

Heidegger, Hegel, and Aristotle: A Straight Line?*

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Sommario: 1. Heidegger's Theory of *Seinsvergessenheit* and his Attitude Towards Humanism and *Forschung*. 2. Heidegger's Interpretations of Time, Being, and Substance in Aristotle and Hegel. 3. Concluding Remarks.



About the same time in which Martin Heidegger was maturing into a philosopher, Marcel Proust referred somewhere in his monumental *Remembrance of Things Past*, to a professor of history at the Sorbonne saying, "he was out of sympathy with the modern Sorbonne, where ideas of scientific exactitude, after the German model, were beginning to prevail over humanism"¹. The time to which Marcel Proust referred was, of course, that of *la belle époque*, a century ago. A quarter of a century later the German model of which Proust spoke was firmly established almost everywhere in the academic quarters of the Western world. Whether or not the philosopher Heidegger was ever attached to this model, the fact is that he sought to keep his own work at an increasing distance from it without, however, ever attaching himself to the rival model of humanism. In this respect, the two World Wars were undoubtedly of special significance for him.

It was only after World War II that, in his letter to Jean Baufret, Heidegger defined his own position towards humanism in a fully explicit way. He had however already touched upon the issue of humanism and culture in a rather dramatic way in the period between the two great wars of our century. This was a period

* Conference at the Catholic University of America, Washington D. C.

** Philosophisches Seminar, Domplatz, 23, D-48143, Münster. Il prof. Fernando InciarTE, che ha collaborato più volte con la nostra rivista, è morto il 9 giugno 2000.

¹ English translation by C.K. Scott Moncrief and Terence Kilmartin in the Penguin Books, vol. 2, p. 897.

during which Germany, despite its first crushing defeat, was witnessing a revival of her Classical tradition under the heading of “The New Humanism”, of which Werner Jaeger’s *Paideia* was only one, though an outstanding example. In the purely philosophical field, one may think of Ernst Cassirer’s *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* as a similarly outstanding example. The two attitudes most dramatically clashed with each other in the famous series of disputes between Ernst Cassirer and his junior colleague Martin Heidegger that took place in the Davos of Thomas Mann’s *Magic Mountain* when Heidegger reproached Cassirer for inviting man to make himself comfortable in the shelters (*Behausungen*) of culture without realizing that it is the genuine task of philosophy, as Heidegger put it, “to cast man back from the sloth of using the products of the spirit into the hardship of fate”². As is well known, he eventually went so far as to altogether reject the title of philosophy for his own endeavours³.

Under such circumstances, one may ask what is the point of treating Heidegger alongside two classical philosophers such as Aristotle and Hegel. The scope of this question is not limited to the issue of humanism. It bears not only on Heidegger’s attitude towards culture in general and philosophy in particular, but on his attitude towards the German model of exact investigation or *Forschung* as well. In fact, Heidegger’s motives for mistrusting both models can be traced back to the same origin. Their common origin lies in the very nature of metaphysics in the sense given by Heidegger to the term “onto-theology”, i.e. in the sense in which metaphysics represents a progressive oblivion of being in favor of beings, of *Sein* in favor of *Seiendes*.

I am not going to give a new interpretation of this real or alleged oblivion, nor am I going to repeat other interpretations. Rather, I will first explain the way in which Heidegger’s thesis of *Seinsvergessenheit* is to be considered responsible for his persistent attitude towards both humanism and *Forschung*. Then, in the central part of my exposition, I will draw some consequences of this attitude with regard to Heidegger’s interpretation of Hegel and Aristotle concerning time, being, and substance. A third section concludes with some remarks in a more general key.

1. Heidegger’s Theory of *Seinsvergessenheit* and his Attitude Towards Humanism and *Forschung*

Heidegger’s attitude to both cultural humanism and exact investigation was rooted in his conviction of the inadequacy of theory vis-à-vis human life in its

² “Davoser Disputation”, edited as an appendix to *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* in Gesamtausgabe (GA) I 3, Frankfurt 1991, p. 291.

³ Cf., e.g., “Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens”, in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, Tübingen 1969, pp. 61-81. For his own work Heidegger retained at first even the title “Forschung”, if only in the sense of “*phänomenologische Forschung*”, but he gave this up later on (cf. also note 24 below).

individual as well as historical dimension. The word “theory” is here to be taken literally, i.e. broadly enough so as to encompass all connotations of “looking at”, including the Biblical “enticing of eyes” or “*Augenlust*” (“lust of the eyes”). But, of course, it was not so much because the Greeks were, as the saying goes, “*Augenmenschen*” (“men of eyes”) that they, according to Heidegger, bequeathed the notion of theory to the Western world. Even during the time of the Third Reich, Heidegger at least firmly rejected any kind of biologism, naturalism or, for that matter, racism. If the Greeks were “*Augenmenschen*”, this was because of their mental or spiritual attitude — i.e. because of the way in which being manifested itself to them, and at the same time concealed itself from them. It is also the way of metaphysics as interpreted by Heidegger.

What is concealed from metaphysics are its own foundations, i.e. the fact that the essence or sense of being is time. A clear example of this is to be found, according to Heidegger, in what he once — drawing more on the Scholastic tradition than on Aristotle himself — called *analogia entis*. In this tradition, substance represents the primary meaning of being, its *primum analogatum*. But whereas at the beginning the Greek “*ousia*” was still understood in the full range of its own connotations, at the end it was reduced to the impoverished notion of *substantia*. What the notion of *substantia* mainly left out was precisely the temporal connotation of “*ousia*” (*Anwesenheit* and *Gegenwart*, presence and the present) on which Heidegger, rightly or wrongly, put so much stress. According to Heidegger, this is already evident in the twist taken by onto-theology into the timeless and eternal when Aristotle set about finding the most primordial sense of “*ousia*” in a unique and — to borrow from Schelling’s critique of Hegelian Aristotelianism — idle or lazy God (“*fauler Gott*”) who makes his appearance only at the end of the system, when nothing more is to be done⁴. It is the same twist that had already led Aristotle to give pride of place to world-detached theoretical wisdom over world-orientated practical wisdom, to *sophia* over *phronesis*, to *theoria* over *praxis*.

