter sichtbar gemacht. »Zeitlich« kann aber dann nicht mehr nur besagen »in der Zeit seiend«. Auch das »Unzeitliche« und »Überzeitliche« ist hinsichtlich seines Seins »zeitlich«. Und das wiederum nicht nur in der Weise einer Privation gegen ein »Zeitliches« als »in der Zeit« Seiendes, sondern in einem *positiven*, allerdings erst zu klärenden Sinne. Weil der Ausdruck »zeitlich« durch den vorphilosophischen und philosophischen Sprachgebrauch in der angeführten Bedeutung belegt ist und weil der Ausdruck in den folgenden Untersuchungen noch für eine andere Bedeutung in Anspruch genommen wird, nennen wir die ursprüngliche Sinnbestimmtheit des Seins und seiner Charaktere und Modi aus der Zeit seine *temporale* Bestimmtheit. Die fundamentale ontologische Aufgabe der Interpretation von Sein als solchem begreift daher in sich die Herausarbeitung der *Temporalität des Seins*. In der Exposition der Problematik der Temporalität ist allererst die konkrete Antwort auf die Frage nach dem Sinn des Seins gegeben.” (Ibid., 18 ff.; the first and the third emphases are mine, I. F. M.) The expression “temporal”, said Heidegger – and this is a key sentence from the point of view of this analysis – did not mean to him “in the time”; this expression was used in a different meaning later on. The non-consideration of this fact led to Heidegger being criticised on several occasions for not having offered a “correct” interpretation or reconstruction of the philosophical tradition’s time conceptions – from Aristotle to Kant and Bergson – in his philosophy historical interpretations referring to this issue. For a mostly similar discussion of the problem see GA 20, 7 ff., especially the question at the end of the considerations: “Was gibt überhaupt der Zeit und dem Begriff der Zeit [...], die Eignung zu dieser eigentümlichen, bisher immer als selbstverständlich aufgenommenen Funktion bei der charakteristischer und scheidung der wirklichkeitsgebiete – zeitliche, außerzeitliche, überzeitliche wirklichkeit?” (Ibid., 8.) – In what follows I shall use some

connected Being and time from its very beginnings, defining Being – without becoming aware of this – temporally. That Being was interpreted on a temporal basis has remained hidden, and thus the question has not been raised concerning the way time can fulfil such a basic ontological function, and what the condition of possibility of this function is. “On the contrary, they take time itself as one entity among other entities, and try to grasp it in the structure of its Being, though that way of understanding Being, which they have taken as their horizon is one which is itself naïvely and inexplicitly oriented towards time.”¹ We could formulate – with some simplification – the dilemma in the following way. The fact that we define being latently by means of time directs our attention to the concept of time. But we must realize that no inherited concept of time can provide a starting point for a concept of time related to Being (able to define Being); that is, a new, a more thorough time concept is necessary. Being is defined through time, but time itself is also conceived as one being among several others. Time thus defined consequently already contains Being, thus it is not able, *vice versa*, to define the latter on a second level. (That by which Being is defined already contains Being, thus it proves to be unsuitable to perform precisely the very task it is resorted to for: to define Being.) Some levelled concept of Being and some similarly levelled time concept are here closely connected and almost inseparably interwoven: Being is grasped through the horizon of a levelled time; time through the horizon of a levelled Being.² – A retrospective summarization from 1969, which was made accessible for the wider public only lately, in 2007, in the 14th volume of the complete works, confirms what has been said: “The traditional notion of time proved to be inadequate for the attempt to discuss the relation of Being and time. My question about time was determined from the perspective of the question of Being.”³

It is not among beings only, as some kind of a highest or foremost entity, that Being is an absolute *a priori*, that is, the first, “earliest”, but it completely differs from beings: it is an absolute *a priori* compared to every entity, it precedes every being as being. Time itself on its turn – as something which precedes every earlier and later, and is able to define Being, this absolute *a priori*, to which it is able to confer the character of “earliest” – must, for this very reason, have an absolute *a priori* character as well. Being and time are co-originally *a priori* in the same measure. Being becomes the earliest *by means of* time, *through* time. In other words: without time Being could not be the absolute first, the absolute *a priori*; Being – conceived as “earliest”, as absolute first – is given by time; time, which, so to say, “arrives” (“comes” in the sense outlined above in part III) together with Being: it cannot be before Being, for, without Being, as „beingless” as it were, it would be nothing, on the other hand, it cannot have “its own

summarizing remarks from my earlier book on Heidegger: István M. Fehér, *Martin Heidegger. Egy XX. századi gondolkodó életútja* (Martin Heidegger. The Path of a 20th Century Thinker), 2nd, extended edition (Budapest: Göncöl, 1992), 69.

¹ BT 48. (= SZ 26: “Diese griechische Seinsauslegung vollzieht sich jedoch ohne jedes ausdrückliche Wissen um den dabei fungierenden Leitfaden, ohne Kenntnis oder gar Verständnis der fundamentalen ontologischen Funktion der Zeit, ohne Einblick in den Grund der Möglichkeit dieser Funktion. Im Gegenteil: die Zeit selbst wird als ein Seiendes unter anderem Seienden genommen, und es wird versucht, sie selbst aus dem Horizont des an ihr unausdrücklich-naïv orientierten Seinsverständnisses in ihrer Seinsstruktur zu fassen.”)

² See to this the retrospective remark of the old Heidegger quoted in note 1 on page 15.

³ See GA 14, 148.

existence” separate from Being, for then it would be one entity among many others, and its character as a “conferrer of Being” would be lost, for it would already possess – nobody knows from where, but in any case – Being from somewhere. Time and Being “arrive” together – and this is pretty much what the concept of „Ereignis” comes down to.

V.

V. 1. Objections against Heidegger’s time conception, time conceived as the *a priori* of *a priori*, can be formulated only from the horizon of a non-Heideggerian time conception, called by Heidegger vulgar, as we have said above. This observation leads to a difficulty regarding the whole of Heidegger’s thought – and maybe even philosophy itself. The characteristic feature of the answer given to this objection (its strength, and from another point of view also its weakness) is that it can be put forward as a universal defence, which can be resorted to at any time; a trump which can be played always, against any objection. This is a defence strategy which thus raises suspicion, for it can avert or immunize any objection. If a philosopher uses a notion in a new, unusual sense (as it happens in our case with the concept of time), then any objection referring to some traditional – usual, long standing – sense of the notion in question can far too easily be repelled with the observation: “I use the concept in another sense”. Thus one can evade any comparison and criticism. On the other hand, it is also most probably true that if we contested the philosophers’ right to use traditional expressions in a new, unusual sense, then we would question their freedom and the freedom of philosophy as well; by this we would eventually put an end to philosophy. To formulate new, so far unobserved or unheard-of questions, problems, one needs a new language, or the old one must be modified to a certain extent. If we wanted to deny this right of philosophers, we would do irreparable harm to philosophy itself.

