

*Introduction*

TRANSCENDENTAL HEIDEGGER

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*Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas*

THE TRANSCENDENTAL is a key notion in Heidegger's thought. Not only does Heidegger's early work stand within the framework of transcendental phenomenology as established by Husserl—even though it also contests and revises that framework—but that thinking also stands in a close relationship to the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and specifically to the transcendental project, and modes of argument, of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Moreover, while the idea of the transcendental is explicitly disavowed in Heidegger's later thought, there still seems to be an important sense (though one that remains in need of clarification) in which that thinking retains a broadly "transcendental" character. It is perhaps surprising, then, that more attention has not been paid so far to what may be thought of as the "transcendental Heidegger"—to the role of the transcendental in Heidegger's thinking as well as Heidegger's stance toward the tradition of transcendental thought as such.<sup>1</sup> This collection aims to go some way toward remedying this apparent neglect, and to argue for the continuing significance of the transcendental for understanding Heidegger's thinking, both early and late. In so doing, it also makes a case for the continuing significance of the transcendental in philosophy more broadly.

Of course, what is meant by the term *transcendental* is an unavoidable and underlying issue here. As Heidegger himself uses it, the term is almost always understood in relation to Kant, and to the idea of "transcendence," which Heidegger—following Husserl in this regard rather more than Kant himself—takes to lie at the heart of the Kantian critical enterprise: the transcendental names that which makes possible the structure of transcendence.

In consequence, the shift away from the transcendental as a key term in Heidegger's thinking goes hand in hand with a shift away from the focus on transcendence, and, at the same time, from Kant, as well as from Husserl and the language of transcendental phenomenology. Basing oneself on Heidegger's overt—and often polemical—self-interpretation, then, one might be tempted to find a radical discontinuity between Heidegger's earlier and later thinking; indeed, the celebrated “turning” in Heidegger's thought has been seen chiefly as a turning away from the transcendental and all that is associated with it. Yet in spite of Heidegger's adoption of this specific reading of the notion, the transcendental is by no means an idea to which there attaches a simple or settled interpretation. Indeed, ever since Kant's appropriation of the term from the language of scholastic logic and metaphysics, the idea of the transcendental has given rise to discussion and debate—debate that has often, particularly in Anglo-Saxon philosophical circles, been rather negatively disposed.<sup>2</sup> So while it is obviously important to understand and acknowledge what Heidegger himself says about the transcendental, there is also a need to interrogate the term in a way that is sensitive to the possibility that it may harbor a significance exhausted neither by Heidegger's explicit usage nor by some of the other interpretations that have circulated around it. Could the transcendental refer us, for instance, to a distinctive mode of nonreductive analysis that aims to analyze phenomena in a way that draws only on elements already given in the phenomena as such?<sup>3</sup> Although such a characterization is extremely general, it would seem to conform, in its general outline, to certain key aspects of the analytic of Dasein in *Being and Time* as well as the account of the structure of the Fourfold in a late essay such as “The Thing.”

How we should understand the idea of the transcendental is a topic that informs many of the discussions that appear in this collection, even if it is not always addressed explicitly. But such a topic can hardly be raised without confronting an extraordinary range of general philosophical issues. We may introduce some of the many topics of investigation on offer in the present volume by reflecting on three areas in which the transcendental tradition from Kant to Husserl gave rise to intense debate: the *scope* of the transcendental question itself; the *character* of transcendental inquiry; and the appeal to *subjectivity*, with its concomitant question of *idealism*.

