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THE ONTOLOGICO-POLITICAL ASPECT OF HEIDEGGER'S THOUGHT¹

The article provides the ontological context for a possible Heideggerian solution of a politico-philosophical problem. Both the ontological issue and the politico-philosophical issue share the same problematic structure of the relation between the general and the particular. The general is the cause and the particular is the effect. Hence, this issue is the ontological issue of causality. The article demonstrates that how the Heideggerian thought of Being dwells on the issue of cause, and how the introduction of the ontological difference, and interdependence, of being and Being can shed light on the political aspect of thought.

Keywords: causality, individual, Heidegger, ontology, political philosophy

Introductory remarks: The fundamental assumptions of Heidegger's thought

The following things are presupposed in Heidegger's thought.

First, it is *Seynsgeschichtlichkeit*, i.e. it has to do with the historical unfolding of Being. It is not a narrowly construed political stance. The historicity of his thought means that the latter can be understood only with respect to the ontological situation of the time. It is a stage in the unfolding of Being. Here, Heidegger can be seen to follow in the footsteps of German Idealism which saw history as the scene or way of Absolute's appearance(-to-itself) wherein philosophy plays a crucial role (cf. [1. P. 25; 2. P. 9, 23–24]). Philosophy formulates the shape in which Being appears. These essential transformations take shape simultaneously in a historical epoch and in the minds of the great thinkers. Currently, we live in an era where the principle shaped first in the philosophy of Plato has achieved its essential fruition (cf. [3]): it achieved more of its essence in Descartes's time than it had achieved in the Platonic time, and even more in the 19th c. of Hegel, Nietzsche and others, and Heidegger positions himself among the epochal thinkers. If there is a political aspect in Heidegger's philosophy, it utterly supervenes on his ontology. It is about the re-appearance of Being.

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Аннотация. Представлен онтологический контекст для возможного хайдеггеровского решения политико-философской проблемы. И онтологический вопрос, и политико-философский вопрос имеют одну и ту же проблемную структуру отношения между общим и частным. Общее – это причина, а частное – следствие. Следовательно, этот вопрос является онтологическим вопросом причинности. Показано, как хайдеггеровское учение о бытии сосредоточено на проблеме причины и как введение онтологического различия и взаимозависимости бытия и Бытия может пролить свет на политический аспект его философии.

Ключевые слова: причинность, индивидуальность, Хайдеггер, онтология, политическая философия

Second, we must heed the wisdom that there is no subject and object distinction, or, rather, that they are in truth one. Although the culture of Heidegger's (and our) time seems to be permeated with the imagery and guidelines of materialistic sciences and "the [technological] use of [material] bodies" (cf. [4]), the ontological understanding of this *Geschehen* must assume the absence of the dualism. The problem is not "materialism" or "dualism" but a peculiar revelation of unity, which Heidegger calls *Gestell*. With the term *Gestell*, the technological is critiqued but not reduced to mere criticism and certainly not to a rejection thereof. He also names it subjectivity (*Subjektivität*) [5. P. 450], or the forgetfulness of Being.

Further, we must consider the distinction of subject and Dasein as it corresponds to the distinction of Being and *Gestell*.

On the distinction between subject and Dasein

Heidegger could not speak about Dasein if his own Being were not Dasein. There is no difference (a distinction there may well be) between subject and object; hence, a thinker can only say about *Wirklichkeit* what he can say about himself. If Heidegger speaks about forgetfulness of Being, it is because he himself has forgotten Being. This forgetfulness is to be understood thus: it is not a shortcoming of our time which is successfully avoided by Heidegger (alone) but a *constant* characteristic of Being. The fault of our time consists precisely in not acknowledging the forgetfulness to Being, of being willing to keep it in mind and make it a property of the self. Subject is precisely the kind of self which has made Being into its property, or object. And Being has thus deprived him of freedom, *quid pro quo*. Dasein, or freedom, is about letting go of Being, about *forgetting* it. What is constant is not the subjectivity of Being but its appearance via forgetfulness. Describing this structure (named the ontological difference) is the great contribution by Heidegger.

To emphasize, the forgetfulness of the distinction between being and Being is a constant. The remembering of Being is the remembering of the distinction between being and Being. This latter does not refer to a dissolution of the distinction between being and Being but, on the contrary, it refers to the remembering of this very forgetfulness. To remember Being is to remember it as self-concealing (or forgotten): it is simultaneously to remember the distinction between being and Being and the forgetfulness of this distinction. It is by radicalising this forgetfulness of the forgetfulness of Being that this very forgetfulness itself (Being itself) is forgotten: the (post)modern forgetfulness of Being (i.e., *Gestell*) is a radicalisation of the constant forgetfulness of Being. Like with the death of God which was proclaimed by Nietzsche's madman, it is both a terrible thing and a dawn. It is only possible because the Greeks had failed to think this Being as forgetfulness (Being as Being) and thus, paradoxically, formulated the potentiality for its forgetfulness.