This dilemma can hardly be solved or answered in general; it must be studied case by case whether the new, uncommon use of concepts has any – first of all objective – base, or simply – for example – eccentricity and/or the wish to evade comparison and criticism operates in the background. In other words, it must be investigated case by case whether the new, uncommon use of concepts outlines a new message, with an interesting object – and the uncommon use of concepts is an organic vehicle for conveying this message –, or it is merely eccentricity, pointless self-differentiation from one’s predecessors, exhibitionism, whereby the uncommon use of concepts refers only back to itself, without creating a consistent, new, interesting world.

This dilemma cannot have been unknown to Heidegger – the philosopher, who had been using concepts in a new, uncommon sense, from the moment he had stepped into the limelight, found himself in the critical crossfire of a philosophy based on traditional use of words (and thus: on a traditional view of the world), being exposed to perpetual attacks –, and he himself kept hesitating for a long time with respect to the adequate procedure. There was a case when he could have considered the above mentioned suspicion worthy of notice, and when we might perceive his reaction as a withdrawal; this was when, at the end of his philosophic path, he gave up or retracted, accompanied by a sever self-criticism, his interpretation concerning truth as *aletheia* conceived in terms of unconcealment – one of the central theses of his entire life work –; more exactly, when he gave up the connection between his interpretation regarding the *aletheia* and the traditional idea of truth. In fact and more particularly, he did continue

to uphold the interpretation of *aletheia* as unconcealment and *Lichtung*, what he renounced was only the thesis that this very interpretation – the interpretation of *aletheia*, unconcealment and *Lichtung* – should be taken to be at the same time as an interpretation of truth as well (which is what, in any case, he had definitely stated before). The question concerning *aletheia* as unconcealment, he claimed in the 1960s, should not be understood as identical with the question concerning truth. Thereby, however, the thesis stating the change of the essence of truth – that is, its change from unconcealment into correctness (a thesis pointedly supported by Heidegger himself in the course of his philosophic career up to that point, and which represented an important part of his philosophical path) – became “untenable”, sounded the words of his sever self-critique.¹

This self-criticism, however, is perplexing; in any case it requires further interpretation. If we can rely on mere words, in my opinion, this gesture was as overhasty as his retrospective annihilating – most probably exaggerated – self-critical remarks on his Kant interpretation in the preface to the fourth edition of his book on Kant.²

To interpret this exaggerated self-criticism is not at all an easy task, and it has given rise to wide ranging and widely spread debates and discussions in the literature, which will be worth being discussed here briefly. “There is no need to dwell on the surprise”, wrote for example Vincenzo Vitiello, “which the reading of this text could rise in a reader somewhat familiar with Heidegger’s work. It seems, Heidegger has

¹ “Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens”, see Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, 77 ff. = GA 14, 86 ff. It is worth quoting some parts of the text referring to this issue, the study entitled *Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens*, which was first published in French in 1964, then in German in 1969: Heidegger, *Zur Sache Des Denkens*, 2., unveränderte Auflage, [1. Auflage 1969] (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1976), 61–80, here 76–78; see now GA 14, 69–90, here 85–87: “Sofern man Wahrheit im überlieferten »natürlichen« Sinn [...] versteht, [...] darf die Aletheia, die Unverborgenheit im Sinne der Lichtung, nicht mit der Wahrheit gleichgesetzt werden. Viel mehr gewährt die Aletheia, die Unverborgenheit als Lichtung gedacht, erst die Möglichkeit von Wahrheit. [...] Aletheia, Unverborgenheit als Lichtung von Anwesenheit gedacht, ist noch nicht Wahrheit. Ist die Aletheia dann weniger als Wahrheit? Oder ist sie mehr [...]? [...] In jedem Fall wird das eine klar: *Die Frage nach der Aletheia, nach der Unverborgenheit als solcher, ist nicht die Frage nach der Wahrheit. Darum war es nicht sachgemäß und dem zufolge irreführend, die Aletheia im Sinne der Lichtung Wahrheit zu nennen. [...] Der natürliche Begriff von Wahrheit meint nicht Unverborgenheit, auch nicht in der Philosophie der Griechen. [...] Im Gesichtskreis dieser Frage muß anerkannt werden, daß die Aletheia, die Unverborgenheit im Sinne der Lichtung von Anwesenheit sogleich und nur als orthotes, als die Richtigkeit des Vorstellens und Aussagens erfahren wurde. Dann ist aber auch die Behauptung von einem Wesenswandel der Wahrheit, d.h. von der Unverborgenheit zur Richtigkeit, nicht haltbar.*” (Emphases are mine I. F. M.). The italicized parts contain the steps of the supposed *retractatio*, which, for the sake of perspicuity, can be summarized with some paraphrasing in the following theses: 1. The question referring to *aletheia*, to disclosedness is not identical with the question referring to truth (though Heidegger had so far stated so). 2. Because of this it was not justified to call the *aletheia* truth taken in the sense of *Lichtung* (though Heidegger had so far done so). 3. The natural idea of truth does not mean disclosedness, it did not mean this even in Greek philosophy (though Heidegger had so far stated so). 4. Thus the statement referring to the change of the essence of truth (as it was said in the *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit*) is untenable.