In fact, immediately after World War I, Heidegger started to scourge what he had been seeking to defend before, viz. the objective and universal validity of eternal truths and values. After such a catastrophe for Europe in general and Germany in particular Heidegger came to see in the belief in allegedly pure objective truths the attempt of human life or *Dasein* to distract itself from its radically contingent condition or, as he put it, its facticity. In this respect, no difference in principle is to be found between humanism and *Forschung*. The pretensions to unshakeable results on the part of the latter correspond on the part of the former to the picture of cultural contents hanging, as it were, on the high wall of ideal values — as if among them one could choose the fittest ones, as from a collection of clothes, in order to cover one’s own existential nakedness. Even Aristotelian virtues, being as they are *ktemata* rather than *chreseis*, properties

⁴ Cf. *Münchener Vorlesungen*, in *Werke* (ed. K.F.A. Schelling) X, p. 160.

and proprieties rather than praxis proper, represent for him some sort of moral code, and are by this very fact to be considered but another consequence of the objectifying drive in metaphysics. The same applies, of course, to the whole realm of Hegelian objective spirit, substantial *Sittlichkeit*, or public morality. Thus, it is not surprising that just as Heidegger never found the way from the Aristotelian ethics to the *Politics*, he, similarly, never found the way from the passions of the *Rhetorics* to the virtues of the *Nicomachean Ethics*⁵. Nor is it surprising that, under such circumstances, to deal with metaphysics ought for him to be at the same time to retrace its living origins by patiently removing the sediment accumulated on them by the sheer passing of time and history. In his view, simply looking back to metaphysics without any destructive intention would have the same deadly effect as the looking back of Lot's wife to the doomed city or that of Orpheus sending Eurydice back to the realm of death as a result of the same sort of idle curiosity or *Augenlust*. Thus the constructive aspect in metaphysics' de-construction — as Heidegger's expression "*Ab-bau*" was to be translated later on as literally as it was appropriately — is not to be taken as objective reconstruction but, precisely, as appropriation, as *An-eignung* or, to lean on Heidegger's later keyword, as *Er-eignung*. This was not so much due to any incapacity for reaching objectivity on the interpreter's part, but rather to there not being any objectivity to be reached here after all. For even the now past metaphysics, when still alive, despite its thrust towards reification, was less of a closed actuality like those of Hegel's or even Aristotle's lazy God, than it was an open potentiality like time or history.

Now, supposing one should accept Heidegger's standpoint on this score, the question arises, on the one hand, as to whether there is — as regards our concern with the metaphysical past — any alternative between objective validity, and, on the other, subjective willfulness. The answer to this along Heidegger's lines would be to say that, in dealing with its own essential past, philosophy must not so much bring back (*wieder-holen*) now dead realities, but rather to bring to light precisely those living possibilities hidden in metaphysics itself that, for whatever reasons, were never realized in it. Obviously, such an attitude fits neither the German model of exact investigation nor that of cultural humanism. Nevertheless, it is, as a matter of fact, the very attitude with which Heidegger looked into the metaphysical past. It is something of this sort that I myself intend to do in the second part of my lecture. More precisely, what I intend to do is to try to bring to light some of the possibilities Heidegger himself once detected in Aristotle as well as in Hegel concerning the issue of time and being, and of time and substance, which he himself never further developed. In other words, I am going to approach Heidegger himself in the same spirit with which he approached Aristotle and Hegel or even metaphysics as a whole.

⁵ W. Marx (*Heidegger und die Tradition*, Hamburg 1980) is not the only one to find fault with Heidegger about this.

2. Heidegger's Interpretations of Time, Being, and Substance in Aristotle and Hegel

In so proceeding, one may be forced to pay a price: the price of unduly simplifying — at least from the standpoint of *Forschung*. This risk has already been hinted at in the expression “a straight line,” which appears in the title of the present lecture. It becomes even more evident in the words of a contemporary French philosopher who, like so many others nowadays in France, has been deeply influenced by Heidegger. I mean Gilles Deleuze. In his book *Différence et Répétition*, Deleuze maintains that from Parmenides to Heidegger “there has never been more than one ontological proposition: Being is univocal. There has never been more than a single ontology, that of Duns Scotus...”⁶. Is Deleuze unduly simplifying? He is, at any rate, playing with the word “univocal”. From Parmenides to Heidegger, ontology has spoken with only one voice: this seems to be Deleuze's contention. And this contention need not be simplistic. For Heidegger's history of being has to do with univocity only in the general sense that what philosophers have said (or voiced) in the past has always been the same (*das Selbe*), where the “same” or “sameness” (“*Selbigkeit*”) has “otherness” (“*Andersheit*”) not outside but inside itself — just as identity, according to Hegel, encompasses difference; or just as, according to Aristotle, the *differentia specifica*, far from being added to an identical *genus* from outside, is nothing else than the latter in its own differentiation⁷. Thus the important thing to ask here, is how it is that all three — Aristotle, Hegel, and Heidegger — came to say the same thing, and this not despite, but precisely because of their differences. Consequently, rather than making external comparisons, it would be more to the point to attempt to repeat the gist of their thought about being and time in a way that, even if it should fail to coincide completely with the philosophy of any one of the three, preserves the thing that matters, *die Sache*. This is more so as Heidegger's original intention was not to liquidate, but to liquidize (“*verflüssigen*”) or revitalize Aristotelianism in a similar spirit to that in which Hegel had hinted at when, shortly before his death, he wrote the following words: “If something ancient is to be renewed, [...] then the form of the idea given to it by Plato and much more profoundly by Aristotle, is infinitely worthy of being recollected, also for this reason that the unpacking of it by means of appropriating it (*Aneignung*) to the formation of our thoughts is immediately, not only an understanding of it, but a step forward for science itself”⁸. Hegel went so far as to say that, for anyone taking philosophy seriously, the best thing to do would be to teach Aristotle⁹. Now, Heidegger's own appreciation of Aristotle is

⁶ *Différence et Répétition*, Paris 1968, p. 52.

⁷ Cf. *Metaphysics*, VII 12.

⁸ *Enzyklopädie*, in *Werke* (Suhrkamp) 8, p. 31: Vorrede 1827. For the translation I am indebted to D. Dahlstrom.