Analogous to the dualism between subject and object, there is the dualism between spirit and matter, or the particular and the general. The general would then represent the state run in a mechanistic fashion according to the general law, based on the principle of unity (a Newtonian kind of *vis mortua* or a Hobbesian *Leviathan*, also see [6]), and the particular would then represent the individual who is contraposed against the general (the machine-like universality) and may rebel against it, based on the principle of plurality. Heidegger with his supposedly critical stance against the technological and the technologically run society and/or

academy would then be placed among the “individualists”; hence, an (unfounded) individualist reading of the term Dasein.

But, in truth, Dasein means an unfolding of the world which has not succumbed to the dualism between the one and the many. In Heidegger’s own words:

Is this one Being something before all unfolding, that is, something that exists for itself, whose independence is the true essence of Being? Or is Being in its essence never not unfolded so that the manifold and its foldings constitute precisely the peculiar oneness of that which is intrinsically gathered up? Is Being imparted to the individual modes in such a way that by this imparting it in fact parts itself out, although in this parting out it is not partitioned in such a way that, as divided, it falls apart and loses its authentic essence, its unity? Might the unity of Being lie precisely in this imparting parting out? And if so, how would and could something like that happen [geschehen]? What holds sway in this event [Geschehen]? (These are questions concerning Being and Time!) [7. P. 25; 8. P. 31].

This structure is discovered as the primordial structure of the Greek thought and the presupposition of the very distinction between matter and form. Matter and form are not separated but are united as power (potentiality) and entelechy. Their unity is *energeia*¹. And its structure recovered is the structure of Dasein [10. P. 250–253]. On the one hand, the Greek *ὑποκείμενον* has evolved into the modern subject as the metaphysical basis for the *Gestell*; on the other hand, its primordial reconsideration by Heidegger demonstrates it to be Dasein, rooted in a constant forgetfulness of Being.

The first note on causality: The subject as the causal principle

The modern romantic rebellion against the law and regularity or the attempt to find place for the individual in the causal order of the cosmos, the state or even everydayness is but another side of the same coin (cf. [11]): they both express the principle of the subjectum. The Cartesian subject is both the source of mechanical laws which are „logically“, i. e. without contradiction, deduced from the axioms of the *res cogitans* [12. P. 76] and the owner of the individual will with its *conatic* attempt at individual happiness. Furthermore, it is this conatic attempt which is the driving force of the technological world.

We can explain that with an analogy. Even though the hardware in a computer is more tangible than its software, the former can only exist because of the latter. Likewise, even though modern technologies are more tangible, they can only exist because of the conatic drive of individual happiness. Likewise, the rationalism of the Enlightenment was driven by a romantic force.

We can explain it further with another analogy – that of the movement of a hand. Let us suppose that one is manually grasping a glass. Three aspects can be distinguished in this sole movement. The first one is the “brutal” hand muscle movement to embrace the piece of glass. The second one is the meaningful movement of a living hand to take a glass (in order to drink some water). This distinction

¹ Even though Aristotelian energy and entelechy tend to be conflated into one actuality, they are in fact different. Entelechy is quasi ever at rest (unity), while potentiality is quasi movement, or change, itself. Energy is their unity. And it is this unity, or energy, which Heidegger refers to as temporality, or time [9. P. 321, 327].

so far, analogous to the body/spirit distinction¹, is not sufficient. Hence, there is the third and most important one – the taking-of-the-glass itself. Just like Aristotle saw that the (“form” or “telos” of the) movement itself is ontologically prior, and the “body” as “matter” exists because of the *telos* or *as* the telos. To phrase it in Heidegger's words, we do not hear because we have ears, but we have and can have ears only because we hear and are beings that hear [13. P. 220]. Likewise, it is only because of the modern subject that modern technology can exist as its way of being.

The modern subject is the ontological-causal principle of the modern technological uncovering of the world. And Heidegger is so far from opposing causality that his own thought can be said to center on the ontological problem of causality. Everything is “caused” by Being and the way it is revealed. And the modern deterministic-mechanistic-technological notion of causality is but an expression of subjectism (Being revealed as sub-ject).