² See GA 3, XIV.

indeed given up the thesis formulated in *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit* and earlier in *Sein und Zeit*. If it were so, the self-criticism would be excessively radical, for it would not refer to some secondary aspect of Heidegger's thought, but to the main line of his interpretation of Greek philosophy, which is present in his thinking from the beginning to the end, and which constitutes one of its basic components."¹ In a note Vitellio added: "It seems that Heidegger adopts Friedländer's criticism directed to him (*Platon* I, Berlin 1954, Teil II, XI, *Aletheia. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit M. Heidegger*, especially pp. 233–237.) Nevertheless, this is opposed to the fact that in his writing entitled *Hegel und die Griechen* [...] Heidegger explicitly refused this criticism." The essay *Hegel und die Griechen* is earlier in time than the other writing [entitled *Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens*] (it was written in 1958, while the latter at the beginning of the 1960s), thus one might think that Heidegger changed his opinion in the course of these few years. However, this is contradicted by the fact that he published the writing of 1958 in his study collection entitled *Wegmarken* (its first edition appeared in 1967) not only without changing anything in his critique referring to Friedländer (see first edition 1967, p. 271), but also without making any reference to his latter work published for the first time in French in 1964, which would be extremely strange, if the hypothesis referring to his self-criticism were correct. By contrast, Vitello said, the self-criticism occurred on Friedländer's side (see *Platon* I, 3rd edition, 1964, p. 242). Be how it may, "the radicality of his self-criticism is perplexing. In two short paragraphs Heidegger would have retracted one of the basic pillars of his interpretation referring to metaphysics as the history of Being. The thing (Sache) itself would probably have deserved a more thorough and articulated discussion."² – In what follows, on the basis of a circumspect argumentation Vitiello arrived at the conclusion that Heidegger had not repudiate the thesis in question, but rather shifted the emphasis: according to the new conception, in Platon truth conceived as correctness (the correctness of the gaze) – an aspect already present in Pre-Socratic philosophy, which does not substitute, but much rather – thrusts into the background or overshadows the concept of truth perceived as unconcealment.³ In other words, the decline of *aletheia* according to the modified conception is not to be dated to Plato's age, rather, it had begun already with Parmenides.

Heidegger disciple Walter Bröcker also expressed his surprise in his review written on Heidegger's volume in question. "That Heidegger buried the favourite child of his later years, the *Lichtung*", he wrote, "is most probably a sensational news", but, according to Bröcker, this is only "news about the last turn of a man, who, as a good alpinist has already left behind several turns".⁴

¹ Vincenzo Vitiello, *Dialettica ed ermeneutica: Hegel e Heidegger* (Napoli: Guida, 1979), 151 ff.

² Ibid., 153.

³ Ibid., 160.

⁴ See Walter Bröcker, "Heideggers letztes Wort über Parmenides", *Philosophische Rundschau* 29, no. 1–2 (1982), 72–76, here 76: "Daß Heideggers Parmenides nicht der wirkliche Parmenides war, sondern eine von ersterem erschaffene Kunstfigur, und daß Burnet vom wirklichen Parmenides 1892 mehr wußte als Heidegger 1973, das ist wohl keine neue Nachricht. Daß aber der alte Heidegger durch sein erneutes Sichzukehren zu seiner Kunstfigur das Lieblingkind seiner späten Jahre, die *Lichtung*, umgebracht hat, das ist, wenn anders die protokollierenden Franzosen Unverbergendes gesagt haben, wirklich eine neue Nachricht, die Nachricht von der letzten



Ana-Maria Călinescu, *Daughter of Wonder*
Pencil on paper (210 × 297 mm)

If we read Heidegger's text attentively – the philological authenticity of this text, let us add, cannot be regarded as completely secured –, we may note however that

Kehre eines Mannes, der auch schon vorher, als ein guter Bergsteiger, mehr als eine Kehre hinter sich gebracht hatte".

not the concept of *Lichtung* is questioned in it, but the fact is emphasized that unconcealment in the sense of *Lichtung* should be separated from the (traditional) idea of truth.¹ Heidegger could have wished to cut from the interrelated concepts of *aletheia*, *Lichtung*, *Unverborgenheit* the reference to the later meaning of truth as *adequatio* (and thus to loosen or detach *Lichtung* from truth), because he might have seen this identification to cause a disturbing contamination, and to be an obstacle in the original understanding of *Lichtung*. In other words: for the original understanding of *Lichtung* we do not need to draw the (traditional, later) concept of truth into the interpretation, this could only disturb the picture. But we could also formulate things in this way: having traced back truth to its original meaning, having understood it in these terms, we have no need to refer (back) the original idea of truth to the secondary, derivative truth concept, indeed, we had better leave it completely out of consideration. The text otherwise mentions truth – as something which does not have the same meaning as *aletheia* – each time in its traditional, “natural” (that is, not specifically Heideggerian) meaning.² Heidegger had indeed made great efforts earlier (e.g., in his main work) to derive this truth concept from the original idea of truth, at this late stage of his path, however, it might have seemed more important to him to outline the original concept of truth, more precisely the concept of *aletheia* (as *Unverborgenheit*, *Lichtung*) in an independent way, than to derive the traditional (epistemological) idea of truth from it, or than to connect it or relate it to the latter. This relation, he could have believed, only makes the precise understanding of the *Lichtung*-concept more difficult, therefore it is better to ignore it. But the remark may be in order: the connection is not entirely annihilated by this text either, as a reference shows. The emphasis in any case fell on the fact – and this was a real change as compared to *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit* – that the decline of the *aletheia* had not begun with Plato, but already with Pre-Socratic philosophy, namely with Parmenides.

Robert Bernasconi arrived at basically the same conclusion. He investigated these texts in relation to the Heidegger–Friedländer debate, and besides pointing out some less significant cases of shift in accent, he did not observe any kind of withdrawal, retracting in Heidegger, much rather – on the contrary – consequent thinking. “But the retraction”, he wrote, “does not amount to a denial that in Plato *aletheia* as unconcealment – and thus also *orthotes* as correctness – comes under the yoke of the *idea*. Once this is recognized, it becomes apparent that Heidegger’s so-called retraction amounts to a strengthening and clarifying his major claim concerning the concealment of concealing, not a weakening of it.”³ In other words, Heidegger – in opposition to Bröcker’s statement – rather than bury his interpretation concerning *Lichtung*, on the contrary, he did very much strengthen it by dating back the turn in the decline of the *aletheia* from Plato’s time to Parmenides’ age.

Bernasconi’s observation lends itself to the following interpretation. His statement referring to the consistency in Heidegger’s thinking – and the strengthening of

¹ Cf. *Zur Sache des Denkens*, 78 = GA 14, 87.

² Cf. *Zur Sache des Denkens*, 76 ff. = GA 14, 85 ff. “Sofern man Wahrheit im überlieferten »natürlichen« Sinn als die am Seienden ausgewiesene Übereinstimmung der Erkenntnis mit dem Seienden versteht [...]”; “Der natürliche Begriff von Wahrheit meint nicht Unverborgenheit, auch nicht in der Philosophie der Griechen.”