### 1. *The Scope of the Transcendental Question*

Kant can reasonably be understood as having raised the question of the conditions that make a certain kind of knowledge possible—namely, rational knowledge that claims to “transcend” what can be given in sense experi-

ence. Perhaps the most well-known feature of Heidegger's Kant interpretation is his rejection of this "epistemological" reading of Kant; instead he favors the claim that Kant's enterprise was really an "ontological" one. As David Carr's contribution to this volume shows, this widening of the scope of the transcendental question stemmed from Heidegger's appreciation of what Husserl's transcendental phenomenology had already accomplished, namely, a "break with the way of ideas," that is, a break with an understanding of intentionality as something that is mediated by mental "representations." To understand transcendental philosophy essentially as an answer to a certain kind of skepticism (that is, as primarily an epistemological enterprise) is to remain within the Cartesian framework in which alone such a problem can arise. Heidegger's reading of Kant makes explicit the tension within Kant himself between a residual Cartesianism and a new paradigm, in which mind is always in the world and subject and object cannot be thought as separate.

For Heidegger, then, the scope of the transcendental question is not restricted to the conditions of cognitive experience, but to all intentionality—all consciousness of something *as* something—as such. Contributions by Mark Okrent and Steven Crowell explore some consequences of this widened scope. For Okrent, one of Heidegger's most important insights is that the intentionality of judgment rests upon a more basic, "practical" intentionality of the sort found in our dealings with tools. Crowell, in turn, argues that Heidegger's analysis of conscience, in *Being and Time*, should be understood as an account of how the norms inherent in such practical intentionality arise in experience. As with all such fundamental issues, there are disagreements: for Okrent, Heidegger's argument fails to make clear why only entities that have "world" in his sense can intend entities; whereas for Crowell, analysis of conscience—and the practice of reason-giving that emerges from it—are precisely what clarify this matter.

These treatments of intentionality show that for Heidegger the real scope of the transcendental question is not limited even to intentionality in the broadest sense, but rather to the "understanding of being" upon which all directedness toward objects "as" something depends. Indeed, as Robert B. Pippin maintains, if Heidegger's "question of being" is not to be construed as a MacGuffin, we should understand it precisely as a question into the very possibility of any intelligibility or meaning at all. In his reading of Heidegger's reflections on *Angst* and *das Nichts*, Pippin argues that what is most interesting about Heidegger's account is his claim that meaning can *fail*, that things can present themselves as wholly lacking in significance. This is in contrast to the Hegelian view that a collapse of meaning—a collapse of a way of looking at the world—can only be part of a dialectical emergence

of new meaning. But it also, according to Pippin, shows that Heidegger's inquiry cannot be truly transcendental in Kant's sense, since Kantian conditions of possibility *cannot* fail.

This widening of the scope of the transcendental question is carried forth into Heidegger's later work, as Jeff Malpas shows in his reconstruction of the traces of "topographical" thinking that are present already in Heidegger's early work but come to full expression in his late reflections on the topology of being. If the transcendental question concerns the conditions that allow entities to come to presence, then *Being and Time*—in which this possibility is traced back to the presence of one of those entities, Dasein—might seem to suffer from disabling circularity. But Malpas shows how the later Heidegger provides a solution by recasting thought as a kind of topographical process, which maps conditions of possibility from within the field they govern, rather than by appealing to some single ultimate ground. The notion of the Fourfold, and the emphasis on the way places constellate around particular things, are thus seen to belong to a kind of transformed transcendental project.

## 2. *The Character of Transcendental Inquiry*

All this gives rise to more questions: What *are* "conditions of possibility"? How do we discover them? For Kant, the answer is that such conditions include a set of concepts whose a priori application to objects is established through transcendental arguments—in particular through a transcendental deduction.<sup>4</sup> Heidegger clearly follows Kant in his idea that what distinguishes philosophical inquiry from empirical science is its concern with "a priori" conditions of experience, that is, conditions that do not themselves derive from experience. Equally clearly, however, he rejects Kant's idea that these conditions stem from a faculty of "pure reason." Rather, their origin lies in the temporality of Dasein, toward which Kant is understood to have been groping in his treatment of imagination in the first *Critique*. Further, taking his cue from Husserl's phenomenological approach, Heidegger famously argued that there is no need for the centerpiece of Kant's thought, the *quaestio juris*, the question that a transcendental deduction is supposed to answer. Rachel Zuckert's contribution to this volume subjects this chapter in Heidegger's reading of Kant to close examination. She recognizes that in his "temporalized" interpretation of the a priori Heidegger is trying to come to terms with a question that even today continues to trouble Kant scholarship—namely, is synthesis a real psychological activity or a purely logical condition?—but she criticizes him for sidestepping the problem of explaining the application of the categories. Heidegger's claim that cate-