Heidegger's overcoming of the subject consists namely in the realisation of the “forgetful” character of this causal principle.

The second note on causality: Subjectum as appearance, or unconcealment

Heidegger recovers the structure of the ontological difference by dwelling on the original meaning of *subjectum*/ὁποκείμενον, among other things, in the first remaining textual evidence of the Western thinking about causality, or “necessity” (τὸ χρεών) as the ontological causal principle.

It is the Anaximander fragment which, based on John Burnet's analysis, Heidegger takes to have originally been this: „κατὰ τὸ χρεών· δίδοναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας [14. P. 340–341]. It is taken to express the same ontological structure as the Aristotelian one quoted above. It is the structure of the ontological difference: τὸ χρεών refers to Being, and the remaining part of the fragment refers to its temporality and beings. For Heidegger, temporality and beings are the domain of the limit (πέρας), thus, the ever-self-concealing Being can be named by Anaximander the limitless (τὸ ἄπειρον). The latter ever presents the former with its temporal constancy (*Weile*). Hence the danger that the ever-present constancy will be reduced to the sub-jectum as Being's concealment is forgotten [14. P. 368]. The correct analysis of Dasein implies an ontologically correct understanding of Being as τὸ χρεών.

This clearly brings us to the analysis of *Zuhandenheit*, or readiness-to-hand, in *Being and Time*, which is crucial to the correct understanding of Dasein. Heidegger links χρεών to χράω/χράομαι and χεῖρ – respectively, *I need, I handle, hand* [14. P. 366]. Dasein is primordially a handler, a user, and is conceived in the image of Being as the handler and user of beings. Dasein and Being share the same ontological structure.

Being is in charge of beings and has them at its disposal (verfügt) [14. P. 363]. Being is likewise characterised both in the analysis of Dasein and in that of Aristotle's (meta)physics (cf. [15. P. 69; 16. P. 247]). The essence of a being is to be the property (οὐσία, Anwesen) of Being as well as to be in-the-world, that is, in the aprioric interrelation with other beings because Being “imparts” but is not “parti-

¹ Or, the representation/will distinction, in Schopenhaurian terms.

tioned" (see above). This interrelation by which Being preserves "justice" (τίσις) in things, or presents them with "justice", is conceived as joyful (frui). "Frui involves praesto habēre. Praesto, praesitum is in Greek *ὑποκείμενον*, that which already lies before us in unconcealment, *οὐσία*, that which lingers awhile in presence. 'To use' accordingly suggests: to let something present come to presence as such; *frui*, to brook, to use, usage, means: to hand something over [aushändigen] to its own essence and to keep it in hand, preserving it as something present [in der wahren Hand behalten...]" [14. P. 367; 17. P. 53]. Dasein is Dasein, that is, one's "own", if and only if it has been transformed from subject into the preserver of the presence of the forgetfulness of Being.

It is the movement analogous to the movement from the present-at-hand (Vorhanden) to the ready-to-hand (Zuhanden) (cf. [18. P. 120]).

The third note on causality: The cause as the general-particular

The essence of the subject is the present-at-hand. The ontological origin of it lies in the Platonic *εἶδος* (3). For Heidegger, it is in Aristotle's legacy that the rootedness of the presence of *εἶδος* in the temporal structure of Being can be uncovered and demonstrated. In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle touches upon the problematics of the relation between the particular and the general and, accordingly, links the grasp of the causal ontological principal (*εἶδος, τέλος, μορφή*) to the particular and temporal aspect of *τέχνη*.

In *Metaphysics* [19. 980b and further], one conceives *εἶδος* (the constant essence) via the temporality of skill. One starts with the empirical observation of an *if (when)...*, *then...* connection (e.g., if one drank lemon juice, one became less sluggish/flegmatic), and via repetitive observation of the same connection – from the presentification (Gegenwärtigen) of this connection in the temporal-practical work – one arrives at the presentation (Präsentation) (to himself) of essence, or the "outward look" (Aussehen, *εἶδος*) [20. P. 51–52]. Crucially, the temporal aspect remains in the presentation of *εἶδος*.

Knowledge of *εἶδος* provides one with the knowledge of a constant causal connection: *because this happens...*, *therefore also this happens*. But this knowledge presupposes the temporal practical circumspection of things, that is, the referential system of the ready-to-hand analysed in *Being and Time*. Hence, the general ever refers to the particular, while the particular ever refers to the general: they move in the "Aristotelian-Anaximandran" circle of Being and beings described above. Heidegger is emphatic that the Greek thinkers who made the distinction between the general (*καθόλον*) and the particular (*ἐκαστον*) also took for granted their unity.