⁹ “Würde es ernst mit der Philosophie, so würde nichts würdiger, als über Aristoteles Vorlesungen zu halten” (*Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke* (Suhrkamp) 19, p. 148).

not far from that of Hegel¹⁰ who, however, tended rather to minimize distances, whereas Heidegger, on the contrary, tended to maximize them¹¹.

As is well known, Heidegger's criticism of the Aristotelian and Hegelian conceptions of time was directed against the idea of a succession of "nows". In this he was, to put it mildly, not exactly attacking them on their strongest side. For Aristotle, the enigma of time already consists not so much — as for St. Augustine — in that, upon closer examination, the reality of time boils down to a succession of "nows", each one of which is not time or even part of it; rather it consists primarily in the fact that, although whatever is, only now — now this, now that, and so on —, there is, nevertheless, only one now, just as, according to Heidegger, there is, as it were, only one being voicing itself throughout history and, indeed, identical with its own ever differently voiced history, as opposed to an alleged hiding itself merely behind its changing manifestations in history. However, the reason why there is only one now is not that in the putative succession of nows, one immediately following upon another, it represents the limit between past and future nows. Just as there is no such immediate succession, there is no such limit either, except by way of abstraction¹². To be sure, we can mark off as many limits as our historical or physical research or even our everyday orientation in the world may require: for instance, just that moment between Coriscus still being in the Lyceum and his starting to go to the marketplace; or between Coriscus still going in that direction and his arrival there. There is no difficulty in accepting as many "now" — limits as one wants as long as one is engaged in practical business or appraisals, including scientific ones — as historians do, when they date, say, the end of a war with the signing of a peace treaty, even though the shooting is still going on, or as physicists do when they dismiss computational errors as being negligible with respect to the purpose in hand. The difficulty with, or rather

¹⁰As in the case of Hegel the evidence is too profuse to be accounted for here. For the purpose of this paper, centered on the problem of time from the *Physics* onwards, the following words of H.-G. Gadamer on occasion of the discovery of Heidegger's Aristotelian programmatic text of 1922 (the primordial cell of *Sein und Zeit*) are instructive: "... Das bedeutet, daß den jungen Heidegger damals mehr als die Aktualität der praktischen Philosophie ihre Bedeutung für die Aristotelische Ontologie, *Metaphysik*, beschäftigt. Das 6. Buch der *Nikomachischen Ethik* erscheint in dieser Programmschrift eigentlich mehr als eine Einleitung in die aristotelische *Physik*" (H.-G. GADAMER, *Heideggers 'theologische' Jugendschrift*, in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch*, 1989, p. 231: "Die Wiederaufgefundene 'Aristoteles-Einleitung' Heideggers von 1922" edited by H.-U. Lessing, p. 266. Both Gadamer's *Introduction* and Heidegger's text are included in the same issue of the *Jahrbuch*, pp. 228-234 and 235-274 respectively).

¹¹Cf., e.g., *Logik. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit*, GA II 21: "philosophisch verstanden wird die durch Aristoteles grundgelegte und in Hegel vollendete philosophische Logik nicht gefördert durch weitere Sohn- und Enkelschaft, um philosophisch weiterzukommen bedarf es eines neuen Geschlechtes".

¹²Cf. my article *Aristotle and the Reality of Time* in "Acta philosophica" 4 (1995) pp. 189-203.

the very impossibility of objectively pinning down the real “now” (as opposed to any such given abstract “now”) only becomes apparent at the philosophical level.

Already in his *Physics*, Aristotle had shown the insurmountable difficulties involved in pinning down the instant of change — not only the transition from motion to rest and vice versa, but also more general forms of change. The difficulties are rooted in the very nature of continuity, as distinct from both contiguity and closest neighborhood. If time, like movement, is continuous, then the very notion of contiguity (*haptomenon*) — and all the more so that of closest neighborhood (*ephexes*) — is misapplied when what is involved is not a question of practice, scientific or otherwise, but a philosophical or, rather, metaphysical theory of real time. And since real as opposed to abstract or extended time is no magnitude at all, the very notion of succession, even that of a continuous succession, is misapplied here as well¹³.

The upshot of all this is that in *rerum natura*, which includes human history in the sense of *res gestae* (not in the sense of recorded history), there can be only one “now”. And this is the true enigma of time. For it then seems as if one ought to be able to infer from this that, to take Aristotle’s example, the Trojan War is still going on. But it only seems so¹⁴. Likewise, it is a *non sequitur* to infer with the Sophists from the fact that Coriscus’s being in the Lyceum is not the same as his being in the market place that it is not the same Coriscus who is now here and then there. Here, the analogy drawn by Aristotle between the only one “now” of real time and the identical substance despite or rather because of the different states into which it itself is continuously changing has been often overlooked. And it is not unlikely that it was Heidegger’s own overlooking of this analogy which lay at the root of some of the difficulties he encountered when writing the then pending third section of the first part of *Being and Time*, and which ultimately forced him to abandon continuation of that work. One year before Heidegger’s death, however, in 1975, a series of lectures were published which he had delivered in Marburg on the same topic shortly after the appearance of *Being and Time* — a series which is also important for the light it sheds on the development of Heidegger’s views on Aristotle’s and Hegel’s treatment of time. Let me explain this.

Less than two years before the publication of *Being and Time*, Heidegger could still write that Hegel’s treatment of time in the *Philosophy of Nature* “kills (*totschlägt*) the proper content of the Aristotelian interpretation, putting it, as it were, on ice, and leaving purely formal and empty results in its place”¹⁵. But, two years later, the series of lectures just mentioned already has a totally different ring to them. Thus, after having raised the question, “to what extent is time itself the condition of the possibility of Nothingness as such?”¹⁶, Heidegger con-

¹³Cf. *Physics*, III 6, 206a33-b2.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, IV 11, 219b18-22.

¹⁵*Logik. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit*, GA II 21, p. 266.

¹⁶*Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, GA II 24, p. 443.

cludes: “In the end (one has to acknowledge) that Hegel was on to a fundamental truth when he said that Being and Nothing are the same thing...”¹⁷. And with a sentence which anticipates further developments in his thought he adds: “We are not sufficiently prepared to enter into this darkness. It is only by going back to (the enigma of) time that it will be possible to cast some light on the interpretation of being”¹⁸. Heidegger was then about to reverse his first attempt at regaining the original sense of being and, taking time now not as his point of departure but rather as his destination, he set out in a direction that was ultimately to lead to the notions of “*Ereignis*” and of the history of being.