³ Robert Bernasconi, *The Question of Language in Heidegger’s History of Being*, (Atlantic Highlands, N. J.: Humanities, 1985), 20 ff., see page 22.

the *Lichtung*-interpretation – holds true, if the case is not such – as one could believe on the basis of the Plato-study – that concealment was originally obvious, self-revealing, and it began to conceal itself only later, in Plato. The statement is therefore true in the contrary case, namely, if concealment is seen as being characterized – according to the attentive and consistent consideration – exactly by the fact that it had concealed itself already at the very beginning, and not at some later time. The hiddenness of concealment belongs to the – original – essence of concealment precisely to the extent to which for example forgetting characterized by the fact that it does not only forget something, but it also forgets forgetting itself.¹ If, according to Heidegger's former Plato-interpretation, the meaning of (*aletheia* as) unconcealment underwent a decisive change in Plato by the fact that the *aletheia* became subject to the yoke of the idea (and by this it shifted into the correctness of the gaze), then this suggests (though Heidegger did not mention it), that Pre-Socratic Greek philosophy could still have experienced *aletheia* as unconcealment, it could have experienced that it explicitly revealed itself. Now, it is this latter tacit assumption that has been retracted or refuted – or maybe only detailed, specified – by Heidegger, when he says that not even Pre-Platonic Greek thinking did conceive *aletheia* specifically – it named it, but it did not conceive it. (Vitiello reversed the emphasis saying: "*Lichtung*, though it remained unconceived, was named".²)

An observation made by Heidegger during a Heraclitus seminar held together with Eugen Fink in 1966–1967 confirms and at the same time completes the considerations of the study *Das Ende der Philosophie... Aletheia* as *aletheia*, said Heidegger, has nothing to do with truth – it means only unconcealment. What had been said in the main work (see *Sein und Zeit*, p. 219) already pointed to this direction. "I have always been preoccupied with *aletheia* as unconcealment, but 'truth' has slipped in" ("schob sich dazwischen"),³ he added meaningfully. To this we might perhaps add that it slipped in necessarily, for without it Heidegger would never have arrived to the interpretation of *aletheia* as unconcealment. It was a ladder by all means necessary for climbing, but – once we had climbed up – it could be thrown away. The important thing – from the perspective of the late Heidegger who gave precedence to *Sein* over *Dasein* – was in any case *aletheia*, unconcealment, *Lichtung*. *Dasein* is not emphatically present in either of these; while, on the contrary, it is very much present "in the truth" understood in terms of the correctness of the gaze. Thus the late Heidegger could light-heartedly get rid "of truth"; and he could refer to it in this respect only according to its current, superficial, "traditional 'natural'" sense. For he had already included its genuine sense in *aletheia* – in unconcealment, in *Lichtung* –, thus he could leave it behind or get rid of it.

A concise observation in the study *Hegel und die Griechen* expresses the core of the matter well: "(If the soon dominant essence of truth as correctness and certainty can only exist in the realm of unconcealment, then) *truth has everything to do with*

¹ Cf. GA 24, 411: "It is inherent to the essence [...] of forgetfulness that it does not only forget the forgotten, but it also forgets forgetfulness itself" (see also GA 51, 65, GA 54, 120; cf. Fehér, *Martin Heidegger...*, 224, 275.)

² Vitiello, *Dialettica ed ermeneutica...*, 154.

³ Martin Heidegger–Eugen Fink, *Heraclit*. Seminar Wintersemester 1966/1967 (Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann, 1970), 260; see now GA 15, 262.

aletheia, but not this with truth.”¹ It is a relationship between the original and the derivative. The original can stand independently, without the derivative, but the latter cannot exist without the former.² According to *Being and Time*, the basis of a proposition’s truth as correctness, as correspondence is conferred by the truth of the being as unconcealment – this standpoint was to be preserved by Heidegger later. If he withdrew the reference of *aletheia* to truth in his later years, his reason for doing so could have been that truth appeared to him only in this secondary – we could say: declined – sense (preliminary understanding); that is, in the sense of the proposition’s truth, of correspondence between statement and thing. “Truth” could have become limited to this dimension of meaning; the other layers of meaning which had played a crucial role in the discussion of truth in his early career and which opened for him the ontological dimension of truth (e.g. “we live and die for truth”, theoretical truth *versus* historical, religious truth³) could have receded into the background – or they were even transposed into *aletheia* (as *Lichtung*), and thus they were included, preserved in it.⁴

In the very first sentence of the fairly long § 44 (pp. 212–230) in *Being and Time*, which discusses truth, Heidegger drew attention to the fact that “the Greeks had connected truth with Being since ancient times”, then after quoting and commenting briefly the Aristotelian passages referring to the question, he argued that the concept of truth is basically an ontological problem, though the later epistemological truth concept (according to which truth is in fact correspondence between statement and object) may also be justified. From this perspective one may say: for Heidegger – mainly in his later philosophy –, this connection of Being and truth – the truth of Being, as he expressed it – must have been much more essential than the truth of linguistic statements, of human

¹ GA 9, 442. (= *Wegmarken*, single edition, 270.) Both the italics and the parentheses in the quotation are mine. I want to suggest by this that the text can be understood without the parentheses, moreover, from the point of view of this analysis the *italicized* part receives the emphasis; the half sentence placed in parenthesis contains additional information, therefore it would not have been right to omit it entirely.

² See *Zur Sache des Denkens*, 76 ff. = GA 14, 86: “*Aletheia*, Unverborgenheit als *Lichtung* von Anwesenheit gedacht, ist noch nicht Wahrheit. Ist die *Aletheia* dann weniger als Wahrheit? Oder ist sie mehr, weil sie Wahrheit als *adaequatio* und *certitudo* erst gewährt, weil es Anwesenheit und Gegenwärtigung außerhalb des Bereiches der *Lichtung* nicht geben kann?”

³ GA 45, 28; GA 17, 98. – For a more detailed analysis see István M. Fehér, *Heidegger és a szkepticizmus. A szkeptikus kételyen át a hermeneutikai kérdésig* (Heidegger and Scepticism. Through Sceptical Doubt to the Hermeneutical Question) (Budapest: Korona Nova, 1998), 51–64, especially 60 ff.