gories do nothing but make explicit the preconceptual synthesis of imagination, while not as outrageous as some commentators have held, leaves important questions unexplored. Zuckert then argues that Kant himself seems to have moved closer to Heidegger's position with late concept of "reflective judgment," whose principle—"purposiveness"—has a temporal structure that closely resembles Heidegger's idea of projection. In the end, however, Zuckert finds that Heidegger too easily abandoned the strong claims for necessity, which, for Kant, distinguished the categories as something in need of transcendental inquiry in the first place.

This point is echoed in Cristina Lafont's treatment of the *a priori* in Heidegger. For her, Heidegger's thought exhibits the "hermeneutic" transformation of Kant's Copernican revolution that is characteristic of an important strand of German thought since Wilhelm von Humboldt. Under such a hermeneutic transformation *a priori* conditions are no longer traced back to a pure transcendental subject but to a merely *factic* one; they are embedded in the particular, historical languages that inform Dasein's "understanding of being." Heidegger follows Kant in claiming that no access to entities is possible outside of such an *a priori* context (a particular understanding of being), but because his synthetic *a priori* is merely *factic* he cannot employ Kant's argument for this claim, namely, that a particular understanding is necessary for *all possible* experience. Rather than drop the strong notion of the *a priori*, however, Heidegger embraces an unstable linguistic idealism. Lafont contrasts such idealism with the "contextual *a priori*" in Hilary Putnam's internal realism—a position that, in Heideggerian terms, is purchased at the cost of abandoning the ontological difference, the absolute distinction between ontic (*a posteriori*) and ontological (*a priori*) knowledge.

A similar tension is uncovered by William Blattner, who finds Heidegger's notion of *a priori* conditions to be caught between two important currents in his understanding of philosophical inquiry: the pragmatic strand, and the aspirations for a transcendental ontology. The pragmatic strand uncovers conditions on meaning—such as skills and capacities—that cannot be captured in concepts and propositions. The transcendental strand seeks an ultimate ground for this sort of "understanding of being" in a theory of original temporality. But the transcendental aspiration involves an objectifying conceptual thematization of *a priori* conditions, which contradicts the very character—preconceptual, resistant to propositional formulation—of these conditions (skills, practices) themselves. Blattner suggests that Heidegger chose to drop the transcendental idea of a scientific ontology in his later work. But he leaves us with the crucial question regarding the character of philosophical inquiry: To what extent can philosophical expression be other than conceptual or theoretical? Is propositionality an obstacle to our access to being?

Several chapters—for instance, those of Pippin, Carr, and Dermot Moran—take note of the fact that Heidegger’s transcendentalism is a placeholder for the idea that there is something distinctive about philosophical inquiry vis-à-vis other intellectual pursuits. In a wide-ranging chapter on this topic, Karsten Harries explores how Heidegger’s approach to the transcendental draws upon far more than Kant and Husserl. The notion first emerges from Heidegger’s early theological concern with “eternal truths” and their relation to human beings, a concern evident in Heidegger’s commitment in his earliest publications to the strong program of transcendental logic. But even in *Being and Time*—which, as Lafont argued, submits Kant’s Copernican revolution to a “hermeneutic” finitization—he still struggles to preserve something of the a priori. Harries presses the issue: is not thinking always in some sense a transcendence of the finite? In his 1929 Davos dispute with the neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer,<sup>5</sup> Heidegger emphasizes the limits of transcendental reflection: can it really dictate conditions for all possible experience, or is it not limited to experience as it has actually arisen under specific historical, and therefore contingent, conditions? Where Cassirer reads the self-transcendence of the human being as a “homecoming” (a term that itself has important connotations in Heidegger’s own thought), Heidegger sees it as a kind of *anxiety*. Following Nietzsche, Heidegger begins to see that a more positive characterization of self-transcendence, and of thinking, is blocked by the scientific pursuit of truth itself, which has no room for many forms of experience—of the beautiful, for instance, or the good—that, consequently, seem to disappear from the science-dominated world. Heidegger’s late thought, then, can be seen as a continuation of the pursuit of transcendence that attempts to do justice to these excluded experiences in an age that puts roadblocks in the way of such reflection.