The preceding quotations may suffice as evidence grounding a two-fold contention: first, that even after the *Kehre* Heidegger continued his search for the meaning of being in the direction originally laid down by Hegel’s concept of negativity as the identity of being and nothingness; secondly, that the concept of negativity, once so defined, provides the key to understanding Aristotle’s analogy between the one and only ever-changing “now” and the substance (*ousia*) of the *Physics*, which Heidegger himself interpreted as movement or mobility (*Bewegtheit*) in the sense of an unlimited or imperfect act (*energeia ateles*)¹⁹. So in his essay on Aristotle’s notion of *physis* published in 1958 in *Il Pensiero*, but written already in 1939, Heidegger paraphrases Hegel in order to convey the meaning of *physis* as *Bewegtheit*²⁰ or limitless actuality by saying: “All living things are in the process of dying as soon as they start to live”²¹. This is but the sadness that, as Hegel put it²², haunts the whole of nature. The identity of being and nothing is, in effect, the identity of coming-to-be and passing-away; that is to say, it is not just a passing-away after having come-to-be, but coming-to-be and passing-away coinciding in the one and only one unlimited “now” in which, unlike the many “nows” as mere limits of time at which nothing occurs, all things do occur. Thus, at the very beginning of the *Science of Logic*, under the heading “Moments of Becoming”, Hegel writes: “Becoming is in this way in a double determination. In one of them, nothing is immediate, that is, the determination starts from nothing which relates itself to being, or in other words changes into it; in the other, being is immediate, that is, the determination starts from being which changes into nothing: the former is coming-to-be and the latter is ceasing-to-be. Both are the same, becoming...”²³. Thus, it is not surprising that, when Heidegger — in his efforts to cope with the problems of being and time as well as of time and being, and after a relatively long period in which he had

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Cf. *Physics*, III 2, 201b31-32.

²⁰ Cf. *Vom Wesen und Begriff der Physis. Aristoteles, Physik B, I*, in *Wegmarken*, GA I 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

²² Cf. *Werke* (Suhrkamp) 5, p.140.

²³ *Hegels Science of Logic I*, Humanity Press International, Atlantic Highlands, N.J. 1969, p. 105 f. (*Werke*, Suhrkamp, 5, 112).

moved from Aristotle to Kant²⁴ — at last returned to Aristotle in the essay just mentioned on *physis*, he did so as already under the sway of Hegel's notion of negativity²⁵.

Heidegger regards the eight books of the *Physics* as constituting the original Aristotelian metaphysics in which the burden of onto-theology had not yet become so heavy as to crush pre-Socratic (above all Heraclitean) insights into the essence of nature under its weight. Now, inasmuch as it preserves those insights, Heidegger's interpretation of this original metaphysics turns on the identity of universal passing-away and universal coming-to-be. Thus, at the end of his essay on the Aristotelian *physis*, Heidegger comments on fragment 123 of Heraclitus (*physis kruptesthai philei*) by saying: "Being loves to hide, what does that mean? Usually this has been understood to mean that being is almost inaccessible so that great efforts are needed to bring it out of hiding and to exorcise, as it were, its love of hiding. Quite the opposite: the hiding belongs to being itself and that is why it loves it"²⁶. These words represent an accurate explanation of the *apeiron*-structure proper to time as something from which nothing is merely hidden — as is the lost umbrella from the distracted professor (Heidegger's own example) — except itself from itself, since time itself is outside itself. It is, in fact, in real time as the unlimited "now" — as opposed to any given abstract "now"-limit — that the truth of manifestation is originally and inextricably tied to the untruth of concealment. On the other hand, it has to be said that Heidegger never explored this Aristotelian-Hegelian path any further, even after the *Kehre*. Such an exploration would have led to an interpretation of Aristotelian time and substance quite different from that of time as a mere succession of nows or of substance as *primum analogatum* of being in the sense of something hiding behind an alleged veil of accidents from which it ought some-

²⁴"Im Winter 1925/1926 änderte Heidegger in einem dramatischen Bruch den Plan seiner Vorlesung und gab statt weiterer Aristotelesinterpretationen eine Interpretation der Lehre von der transzendentalen Einbildungskraft und der Schematisierung" (O. PÖGGELER, *Neue Wege mit Heidegger*, Freiburg-München 1992, p. 194). Cf. also D.O. DAHLSTROM, *Heideggers Kant-Kommentar, 1925-1936*, in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 1989, pp. 343-366 as well as D. KÖHLER, *Martin Heidegger. Die Schematisierung des Seinssinnes als Thematik des dritten Abschnittes von "Sein und Zeit"*, Bonn 1993.

²⁵Cf. *Hegel. Die Negativität* (1938-1939), GA III Abteilung, Unveröffentlichte Abhandlungen. In the meantime, if only for one semester (*Aristoteles, Metaphysik IX 1-3*, summer 1931), he had already lectured on Aristotle's *ousia* in a different mood. Cf. O. PÖGGELER, o.c., p. 232: "In jenen Jahren revidierte Heidegger seine Rezeption der Analogie des Seins (nämlich der Ausrichtung aller Seinsweisen auf eine leitende Bedeutung) zugunsten der Erfahrung der *Energieia* als eines Am-Werke-Seins und somit einer "Geschichte" [...] So wollte Heidegger fortan nicht mehr weiter akademische Philosophie, sei es in der Weise Husserls, betreiben...". Cf. *ibid.*, p. 35: "... wenn dynamis Eignung ist, muß die *energeia* als eine Wirklichkeit, die eine offene Möglichkeit in sich trägt, in ihrer Bewegtheit und mit der Not ihrer Notwendigkeit ein Ereignis sein".