⁴ A similar shift could have taken place in Heidegger’s thinking related to theology: after he had relocated his religious concerns – together with his original interest in actual life experience – definitively into (Greek) philosophy until the mid 1920s, he regarded Christianity only as a superficial, rigid theology, estranged from life, which contained and passed on a petrified and deformed Greek philosophy, and „theology” only occurred in his texts in a negative sense. The Heideggerian “Denken” at the same time, while completely undermining the conceptual basis of traditional theology, with its quietly questioning character became in its way filled with theological-religious features. See this question in more detail in: István M. Fehér, “Karl Rahner szellemi gyökereihez: Heidegger és a XX. századi teológia” (To Karl Rahner’s Intellectual Origin: Heidegger and the 20th Century Philosophy), in *Az Ige meghallója. Karl Rahner emlékülés* (The Hearer of the Word. Karl Rahner Memorial Session), ed. István Boros (Szeged – Budapest: Szegedi Hittudományi Főiskola – Logos Kiadó, 1996), 43–91, here 80 (note no. 40), 87 ff. (note no. 66).

cognition considered in a wider sense – as adequacy –; thus he could even give up (light-heartedly, anyway seeing the repeated misunderstandings) its reference to the latter (in favour of the former).

Let us summarize: Heidegger's different interpretations given about the concept of truth in the course of several decades are a famous case when he used concepts in a new, unusual sense. That which he revealed, or thought to reveal in the course of these interpretations is highly debatable and debated, but his analyses in any case outlined new, interesting thoughts. What has proved to be disturbing on several occasions in the course of decades was that Heidegger connected these thoughts to the concept of truth, made them known under the designation of the concept of truth. This has been disturbing because there is nonetheless a considerable distance between the usual, well-established, traditional sense of truth and the Heideggerian usage ("unconcealment"). The question may be raised: why did Heidegger resort to the concept of truth to convey his thought? And was he right to do so? Is the fact that in Greek the literal meaning of "truth" is "unconcealment" a sufficient justification? As we have seen, Heidegger in the end decided to keep the interpretation in question – its objective grounding, weight, importance –, but he renounced the word, which means that he no longer referred the interpretation to "truth", he did not keep it as the interpretation of truth. (The truth of Being is the unconcealment of Being, one could summarize the former thesis; while the latter could be summed up approximately as follows: in the statement concerning the unconcealment of Being unconcealment does not have the same meaning as truth; nevertheless, Being is in any case characterized by unconcealment, that is, the unconcealment of Being – which conceals itself – is an essential and important phenomenon in itself, its reference to truth is untenable, but it is unimportant.) This, of course, implies other difficulties, for the phenomenon is thus so much as pushed into the unnameable; by this we refer to the particular difficulty we have already mentioned briefly above,¹ which accompanied Heidegger all the way through his path as a thinker – and which maybe characterizes philosophy in general –, namely, the scarcity of language.

V. 2. It will be of use to mention in brief some similar cases, in which Heidegger's key concepts appear in a new, unusual sense, different from the traditional. "If Heidegger speaks [...] about the 'history' of Being," wrote in his basic monograph Otto Pöggeler, "than that which is called [...] here history must strictly be differentiated from that which we call history otherwise, namely from that area of being which, for example, is usually opposed to nature. What nature and history are in their own being can be adequately conceived only from the direction of the experience regarding the truth of being."² The Heidegger texts published after Pöggeler's monograph confirm this interpretation. Indeed, Heidegger in his second period wrote: "We do not understand here history as one of the realms of being, but exclusively with respect to the essence of Being. [...] By this, however, we do not push for example 'nature' into the background, but this also goes through a similarly original transformation. In this original concept of history we arrive for the first time to the realm where it becomes perceivable, history is 'more' than

¹ See above note 3 on page 19.

² Otto Pöggeler, *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1963), 2nd, extended edition, 1983, 186.

action and will". The aim of the considerations in question, wrote Heidegger, is neither "some theory of history, nor some philosophy of history".¹ In the expression "the history of Being", the word history figures in a non-traditional, unusual sense. The differentiation "nature"–"history" itself constitutes an age in the "history of Being". According to this, the expression "history" means radically different things in the two cases (between them the distance is "infinite", in a sense which we are going to expound on later), and the question may be put: is the use of the same word justified? To what extent can the history of Being be described as "history"?

I attempted to formulate a similar objection in one of my former studies regarding Heidegger's ontological radicalization of the *wissenschaftstheoretisch* concept of understanding; the issue in question is related to nothing less than the ontological turn or radicalization of 20th century hermeneutics. I did this on the basis of a critical perspective formulated by Heidegger himself in his main work arguing against Descartes in the following way: "The question may arise: is there not an infinite difference between the (traditional) epistemological and the (new) ontological concept of understanding and through this a possibility to span it? To perceive understanding as a kind of cognition does not raise too great difficulties; to call understanding a mode of being, however, is at least unusual or perplexing. The latter, unusual way of expression, nevertheless, would still be acceptable; but the fact that, in spite of his unusual use of the concept of understanding, Heidegger attempted to relate his concept of understanding to the epistemological concept of understanding he had declared outworn and had left behind, the fact that he tried to bridge the gap between the two is worth much more consideration. At this point the question may arise: what right had Heidegger to claim that his ontological concept of understanding constituted the fundament of the epistemological concept of understanding, and that the latter was nothing else than the derivative of the former? Is not the difference between the two 'infinite'?"² The

¹ GA 65, 32 ff. See *ibid.* 359, 421; furthermore *Der Satz vom Grund*, 2nd edition (Pfullingen: Neske, 1958), 109, 114, 120, 130. The issue already appeared in the early lectures, e.g. in the famous lecture course on the phenomenology of religion; see GA 60, 32. From Pöggeler referring to this see also: "Temporale Interpretation und hermeneutische Philosophie", *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 43 (1989), 5–32, here 30 (reprinted in Pöggeler, *Neue Wege mit Heidegger*, Freiburg/München: Alber, 1992, 115–141, here 139 ff.); "Zeit und Hermeneutik", in *Krisis der Metaphysik. Wolfgang Müller-Lauter zum 65. Geburtstag*, hrsg. G. Abel–J. Salaquarde (Berlin–New York: De Gruyter, 1989), 364–388, here 380 (reprinted in Pöggeler, *Schritte zu einer hermeneutischen Philosophie* (Freiburg/München: Alber, 1994), 115–141, here 132).