### 3. *The Role of Subjectivity and the Question of Idealism*

Heidegger is rightly understood as an implacable foe of the Cartesian picture of an isolated subject cut off from the world; being-in-the-world is nothing if not a challenge to such a picture. One might expect, then, that Kant’s appeal to the “I think” as the cornerstone of his transcendental philosophy would find little resonance in Heidegger’s thought. But this is by no means the case. Instead, Dasein comes to occupy the position of the transcendental subject, with corresponding fractures introduced into the project. As we learn in Dermot Moran’s contribution—which traces in detail the interconnections between Heidegger’s “question of being” and Husserl’s idea of transcendental phenomenology as “first philosophy”—the fundamental question that troubled Husserl was the “paradox of subjectivity.” For Husserl, the transcendental subject is not, as it was for Kant, a for-

mal principle or logical postulate; it is the concrete locus of the intentional “constitution” of entities in the world. At the same time, as human subjectivity it is itself one such entity in the world. Moran shows how Husserl attempted to solve this problem by means of the phenomenological reduction, through which a distinction is made between a world-involved “natural attitude” and a world-bracketing “transcendental” attitude. If Heidegger rejects the reduction—and so this sort of solution to the paradox of subjectivity—does he not fall back into the problem that one entity, *Dasein*, is both “in” the world and also the condition of the world’s very appearing?

However it stands with this ultimate question—and the chapters by Dahlstrom, Malpas, Philipse, Lafont, and Harries, among others, all register its effects on Heidegger’s thought—Heidegger’s approach can also be seen to illuminate the apparent necessity by which philosophy continually has recourse to some form of subjectivity. Mark Okrent, for instance, shows how Heidegger’s notion of the *Worumwillen*—the sort of self-understanding that I have when I am engaged in practical, goal-directed activities—avoids problems that arise when one starts with the Kantian “I think,” that is, with the subject of cognition or judgment as representation. Such a subject can only become aware of *itself* by means of a representation, which leads to an infinite regress. Heidegger, in contrast, conceives the subject first of all as *practical*, and in practical activity my self-understanding is a function of the holistic and typical structure of such activity: in acting, I act “as” something—gardener, teacher, husband, and so on. Such self-understanding is not a second-order reflection, but it makes possible the kind of explicit cognizing and representing that finally gets formulated in the practice of judging.

This pragmatic transformation of the transcendental subject has implications for the vexed question of idealism. As Carr’s chapter points out, Kant himself did not fully break with the Cartesian picture that gives rise to something like a “problem of the external world.” His “Refutation of Idealism”—the focal point of many earlier discussions of the nature and scope of transcendental arguments<sup>6</sup>—has thus been variously understood. Heidegger claimed that the problem of the external world was a pseudoproblem, but his own stance toward the realism/idealism debate, and toward transcendental idealism in particular, has been widely disputed. In his contribution to the volume, Herman Philipse compares Heidegger’s strategy of “debunking” skepticism about the external world with similar strategies in Husserl, G. E. Moore, and Rudolf Carnap, and asks whether the resulting concept of “world” can avoid the problem of the *Ding an sich*. This chapter, which proceeds by unpacking the various possible senses of “idealism” and “realism” in several famous puzzle passages in *Being and Time*, poses a question similar to the one that occupied Lafont, namely, whether there is, on Heidegger’s view, the possibility of encountering entities outside the global transcendental

framework, “world.” Where Lafont answers in the negative—thereby attributing to Heidegger a kind of linguistic idealism where meaning determines reference—Philipse explores the idea that the access to entities in the phenomenon of *Angst* might provide an alternative to such idealism.