²⁶GA I 9, p. 300.

how to be exorcised²⁷. It must be said as well, however, that even after having reversed the hermeneutical priority of time over being, Heidegger kept on insisting on another genuine aspect of Aristotelian time: that just as there can be no being without man (no *Sein* without the clearing of *Da-sein* in the wood of nothingness), so there can be no time without man; that, to put it another way, man is not a traveler along a particular path of time but is temporality itself. This, of course, sounds more like *Physics* without *Metaphysics* than Aristotelian metaphysics proper as the science of *ens qua ens*. For as the science of *ens qua ens* metaphysics seems to banish all forms of negativity from being and to relegate them instead to the realm of mere thought or to *ens ut verum*²⁸. As a matter of fact, Hegel himself had already explicitly protested against the exclusion of negativity from being as such. Again, shortly before he died, Hegel wrote: “It is therefore said that although nothing is in thought or imagination, yet for that very reason it is not nothing that is, being does not belong to nothing as such, but only thought or imagination is this being... that nothing does not possess an independent being of its own, is not being as such”²⁹. The contrary is true according to Hegel. So, just as, according to both Hegel and Heidegger, one must not sever being from nothing, so one must not sever *ens ut verum* from *ens ut ens* or being from man (*Sein* from *Dasein*) either. In this respect both Hegel’s and Heidegger’s thought is, in fact, Aristotelian philosophy stripped of the doctrine of *ens ut ens* as distinct from *ens ut verum*. Heidegger himself — like Hegel³⁰ — refused to subordinate the latter to the former right from the beginning³¹. But the situation is a little more complicated than that, both as regards non-being and as regards truth. For not only does Aristotle say, in a famous passage, on which Heidegger often commented³², that truth is the main meaning of being³³. He also sometimes treated non-being on a par with accidents despite the fact that these are ways of being. And he does it in the very passage in which he explains metaphysics as the science of being *qua* being³⁴.

Let me make two comments on this. First, if any sense is to be made of the comparison between, on the one hand, time as the simultaneous coming-to-be and passing-away of the only one continuous “now” and, on the other, the

²⁷ Cf., e.g., *Was heißt Denken?*, Tübingen 1954, p. 68: “Alles wahrhaft Gedachte eines wesentlichen Denkens bleibt — und zwar aus Wesensgründen — mehrdeutig. Diese Mehrdeutigkeit ist niemals nur der Restbestand einer noch nicht erreichten formallogischen Eindeutigkeit, die eigentlich anzustreben wäre, aber nicht erreicht wurde. Die Mehrdeutigkeit ist vielmehr das Element, worin das Denken sich bewegen muß, um ein strenges zu sein”.

²⁸ Cf. *Metaphysics*, VI 4, 1027 b 25-31.

²⁹ *Science of Logic*, cit., p. 101 f.

³⁰ Cf. note 29.

³¹ Cf. *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles*, in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* (s. note 10 above), p. 268.

³² Cf., e.g., GA II 21, pp. 170-182.

³³ Cf. *Metaphysics*, IX 10, 1051 b 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, IV 2, 1003 b 6-10.

essence (*ousia*) of all that belongs to nature (David Ross, for instance, dismissed the whole passage in the *Physics* as too obviously wrong to be commented on³⁵), then this is arguably in the sense in which physical *ousia* is taken to manifest and hide itself in its changing states³⁶. Now, this description corresponds not only to the notion of *physis* as developed by Heidegger. It corresponds also to an important aspect of *Ereignis* as appropriation, to which I shall now address the second of my remarks.

At the lecture held in Freiburg in 1957 on identity as the sameness of being and thought (“*to gar auto noein esti the kai einai*”) — reprinted in the volume *Identität und Differenz* — Heidegger said: “The word *Ereignis* is taken from an already evolved language. *Er-eignen* originally read: *eräugen*”. Here one can still hear the German for “eye” — “*Auge*” — or even its cognate form, “*be-äugen*”, meaning “to eye something” or “to take a close look at something.” So Heidegger concludes his series of renderings with “to appropriate in looking” (“*er-blicken, im Blicken zu sich rufen, an-eignen*”). And he adds: “Understood in this way it is just as incapable of being translated as the key Greek term *logos* or the Chinese *Tao*”³⁷. Perhaps. But here, wherever the truth of the matter may lie, the consideration that allows one to discern an intrinsic connection between Heidegger’s *Ereignis* and Aristotle’s comparison of “*ousia*” with the identical “now” of time — which only conceptually has “nows” different from each other — is offered immediately after the passage quoted, when Heidegger continues: “Therefore, the word “*Ereignis*” no longer refers here to what we usually describe as some recurrence or happening. It is to be understood as a *singulare tantum*. What it says occurs only once (“*ereignet sich nur in der Einzahl*”), and in fact not even once (“*in einer Zahl*”), but is unique (beyond number)”³⁸.

As I noted above, Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotelian and Hegelian time as a succession of “nows” treated neither of the two on their strongest side. We have already seen this with respect to Aristotle. The same also applies, however, to Hegel. Take, for instance, Hegel’s following contention about time: Time “is the being which, in that it is, is not, and in that it is not, is. It is intuited becoming; admittedly, its differences are therefore determined as being simply momentary; in that they immediately sublimate themselves in their externality, however, they are self-external”³⁹. One may take this contention as a paraphrase of the unlimited “now” which Aristotle compared with the always changing and only relatively resting physical *ousia* of Coriscus or of anything else. Such an

³⁵Cf. *Aristotle’s Physics. A revised text with introduction and commentary by W.D. Ross*, Oxford 1960, p. 599.

³⁶Cf. *Physics*, IV 11, 219b18 ff.

³⁷*Der Satz der Identität*, originally published in *Die Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg 1457-1957. Die Festvorträge bei der Jubiläumsfeier*, p. 76.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature*, transl. by M.J. Petry, vol. I, London 1970, pp. 229 f. (*Werke*, Suhrkamp 9, 48).

ousia shows the structure of the unlimited act (*energeia ateles*) which Heidegger interpreted as *Bewegtheit* embracing both movement and resting. For Aristotle's definition of *apeiron* does not read, as it has been sometimes translated⁴⁰ "that which always has something outside itself". This corresponds rather to the definition of the perfect or limited. The limits (points, lines, surfaces), taken as in contiguity, not continuity, are themselves only outside each other just like those "nows" by means of which we break up the only one continuous "now" into more or less smaller events in an ultimately futile attempt to control the unique *Ereignis* in whose tapestry we are all, as it were, interwoven. Aristotle's definition of the unlimited should, of course, read instead: "that of which some part is always outside" ("*hou aei ti exo*", where "*hou*" modifies "*ti*", and not "*exo*")⁴¹. It is precisely because the moments are not outside each other, but each individual moment is, as Hegel himself said, outside itself ("*sich selbst äusserliche*", "self-external") that they form a unique and continuous flowing.