² István M. Fehér, "Verstehen bei Heidegger und Gadamer", in *"Dimensionen des Hermeneutischen". Heidegger und Gadamer*, hrsg. G. Figal und H.-H. Gander (Schriftenreihe der Martin-Heidegger-Gesellschaft, Bd. 7) (Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann, 2005), 89–115, here 104: "Es kann [...] die Frage entstehen: gibt es nicht einen unendlichen Unterschied, und damit keine Brücke zwischen dem (traditionellen) erkenntnistheoretischen und dem (neuen) ontologischen Verstehensbegriff? Die Auffassung des Verstehens als eine Art Erkennen bereitet ja keine große Schwierigkeiten; Verstehen als Seinsart anzusprechen ist dagegen zumindest ungewöhnlich oder befremdend. Dieses, die ungewöhnliche Redeweise könnte gleichwohl noch akzeptabel sein; was bedenklicher erscheint, ist, daß Heidegger, seiner ungewöhnlichen Beanspruchung des Verstehensbegriffs zum Trotz, den Versuch unternimmt, ihn selbst mit dem für überwunden deklarierten und hinter sich gelassenen erkenntnistheoretischen Begriff in Verbindung zu setzen, zwischen beiden eine Brücke zu schlagen. An diesem Punkt kann die Frage entstehen: Mit welchem Recht behauptet Heidegger, sein ontologischer Verstehensbegriff bilde den Grund des

formulation of such a question may be seen as being justified by Heidegger himself, who, discussing the Cartesian definition of the world as *res extensa*, wrote in his main work: "Every entity which is not God is an *ens creatum*. The Being which belongs to one of these entities is 'infinitely' different from that which belongs to the other; yet we still consider creation and creator alike as *entities*. We are thus using 'Being' in so wide a sense that its meaning embraces an 'infinite' difference."¹

If we adopt this critical point of view, the question arises whether a kind of "infinite difference" in a similar sense can or cannot be discovered in the concept of understanding in Heidegger himself through the fact that according to his intentions this conception was meant to encompass both the traditional epistemological and *wissenschaftstheoretisch* aspects, as well as the new ontological dimension (radicalized by Heidegger). The discussed case is similar to the above analyzed dilemma regarding the problem of truth in virtue of the fact that there the Heideggerian concept of truth (truth as unconcealment) and the traditional one – conceived as the correspondence between proposition and object – were to be connected; these two poles are constituted in the present case mostly in a similar sense by the ontological and epistemological concepts of understanding. This example, however, differs from the former in that while in the former case Heidegger ceased at a certain point to refer the two poles to one another – and thus, we may say, he tacitly acknowledged the existence of the "infinite difference" –, in the case of the concept of understanding such a retraction, as far as I am aware, did not occur. It is true, however, that here this would have been most probably needless, therefore it could scarcely have been seriously considered, for the late Heidegger completely left behind the concept of understanding itself (in both its ontological and epistemological sense), and together with it the dimension of hermeneutics – which he may have felt as being subjective.

V. 3. Resuming our original subject and at the same time continuing the results of former analyses, we may say: against Heidegger's concept of time, time conceived in terms of the *a priori* of *a priori*, an objection greatly similar to those outlined above – related to the meanings of the concepts of truth, history, and understanding – can be formulated. Applying it to our case, the question is the possibility, plausibility of "bridging" the gap between the traditional and Heideggerian use of the concept of time. Is there not between them no less "infinite difference"? That Heidegger used the concept of time in an unusual way – radically different from the greatest part of the tradition – would be – perhaps – here acceptable; but the (hermeneutical) situation once again is characterized by the fact that he tried to derive the traditional concept of time (called by him vulgar) from his own time concept, that is, he tried to connect the two notions. The dilemma – in the final analysis and in a sharpened formulation – consists of the fact that Heidegger named and expanded on his concept in question as a *time* concept (in the

erkenntnistheoretischen, bzw. dieser sei ein Derivat jenes? Ist der Unterschied nicht ein 'unendlicher'?" As here I raise the possibility of applying a critical objection directed by Heidegger against Descartes on Heidegger himself, the discussion continues with further elaboration on this issue; see *ibid.* 104–107.

¹ BT 123 (= SZ 20 §, 92: "Jedes Seiende, das nicht Gott ist, ist *ens creatum*. Zwischen beiden besteht ein »unendlicher« Unterschied ihres Seins, und doch sprechen wir das Geschaffene ebenso wie den Schöpfer *als Seiende* an. Wir gebrauchen demnach Sein in einer Weite, daß sein Sinn einen »unendlichen« Unterschied umgreift.")

other two mentioned cases: as concepts of understanding and history). If a notion has to encompass an “infinite difference”, this leads up to a difficulty which can hardly be overcome. But if it has not this task, that raises new, different difficulties. An aporia, an unsolvable situation is being created. In both cases the difficulty originates from the scarcity (or lack) of language.

The philosopher *either* refers his use of concepts to the tradition, and in this case he may come to use his basic concepts in a sense “infinitely” different from the traditional: the difficulty in this case arises from the necessity to bridge the gap between the infinitely different elements, to join them; *or* – trying to solve this difficulty – he may decide to give up referring them to the tradition, he dissolves the connection, thus pushing his own theme into namelessness. This – retracting – step was taken only (as far as I can see) related to the concept of truth in the discussed cases (I leave now Heidegger’s retraction of his earlier reduction of space to time without discussion.) . The question concerning *aletheia* as uncealment, the late Heidegger claimed, is not identical with the question concerning truth; thus he removed the dilemma of the “infinite difference” – the dilemma of building a bridge between the two concepts, together with the necessity of doing so. But if *aletheia* is not identical with truth, then what is it and how can it be *identified*? For *aletheia* has become a philosophically relevant subject – before anything else and first of all – in relation to the interpretation of truth. If we loosen or dissolve this relation, what are we going to call that which remains? Language in one case must encompass an “infinite difference”, in the other it cannot find – more precisely, it gives up – the adequate word, and has to remain silent. This dilemma, as far as I can see, is one of the basic dilemmas of Heidegger’s thought – if not of philosophy itself. (And we have not even mentioned one of Heidegger’s basic concepts, Being. The relationship between this and the similar – or apparently similar – questions and questionings of the tradition could only be discussed in detail in a separate study. Let us anyway refer briefly to the fact that if the concept of time compared to the question of Being must go through a radical change which results in a new time concept, then this also holds true to the concept of Being related to time, which, compared to the traditional notions of Being, must also be new – and at the same time related to the tradition.¹)