Philipse argues that one can accept Heidegger’s “realism” only if one gives up scientific realism—the idea that science is our best access to things in the world. What, then, is one to say about scientific practices within the framework of Heidegger’s transcendental philosophy? This is equivalent to asking how it is that Dasein’s understanding supplies the “enabling conditions” for the “being of entities.” In place of Kant’s view that such conditions “synthesize” the manifold of space and time, Heidegger holds that they “let beings be.” John Haugeland carefully unpacks this central Heideggerian thought, moving from simpler cases—the idea that in order for something to be a baseball or a hammer there must be certain social practices and skillful abilities (which Heidegger associates with Dasein’s “understanding of being”) that let such things show themselves as such—to the harder case of how we are to understand the idea that Dasein’s understanding also lets mere natural entities “be.” Through a series of careful phenomenological distinctions, Haugeland shows how the scientific practices of theory construction and experimentation, together with the existential commitments that are bound up with them—provide necessary conditions for bringing natural things out of their “obscurity.” Because this obscurity is deep, the project of science is difficult. In Kantian terms, we certainly end up with an empirical realism here. Is this also a scientific realism? Haugeland’s account of the relation between Newton’s laws and Einstein’s laws emphasizes the role of commitment in scientific practice, and he argues that the urge to say which one is “really” true is a holdover of the desire for a God’s-eye view that Heidegger’s thought should help us resist.

Of course, the problem of truth—so closely related to questions of transcendental idealism and the transcendental subject—has long been a disputed topic in the Heidegger literature. Ernst Tugendhat’s argument that Heidegger’s identification of truth with “disclosedness” abandons the critical concept of truth in favor of a concept with no normative force is often seen as having been so persuasive that, on its basis, Heidegger himself came to reject the idea that the openness of beings can rightly be called “truth.” Daniel O. Dahlstrom revisits this issue, arguing that Heidegger’s earlier notion of transcendental truth as the condition for the possibility of propositional truth did undergo a major transformation. This transformation was not the result of Tugendhat’s arguments, however, but of Heidegger’s own gradual move away from posing the question of transcendence in terms of the ontological difference between being and beings. As Dahlstrom argues on the basis of passages from Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enown-*



ing) (*Beiträge zur Philosophie [Vom Ereignis]*), to pose the question that way merely reproduces the problem of treating being in the manner of an “idea.” Heidegger’s later approach to being as the event of the presencing-absencing of beings terms it the “truth that prevails [*west*],” and Dahlstrom argues that this new approach retains a kind of transcendental structure, since such prevailing, or valence, is the condition of the *bivalence* on which Tugendhat insisted in any concept of truth. In his final writings Heidegger does reject the idea that this prevailing is properly called “truth,” but he continues to maintain that such prevailing—including its necessary relation to human beings or “mortals”—makes bivalence possible. Here we recognize the same move that Crowell’s chapter attributes to the analysis of conscience in *Being and Time*: Heidegger wants to exhibit the source of our responsiveness to the normative as such, which provides the ultimate conditions for intentionality, meaning, and ontic truth. In Heidegger’s later thought, as in the earlier, there thus remains an important relation to the transcendental tradition.

This collection does not claim to provide a definitive account of the “transcendental Heidegger,” nor does it resolve the question concerning Heidegger’s status as a transcendental thinker or the many issues concerning his relation to Kant or Husserl. But it does allow the controversies surrounding the transcendental in Heidegger’s thought to take center stage, with the hope that the richness of these themes will spur further philosophical investigation.

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