So much for potentialities that had perhaps even in Aristotle not always been fully actualized, but which a sympathetic reading of Heidegger's interpretations of Hegel and Aristotle could help to bring, if not fully then at least a little further, to light. Along these lines one might fairly straightforwardly gain a view of the traditional notion of substance more orientated towards a temporal rather than to a spatial model of substance as conceived under the new-Scholasticism, just as Heidegger once was trying to "liquidize" (but not yet to "liquidate") the concepts of scholasticism. I come now finally to some brief considerations of a more general kind.

3. Concluding Remarks

As radically temporal we too are always outside ourselves and thus vulnerable. To be sure, all things in the world are alike in being somehow composed of that enigmatic stuff which is ecstatic time. But we alone are aware of the fact, and try to escape our fate by compensatory devices such as computation of time and so on. The result is what we usually call "culture" — from the most primitive burial rites to the most sophisticated technology, be it beneficial to or destructive of mankind. Philosophy as such, and metaphysics in particular, forms a part of such precautionary measures. But inasmuch as we fail to take seriously our radical temporality and historicity, i.e. the fact that we do not merely consist in being something (*bestehen*), e.g. in being a rational animal, but do also properly *ek-sist* (*ent-stehen*), all cultural precautions, humanism included, are, according to Heidegger, in the end illusory and self-delusive.

⁴⁰E.g. as late as 1987 by H.G. Zekl, cf. *Aristoteles' Physik*, Griechisch-Deutsch, Hamburg 1987.

⁴¹*Physics*, 207a1, 8.

“*Ek-sistence*” is always in the process of starting anew, provided one does not succumb to routine. Anything that may be said to consist in being something else, anything that has consistency (*Bestand*) is always an objective content (*Inhalt*). Philosophy, for instance, as a cultural precaution, is full of contents. All that we can grasp with the help of a definition — man or whatever — is a content. But time is not a content, nor does man in his historicity consist in anything. *Ek-sisting* rather than consisting beings like ourselves are, of course, always relentlessly getting older and passing away, but at the same time they are always starting to be in the first place. In other words, man, history, philosophy, being, are, like time, always repeating themselves; but, like time itself, what they are always repeating are not closed realities but open possibilities. The title of Deleuze’s book, to which I previously referred, *Différence et Répétition*, was intended to hint at this — only its author completely failed to realize how much of all this is already to be found in Aristotle, whom he has so maligned in his book⁴². Similarly, it would perhaps not be false to say that had Heidegger from the beginning better assessed Aristotle’s and Hegel’s views on time and *ousia*, then he would have arrived much earlier at his notion of *Ereignis* as appropriation. But this would — at best — be true in a rather irrelevant way: what matters is not the duration or the length of the way traversed but the traversing itself, a traversing which is always at the same time a transformation. Thus, at the beginning of his above mentioned lecture on “Identity”, Heidegger wrote: “In thinking about something that matters it might happen that, on the way, thought undergoes some change. So, in thinking of identity, it is advisable to pay less attention to the content than to the way. The very unfolding of a lecture such as this makes it impossible anyway to dwell on the content”⁴³. Here again, you have the overcoming of the misrepresentation of real time as an extended line with points succeeding one upon another in the way Heidegger once interpreted the whole Aristotelian as well as Hegelian notion of time. However, the overcoming of such a misrepresentation in the last quotation sounds as if a lecture could never stick to just one topic. But what was meant was rather the opposite, namely that, if the topic is a dead one, nobody can stick to it for any length of time, except outwardly, whereas if the topic is a living one — not a topic at all, as it were, i.e., not a pure content — it varies continuously so that one cannot simply return to the same spot as one can direct his view back and forth along a straight line. (Etienne Gilson was, incidentally, present at this lecture, having received during

⁴²Cf. *Différence et Répétition*, Paris 1965. The main shortcoming of this book lies in the inability of its author to grasp why, according to Aristotle, the *differentia specifica* does not merely express a part of but the whole *ousia*. In this he was indeed following Scotus’ doctrine of *univocatio entis* in the usual sense of this term (cf. note 5 above). As for Scotus’ own inability to cope with Aristotle’s doctrine of *ousia* in this respect cf., e.g., “*quod finalis differentia erit terminus et definitio, nullo modo potest intelligi, quod tota ratio quidditativa sit in ultima differentia...*” (*In IV Sent.*, d. 11, q. 3, ed. Vivès, n. 47).

⁴³*Der Satz der Identität* (s. note 36 above), p. 69.

the same ceremony an honorary degree from the University of Freiburg. It was after this lecture that he remarked: “I have only twice heard philosophy spoken aloud (*en haute voix*): once by Henry Bergson and today by Heidegger”). Now, what to Heidegger as well as Deleuze remained hidden in the metaphysical theory of *ousia* — hidden perhaps even to metaphysics itself — was the possibility of viewing *ousia* not only in the sense of substance but even in that of essence, as something transforming itself continuously like time, though, of course, not essentially. One may bring out the appropriate kind of transformation in terms borrowed from Aquinas by saying that the change concerns only the *ousia* as *forma substantialis*, whereas the *ousia* as *forma essentialis* or *eidos* (in the sense of species) remains unchanged. In this, Aristotelian essentialism clearly differs from any kind of holism for which there are no bounds marked by the different species beyond which no individual can change and yet remain itself. This reservation does not go against taking Aristotle’s analogy between real time and substance in a strong sense. On the contrary. Let us explain this briefly before ending.