V. 4. I have quoted above (at the beginning of part V. 2.) Otto Pöggeler warning – completely justifiably – that in Heidegger’s expression, history of Being, “that which is called [...] here history must strictly be differentiated from that which we call history otherwise, namely from that area of the being which, for example, is usually opposed to nature.” Pöggeler made similar observations – with reference to the correct understanding of Heidegger’s use of concepts – on other occasions as well; from the point of view of our subject it is most relevant that one of these referred to the *a priori*. Nevertheless, here observation and warning – differently from the former case – were not formulated neutrally but were accompanied by criticism. Considering the fact that our analysis so far claimed that we have to deal with a real but not easily solvable dilemma, we would not go that far as Otto Pöggeler, when he formulated this – in my opinion theoretical and philosophically unsolvable – difficulty as an objection against Heidegger. “If Heidegger”, Pöggeler observed, “connects the traditional discussion of

¹ See for this note 1 on page 15.

the ‘a priori’ to some kind of earlier being and by this to time, then he overlooks the fact that philosophy has become aware of the metaphorical aspects contained by this and has deconstructed them”.¹ This objection seems all the less justified as Heidegger had already “deconstructed” the pejorative meaning of “metaphor” on which Pöggeler tacitly constructed his critique. (Of course, the excellent Heidegger scholar was obviously perfectly aware of this, but for a moment seemed to have left it out of consideration.)² On the other hand, if the argumentation claims that the “earlier being” can only be connected to time metaphorically, then it tacitly commits itself (has always already committed itself) to some kind of a literal, exact meaning of time – in a certain sense borrowed (naturally: dogmatically, without questioning it and questioning behind it) from the course of the tradition. This prior commitment, however, forms an impediment to Heidegger’s own question concerning time – and to “being and time” –, that is, it distances itself from this question before facing and thematizing it properly. If my metacritical argumentation is not wholly unfounded then it removes an important conceptual obstacle from the way of referring the *a priori* and time mutually to one another. Thereby the question concerning the *a priori* becomes open towards its possible connection to the concept of time – understood and thematized in some new sense.

V. 5. By way of conclusion of this part let us resume our initial, starting questions. If a philosopher uses a concept in a new, unusual sense – this has been our starting claim –, then any objection referring to some traditional – usual, long standing – sense of the notion in question could far too easily be repelled with the observation: “I use the concept in another sense”. Thus one can evade any comparison and criticism. On the other hand, we have observed that if we contested the philosophers’ right to use traditional expressions in a new, unusual sense, then we would question their freedom and together with it the freedom of philosophy; thereby we would eventually end up in putting an end to philosophy. We would make *ab ovo* impossible the formulation of new, so far unobserved questions, problems, we would impede new discoveries.

The fact that philosophers try to expound on their discoveries related – in some cases critically – to some traditional concept points to the procedure which Heidegger, after his hermeneutical turn following World War I, called destruction.³ The destructive work is directed to the basic concepts of the philosophical world view and it is carried out with the aim of winning back, reappropriating these ideas in a creative and living manner. The theoretical difficulties and limits of destruction can be illustrated with a computer-analogy. It is a well-known fact that operating files cannot be scanned for

¹ Otto Pöggeler, “Zeit und Hermeneutik”, in Pöggeler, *Schritte zu einer hermeneutischen Philosophie* (Freiburg/München: Alber, 1994), 115–141, here 135: “Wenn Heidegger auch die traditionelle Rede vom »Apriori« auf ein Frühersein und damit auf Zeit festlegt, erkennt er, daß das Philosophieren die hier liegende Metaphorik bewußt gemacht und abgearbeitet hat.”

² Related to Heidegger’s view on metaphor see István M. Fehér, “Léteznek-e szó szerinti jelentés?” (Is There a Literary Sense?), *Világosság* XLVII, no. 8–9–10 (2006), 185–196, here especially 190 ff. Online: <http://www.vilagossag.hu/pdf/20070507214049.pdf>.

³ For more detail on what follows see István M. Fehér, “Destrukció és applikáció avagy a filozófia mint »saját korának filozófiája«. Történelem és történetiség Heidegger és Gadamer gondolkodásában” (Destruction and Application or Philosophy as ‘the Philosophy of Its Own Age’. History and Historicity in Heidegger’s and Gadamer’s Thinking), *Világosság* XLIII, no. 4–7 (2002), 19–33. See online: <http://www.vilagossag.hu/pdf/20030704121036.pdf>.

viruses. The program which performs the scanning – at least while it is scanning – cannot be scanned itself, it cannot be subjected to questioning. The antivirus program cannot scan itself reliably. The starting point of the procedure destruction–reappropriation – the demand for new, fresh access to things – evades investigation. It does so because investigation starts from it; it happens and is carried out with and through it; that is, presupposing it.¹ Most probably, its efficiency – what and how it can reveal and make accessible in the course of its progressive deconstructing–reacquiring work – can only be measured on this. Besides deconstruction, Heidegger used for this procedure the expression “loosening” („Abbau”) as well. If we *have loosened* the basic concepts of the metaphysical tradition and world view – that is, if we have indeed made them accessible for new questioning and acquiring – then it is no longer possible for us to reject Heidegger’s time analysis “a priori” (!) – and here this means: without, “prior” to a thorough critical confrontation with the texts – on the account that we *know* (from tradition or from anywhere else, in any case, we know stably and for good) what time is.

The crucial point in Heidegger’s argumentation – as in any philosophical argumentation – is its starting point, or premise which I have reconstructed above² thus: “...‘earlier’/‘former’ is a temporal determination (since ‘earlier’, ‘former’ obviously means ‘earlier’ *in time*, ‘former’ *in time*)...” Concerning this formulation the objection can be raised that this definition tacitly already presupposes exactly that which is a question itself, namely that “‘earlier’/‘former’ is a temporal determination”. This can only be accepted, the argumentation continues, if we already draw on a time concept which differs from the tradition – maybe even Heidegger’s own idea. (We have formulated this somewhat later in the text: “That which precedes any earlier or later is nothing else than time – of course, time taken in the ontological and not in its vulgar or subjective sense.”) If, however, we abide by the traditional concept of time, then we can respond to this: why would “‘earlier’, ‘former’ *obviously*” mean “‘earlier’ *in time*, ‘former’ *in time*”? It is not at all so – not at all *obvious*! This expression conceals, but anyway skips the difficulty. We have to deal with the appearance of an argument, but not with a real argument.