While the theoretically graspable principle (Being) is one, it contains a power, or possibility, of a multitude of practices, and it preserves itself as constant, or theoretical, only by spreading-through in the practices which presuppose it [21. P. 129–130]. Heidegger's philosophy is not "anti-Platonic" or "anti-Aristotelian" in that it throws itself away from the "dead" causal force into an "unreflected" living force. On the contrary, Heidegger's achieved aim is a sort of *Aufhebung* of this distinction. The grasp of the constant Presence of (ever-self-concealing) Being may be opposed to the disowned temporality of the now-time but not to the own, "authentic", temporality. Being is one with the "authentically" conceived time which is given origin to and gathered by Being.

In *Being and Time*, the temporal interrelatedness which is “abstracted” into a constant causal connection is said to be pre-predicative [15. P. 359]. It is non-thematic also in Aristotle's writings and is generally presupposed by all Greek thought. Furthermore, by the same token, it must be presupposed also by modern subjectist thought which is but a variant of the Greek one. This is how the general law is united this a particular individual.

Here, the importance of Kant's transcendentalism cannot be exaggerated. The insight of the unity of categories and the sensible form of time was the presupposition of thematising the temporal interrelatedness which underlies the conceptual grasp of Being. Thanks to Kant, Heidegger is able to revive the primordial structure of the ancient Greek thought; first of all, by demonstrating in *Being and Time* that the proposition which refers to the objective, or general, is inseparable from the circumspect using of things and working. Situative deliberation is essential to the transcendental schema of „if/when..., then...“, from which representation of constant object arises. But this, again, is only possible because of keeping in view the whole of *Zeug*, because of being in a referential and temporal “context” [15. P. 359]. Just like Kant's productive imagination sublates the distinction of the particular and the general, so a Heideggerian ontological revelation of a being is only possible as an irreducible unity of it with Being.

A concluding remark

We have sketched how the politico-philosophical problem of the relation between the general and the particular has an ontological counterpart as the key issue in Heidegger's thought. Heidegger's thinking of Being is to be seen as a novel kind of the sublation of the two opposites – Being, or the General, and beings, or the particular. Being, as ever-self-concealing, provides the individual with freedom because the former does not transform itself into a dead generality, or any being-like entity at all, while the free individual provides Being with its appearance by allowing Being to be “forgotten”.

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The article provides the ontological context for a possible Heideggerian solution of a politico-philosophical problem. This problem is rooted in the context of the history of Being, namely, at the end of the history of metaphysics which allows and demands transforming its ground. At the end of the history of metaphysics, Being has revealed itself as Subject. Both the ontological issue and the politico-philosophical issue share the same problematic structure, that of *Gestell* as well as of the relation between the general and the particular. The general is the cause and the particular is the effect. Hence, this issue is the ontological issue of causality. The article demonstrates that how the Heideggerian thought of Being dwells on the issue of cause, and how the introduction of the ontological difference, and interdependence, of being and Being can shed light on the political aspect of thought. First, the article indicates that both Subject and Dasein are variants of the fundamental self-revelation of Being as *ὑποκείμενον*. The metaphysico-historical conclusion of the latter is Subject, or *Gestell*, but its Heideggerian transformation is Dasein. The time of *Gestell* is characterised by a strict, yet reciprocally supportive, opposition between the one (the general) and the many (the particular) whereas Dasein is characterised by the ontological circle and unity between the one and the many, based on an original interpretation of ancient Greek thought. Second, the article demonstrates that Subject, or Being as Subject, is the causal principle which governs the modern time. Everything has to do with the causal principle. Thus, the transformation of the fundamental structure of our time has to do with the transformation of this causal principle, that is, of transforming subject into self-concealing Being. Third, the article shows that the analysis of causality is rooted in the description of the ready-to-hand in *Being and Time*, which is subsequently reintegrated in the reinterpretation of pre-Socratic thought (here, of the thought of Anaximander), that is, in the course of transforming the ground of Western thought into self-concealing Being. It freshly reveals the structure of ontological difference as that of the relation between the one and the many, or the general and the particular, where the general is no more conceived as a being but as Being. Finally, the very ontological unity of the one and the many is shown to be embedded in causality itself. This unity, as exhibited already in *Being and Time*, with the help of the principles exposed by Aristotle and Kant, is equiprimordial, or ontologically synonymous, with the ontological relation between Being and time.