Independently of whether time be considered in terms of the history of being or in terms of the one and only continuous “now”, there are two possible mistakes that one may make in dealing with time, and if, as in a statement once derided by Heidegger⁴⁴ Hegel thought, time is somehow even the truth of space then there are also two possible errors one may commit in dealing with space, the error of thinking that nothing is old, and the error of thinking that nothing is new. Take the example of a straight line that has been drawn on a blackboard. As long as it has not been erased, enlarged, or foreshortened, it seems to remain unchanged as far as its being on the blackboard is concerned. But this is not in fact the case. Only so long as one fails to take into account the lapse of time, i.e. the flowing of the one and only real “now,” can one consider the straight line on the blackboard unchanged. For as soon as one has finished drawing it⁴⁵ the line is, of course, already there, but at each particular moment in time it is only there then, and not at some later point in time. The line is itself something temporal. As such, it is, like everything else, changing. Only when regarded in merely spatial terms can it be said not to have changed. However, nothing is purely spatial. In this, Aristotelianism — especially with regard to its critique of Anaxagoras and Empedocles⁴⁶ — is Hegelianism and Heideggerianism *avant la lettre*. A

⁴⁴“Die Wahrheit des Raumes ist die Zeit’ [...] Die umgekehrte These hat Bergson ausgesprochen [...] Bergson aber wie Hegel vernichten das, was an echtem Gehalt darin liegt, dadurch, daß sie ihn aufheben, nicht in sicherer Wahrheit, sondern in einer grundsätzlicher Sophistik, von der überhaupt Hegels Dialektik lebt” (GA II 21, p. 252).

⁴⁵Cf. G.E. OWEN, *General and Particular*, in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, London 1979/80, p. 18: “... an unfinished statue can be a statue, an unfinished circle is not a circle. Aristotle disregards the difference, even in house-building (*Phys.* 201 b 11-12) [...] statements of the form “A is becoming/making a Y” do not carry in their truth-conditions or entailments any requirement that there must (timelessly) be some particular Y for A to become/make”.

⁴⁶Cf. *Physics*, VIII 1.

thoroughly unchanging and hence timeless universe is as impossible for Aristotle as it is for Hegel or Heidegger. The fact of the line changing, however, is not limited to a particular period of time. Periods of time are always periods of rest: time frozen, as it were, by the mind, which — by virtue of its retentive as well “protentive” (Husserl) power to extend or stretch the “now” — is able to transform time into space, that is to say, that which represents no magnitude at all into a magnitude. By way of contrast, the fact of the line’s changing depends on the fact that real time as the unique “now” does not stop flowing any more than the universe stops moving, whereas any period of time or, for that matter, of history is by definition limited and static. A period of time, like the line drawn on the blackboard, must have a beginning and an end. It is not limitless, *apeiron*. To put it briefly, then, the first error would be to deny that, regardless of how late in the course of its development it might be at a given point in time, the universe is always new, that in it nothing is ever left behind, i.e., left behind in a past that no longer exists. In this sense, of course, nothing can be said to be old.

The second error is just the reverse of the first. It consists in proceeding from the fact that, to take the same example, the straight line remains unchanged in its career — for, however dull its career, it is like everything else in that it, too, is always starting afresh — to the conclusion that the line that yesterday I saw on the blackboard and that I still see there today is not allegedly the same line at all and, in general, that nothing can be said to be old or aging in any sense whatsoever. This would be tantamount to denying that Coriscus can at any two points which we may choose to select within the ceaseless flowing of real time be the same person, on the grounds that Coriscus-at-the-Lyceum is no longer Coriscus-in-the-market-place — as if the real thing were not the changing Coriscus himself but rather his unchanging abstract states “Coriscus-at-the Lyceum” and “Coriscus-in-the-market-place”, or as if the real time were not the only one “now”, but rather different nows succeeding one upon another. True, if Coriscus is no longer in the market place, then this state of Coriscus is no longer anywhere, not even somewhere in the past, since the past does not exist. Therefore, one cannot even say that it has been left behind, except of course in the sense that his having been in the market-place has been preserved in the memory of all those who happen to think of Coriscus’ displacement. But this does not prevent its being in Coriscus in the sense of having been there. We are so used to the idea of substance as something that solidly remains in space throughout temporal change that we scarcely realize the challenge contained in this second error. Due to a reifying tendency inherent in the spatial representation of substance, we are naturally inclined to regard the previous stages in the career of whatever we are talking about as having been left somewhere behind unchanged — like a line which after having been drawn on a blackboard is still there. It costs us not a little bit of effort to realize that they are just as little anywhere as, say, the skull of the young St. Thomas which was allegedly kept in Montecassino while that of the older St. Thomas had been buried at Toulouse. In other words, whereas there

is at least some truth in Hegel's dictum according to which time is the truth of space, its converse — viz. that space is the truth of time — has nothing to offer except the coarse representation of real time (or substance) as a straight line. But to throw away the idea of the identity of substances “over time” for this reason — i.e., to abandon the very idea of physical substances altogether — would be but another way of clinging to the same coarse representation. A physical substance is, by virtue of its temporality, analogous to a snail carrying along all its belongings — *omnia mea mecum porto* — or like a tree that has its annual rings inside it. It is precisely because nothing is left behind that all things, while constantly in the process of starting anew, are at the same time always getting older. Coriscus's now being in the Lyceum is different, simply by virtue of his previously having been in the market-place, from what it would have been had he not been in the market-place.

The same applies to the notions of *Ereignis* and of the history of being. Just as it is wrong to say that there is nothing new or nothing old since time is precisely both passing away and starting to be at once, so it would be equally wrong to say that, e.g., Aristotle's, Hegel's, and Heidegger's *Sache* — the thing that matters for each of them — was each always the same or always different. Either way we would not be progressing beyond, but rather falling behind, Aristotle's analogy between time and substance. For it would be like saying that physical accidents as well as the happenstance of everyday life or even the different epochs in the history of mankind do not affect either the essence of things or the *Sache des Denkens*; it would be like adding differences to the identical *genus* from without and in the process getting only the dead content of *eide* as general species (the *forma essentialis*) instead of the living essence (the *forma substantialis*), the soul, or the heart, of the matter. From this standpoint this would be no less wrong than to say that, from Aristotle or even from Parmenides onwards up to Heidegger and beyond, the questions or problems of philosophy have remained the same, and that only the answers or solutions offered in response to them have been different. Were we to cling to this idea we would still be thinking in rather straightforward terms of a thoroughly unchanged, extended line — i.e. of content rather than of a changing path, relying more on a spatial rather than a temporal model for viewing philosophy and its history. But the fact that not only the answers, or solutions, but along with them also the questions or problems do change throughout history ought not to deter one from saying that the *Sache des Denkens* is always the same. Otherwise, the history of philosophy would be, as Hegel put it, but a collection of peculiar opinions.