This critical objection is most probably correct. But its author also conceals something, and in his case we have likewise to deal with the appearance of arguments rather than with arguments. The starting point is eventually the readiness – or the lack of readiness – to re-examine the traditional concept of time. Whether we can hear or not the temporal determination in “earlier” turns on our way of listening: that is, on the time

¹ The hermeneutical deconstruction–reacquisition is also carried out from the ground of tradition; it can hardly be claimed that it is above history. But this does not at all mean that it is safe from criticism. See on this Robert Sokolowski, “Gadamer’s Theory of Hermeneutics”, in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, The Library of Living Philosophers, vol. XXIV, ed. Lewis E. Hahn, (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1997), 223–236, here 227: “We cannot stand outside all traditions and evaluate them from no committed point of view; the desire for such an inhuman and detached perspective is another of the misleading hopes of rationalism and the Enlightenment”. Cf. further G. B. Madison, “Hermeneutics: Gadamer and Ricoeur”, in *Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy*, ed. R. Kearney (Routledge History of Philosophy, vol. VIII) (London – New York: Routledge, 1994), 290–349, here 319: “the fact that we stand always within tradition and cannot, for that reason, criticize everything *at once*, does not mean that there are things that cannot be criticized, as a cultural conservative might maintain”.

² See point II, the context of note 5 on page 14.

concept we tacitly keep – always already (so to say “a priori”) – in mind, on the time concept we compare this demand to. This previous understanding decides on the acceptance or rejection of the demand (and this prior understanding cannot be suspended, it always functions in one direction or another). We arrive to an *either–or* which does not allow for an argumentative answer – in either case –, for this is the choice of the absolute starting point. If we abide by tradition, it is not obvious that in “earlier” a time determination is inherent, and Heidegger’s way of putting the question and his starting point can summarily be rejected. If, however, we show readiness or openness to break with the tradition, to re-examine its senses of words (the readiness to hermeneutical destruction, to the critical re-examination, to the reappropriation of tradition consists exactly in this), then we do not have to refrain *ab ovo* (“a priori”) from outlining a new, unusual time concept. And this, if it is the case, could start from the observation that a time determination is lies implicit in “earlier”, “former”.

Heidegger in each of the above mentioned and analyzed cases used certain basic concepts of his thinking and at the same time of the philosophical tradition – the *a priori* concepts of truth, history, understanding, and time – in an unusual, new sense (the unusual, new meanings, however, in each case started from some traditional sense). Was this justified? Did all this result from the originality, or from the arbitrariness of his thinking? We leave the answer open at this point. Last but not least we cannot be sure with regard to the very fact whether our questioning touched upon the real issues or not.

VI.

I should like to end this paper with a somewhat subjective observation. The conclusion of the Heidegger lecture course held in 1927, entitled *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* – published as volume 24 of the collected works –, where the above reconstructed observations on the relationship between the *a priori* and time appear, contains a formulation which seemed to me strangely familiar when I reread the text this time and I was glad to have come across it. This formulation says: “*Die Phänomenologie gibt es nicht, und wenn es sie geben könnte, dann würde sie nie zu so etwas wie einer philosophischen Technik werden [The phenomenology does not exist, but even if it existed, it could not become some kind of a philosophical technique].*”¹ After some efforts I realized that the passage did not seem familiar because I remembered it – although there are Heidegger texts which I recall, and this could have been one of them, since it was one of the first Heidegger texts I have read –, but because I myself used a similar formulation once, moreover with similar emphasis – related to hermeneutics. In the mid 1990s I wrote an article in German entitled *Gibt es die Hermeneutik?*, in which I questioned – or at least made questionable – the existence of “*the hermeneutics*”. Among other things I wrote: “aus der Sicht philosophischer Hermeneutik, *die Hermeneutik als solche*, d.h. so etwas wie den (allgemeinen oder einheitlichen) Begriff der Hermeneutik, überhaupt nicht gibt, überhaupt nicht geben kann” [“from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics [...] there is not [...] and there cannot be such a thing as *the hermeneutics* (the concept of hermeneutics, its general or unified concept)”].²

¹ GA 24, 467.

² István M. Fehér, “Gibt es *die Hermeneutik*? Zur Selbstreflexion und Aktualität der Hermeneutik Gadamerischer Prägung”, in *Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, hrsg. G. Figal, E. Rudolph (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag), Jg. V, 1996, Heft 2, 236–259, here 251. In Hungarian see “Hermeneutika és problémátörténet – avagy létezik-e »a« hermeneutika? A gadameri

When I wrote this article, more than ten years had past since I had read volume 24 of Heidegger's complete works, and this Heidegger passage did not linger in my mind, at least I cannot remember it, and the text itself does not contain any kind of reference to it either. I tried to question the existence of "*the*" hermeneutics based on independent arguments, irrespective of Heidegger's questioning about phenomenology and of the context of this questioning. Be as it may, I should like to recommend now the following theses as conclusions worth considering: if *the* hermeneutics does not exist, and according to Heidegger neither does *the* phenomenology, then a third thesis could be added to these two, namely that *the* analytic philosophy does not exist either. If all these do not exist, what does then remain? What does exist at all? – one may ask. A possible answer could be: what remains is *the* philosophy or (as Heidegger liked to express it) the philosophical investigation, research, philosophizing, looking things in the face in an effort to appropriate and reappropriate them.¹

Translated by Ágnes Korondi

hermeneutika önreflexiója és aktualitásának néhány vonása" (Hermeneutics and History of Problems – Or Does 'the' Hermeneutics Exist? The Self-Reflection of the Gadamerian Hermeneutics and Some Aspects of Its Timeliness), in István M. Fehér, *Hermeneutikai tanulmányok I* (Hermeneutical Studies I) (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2001), 66; see also *ibid.* 78 ff.: "From a hermeneutical perspective (that is from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics) the question 'what is "hermeneutics"?' according to what we have said so far is impossible, because it lacks motivation, that is, it is a freely floating question. On this view, it also remains – it must remain – a question whether *the* hermeneutics – the hermeneutics as such, and *the* philosophical hermeneutics as such (as stars in the sky) – does (do) and can exist at all."

¹ See for example SZ 2, 7, 9 ff., 11; GA 56/67, 212; GA 61, 3, 8, 24. ("Der Weg ist weit für die Philosophie als Forschung"), 29 ("konkrete Forschung"), 182 ff., 187 ff., 190 ff., 193 ff. ("phänomenologische Forschung", "phänomenologische und geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung", Philosophie "als radikale Forschung"); GA 62, 329, 347 ("philosophische Forschung"), 348 ff., etc. Further on GA 27, 15 ("Philosophie = Philosophieren"); GA 29/30, 6 ("Philosophie ist Philosophieren"), etc.