Since the similarities between Aristotle's theistic, Hegel's quasi-pantheistic, and Heidegger's atheistic thought do not reflect the repetition of a closed reality or content but that of an open possibility, the path which leads from Aristotle to Heidegger via Hegel cannot be said to have started with Aristotle or stopped with Heidegger. Surely the fact that neither Aristotle's nor Hegel's metaphysics was atheistic is mainly to be attributed to the fact that neither rejected, as did

Heidegger⁴⁷, the ultimate truth of the principle of non-contradiction. It is true that for Hegel, unlike Aristotle, contradiction is the very soul and essence of anything that is not in itself dead. But contradiction is not the only force pushing forward that process in which — if in anything — being consists for Hegel. Just as vital for the process of being is the striving to overcome that contradiction which lurks in each one of the several stages of a given life-process — be it that of consciousness or anything else — with the result that the validity of the principle of non-contradiction is preserved, if not during the individual stages themselves, then at least at the end, i.e. in the process as a whole. Whether pantheistically or not, all forms of productive contradiction — be they in thought, nature, or history — find their resolution in God. That is why Hegel can close his system with a quotation from Aristotle without having to take the trouble to comment on it⁴⁸. As Aristotle put it, without the principle called God nothing would exist at all⁴⁹. To place such a great emphasis on the negativity of the world is Hegelianism *ante litteram*. But is it compatible with Heidegger's atheistic thought? His not accepting non-contradiction as a principle at all blocked the way of onto-theology after all. But perhaps the resulting thought only appears atheistic because Heidegger preferred to embrace the contradiction involved in accepting only the ultimate Heraclitean *physis-logos* till the very end, in the belief that the miracle of being thus becomes all the more conspicuous; in other words, because he preferred to go on wondering at the fact that there should be something rather than nothing instead of asking why there is something and not nothing, this latter being — as he put it — still a metaphysical question, and the ultimate one at that; because, let us say, he preferred to peer over the abyss (*Ab-grund*) rather than to search for some final ground — lest the source of all philosophy, wonder, should disappear.

Somewhere else in his *Remembrance of Things Past*, with which I started, Marcel Proust wrote: “An artist has no need to express his thought directly in his work for the latter to reflect its quality; it has been said that the highest praise of God consists in the denial of him by the atheist who finds creation so perfect that it can dispense with the creator.”⁵⁰ Heidegger's attitude towards religion is less clear-cut than that. The ambiguity ranges from the almost Satanic lifting of the hand against God — which Heidegger attributed to philosophy even at the time in which he considered himself to be doing philosophy — to something perhaps quite the opposite of this⁵¹. Who knows whether somehow — behind his giving

⁴⁷Cf., e.g., GA II 33, pp. 198 f. (taking into account that for Aristotle, Protagoras was the main opponent of the principle of non-contradiction).

⁴⁸Cf. *Enzyklopädie*, par. 577, in *Werke* (Suhrkamp) 10, p. 395.

⁴⁹Cf. *Metaphysics*, IX 8, 1050 b 19, XII 6, 1071 b 55 f.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 430.

⁵¹Cf., e.g.: “Jede Philosophie [...] muß [...] gerade dann, wenn sie eine ‘Ahnung’ von Gott hat, wissen, daß das von ihr vollzogene sich zu sich zurückreißen des Lebens, religiös gesprochen, eine Handaufhebung gegen Gott ist. [...] atheistisch besagt hier: sich freihaltend vor verführerischer, Religiösität lediglich beredender, Besorgnis” (*Phänomenologische*

up of not only any cultural way of transforming the thingness of things into the objectivity of objects including exact research, metaphysics, and finally even philosophy as a whole — there did not lie something like Hölderlin's complaint, viz. "zu lang ist alles Göttliche dienstbar schon," i.e., the sadness about the instrumentalizing of the divine "since long, too long ago," which Heidegger himself reckoned to the *Frömmigkeit des Denkens qua Dankens*, to the piety of thinking *qua* thanksgiving or gratitude. But this does not remove the ambiguity of Heidegger's thought as regards the issue of atheism; it rather makes it inevitable⁵². On the other hand, I have in no way been claiming that the objectifying method of *Forschung*, or research proper to the historiography of philosophy, should be forced to yield pride of place to something as questionable (*fragwürdig*) as the history of being. Indeed, were one to forsake the former for the latter, one would be in even less of a position to do justice to *Seinsgeschichte* itself⁵³. All that I have been suggesting is that the model called by Marcel Proust the German model of exact investigation represents a more historical than philosophical approach to the history of philosophy, and that the concern with the history of being possibly represents, by contrast, a more philosophical than historical approach.

* * *

Abstract: *Per quanto riguarda lo studio storico della metafisica, Heidegger rifiuta sia il modello tedesco di ricerca esatta (Forschung) che quello dell'umanesimo culturale. Invece, Heidegger propone che la filosofia, nel trattare il proprio passato essenziale, deve soprattutto cercare di mettere in luce le possibilità nascoste nella metafisica che prima non siano state trovate. Heidegger esegue con questo spirito la sua interpretazione di Aristotele e di Hegel. In questo articolo si tenta di esaminare il pensiero dello stesso Heidegger e della sua interpretazione di Aristotele e di Hegel sotto la stessa luce per quanto riguarda gli argomenti dell'essere, del tempo e della sostanza. Questo metodo si distacca da quello della Forschung offrendo un modello più filosofico che storico per l'interpretazione appunto della storia della filosofia.*

Interpretationen zu Aristoteles, in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* (s. note 10 above), p. 246, note 2. Cf. also the quotation in note 25 above).

⁵²Cf. notes 26 and 51 above.

⁵³To take only one example: it can be shown that Heidegger's notion of Aristotelian *energeia* is defective inasmuch as it takes into consideration only the aspect of manifestation ("*sich zeigen in Anwesenheit*") and not that of (perfect) activity. But with regard to Heidegger's reversal of the priority relation between actuality and potentiality, his was at least a productive error.