MARTIN HEIDEGGER

Heidegger is the most prominent and controversial figure in European philosophy in the twentieth century. Born in 1889 in Messkirch, Germany, Heidegger’s grammar and secondary-school days were spent at Catholic boarding schools in preparation for a career in the clergy. In 1909, he began his studies at the University of Freiburg, first in theology and, after he gave up his plans to enter the priesthood in 1911, then in mathematics, the natural sciences, and philosophy. Hence, two main strands of influence in his early studies were Neo-Scholasticism, as represented by his teacher Carl Braig and his dissertation director Artur Schneider, and Neo-Kantianism, as represented by Rickert, who was the director of his qualifying work for a professorship (Habilitation), and Rickert’s student Lask. To this constellation soon came the influence, mediated originally through Lask, of Husserl’s phenomenology, which proved to be a decisive influence on the young Heidegger. However, Heidegger did not meet Husserl until Husserl was appointed as Rickert’s successor in 1916. Heidegger’s first two larger studies reflect these influences. His dissertation on The Doctrine of Judgment in Psychologism (1913), brings together Neo-Kantianism and phenomenology. In his habilitation thesis, entitled The Doctrine of Categories and Meaning in Duns Scotus (1916), all three interests come together: the theme of judgment and categories (Neo-Kantianism), his work on the transition from the medieval philosophy and theology (Neo-Scholasticism), and its phenomenological method and terminology. In both works, there is strong emphasis upon the notions of judgment and validity as entities that transcend space and time; this is far removed from the work that followed more than a decade later and established Heidegger’s reputation as a major new force in philosophy—namely, his monumental and yet fragmentary Being and Time.

During that decade, Heidegger did not publish any major books or essays. This period spans his personal acquaintance with Husserl, a brief military service, three years of teaching as a Privatdozent in Freiburg, and an appointment as a professor without a chair in Marburg. Until the publication of the early Freiburg and Marburg lectures in the Gesamtausgabe (complete edition) of his works in the 1960s and 1990s, scholars had to rely on anecdotal evidence and Heidegger’s own often unreliable accounts of the development of his thinking and the influences upon him. What is clear, however, is that during this decade he turned away from Neo-Kantianism and Neo-Scholasticism and that his interpretation of phenomenology became the project of explicating life as it presents itself to us in concrete, individual, historical existence. Under the influence of the philosophy of life, above all as presented by Dilthey, phenomenology in Heidegger’s eyes takes a hermeneutical turn to a self-interpretation of life, and the technical term for this factual life becomes “Dasein.” Also apparent are the influences of Karl Jaspers, of existentialist readings of Christian authors such as Kierkegaard, Meister Eckhart, Martin Luther, and Paul (replacing Scholastic and Neo-Scholastic Christianity for him), which became decisive influences
on the second part of *Being and Time*; of the renewed preoccupation with the Greeks, especially Aristotle; and finally of a new look at Kant freed of Neo-Kantian presuppositions.

*Being and Time* as published presents only two of three proposed divisions of the first part of what was supposed to become a two-part work directed toward an explication of what Heidegger calls the “question concerning Being [Seinfrage].” Yet it changed the philosophical landscape of the twentieth century and had a decisive influence in the shift of philosophical emphasis away from Cartesian subjectivity to more dynamic models of human life, away from theoretical cognition of reality in favor of practical understanding of possibilities (i.e., from knowledge-that, to knowing-how-to), from scientific knowledge to everyday familiarity, from spatial location to temporal emergence as the mark of genuine existence, from truth as correspondence to truth as an event of things becoming manifest, and from an emphasis upon unchanging and universal structures to historical and contextual situatedness. At this stage of Heidegger’s development, he distanced himself from Descartes’s philosophy, hoping instead to turn to Aristotle, appropriately purged of Scholastic overtones, as an authoritative predecessor and model of Greek philosophizing. Heidegger is also convinced that the misleading presuppositions of the philosophical tradition are reflected in and reinforced by the philosophical terms that shape our thinking, so he attempts to follow what he takes to be the example of the Greeks and to invent a new philosophical terminology based on terms taken from everyday (in this case German) language.

In the introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes the work as a step along the way to a “fundamental ontology” that would address not just the question of the basic structure of this or that kind of being (“regional ontology”) but the meaning of being in general. The intent is to proceed through an analysis of the basic constitution of Dasein in order to show that temporality is the horizon against which the being of any being as such is understood. The methodology is phenomenological in that it appeals to and attempts to articulate experiences with which we are all already supposed to be at least vaguely and implicitly familiar. Its primary mode of access to all kinds of beings is through an analysis of Dasein, since Dasein has the unique distinction of existing in and through an “understanding of being” as such—even though this understanding is for the most part inarticulate, implicit, and vague.

The task of fundamental ontology is thus to explicate this non thematic understanding that we already possess. Since this takes place as an explication of the structures of this understanding, which is itself an activity or way of being, fundamental ontology is as the same time a phenomenological hermeneutics, the explication by Dasein of its own, usually inarticulate and implicit, self-understanding that also guides its understanding of everything else it encounters within the world. In Heidegger’s hands, the term “existence” also becomes a technical term referring to the ecstatic (that is, extended) being of Dasein. This extension first suggests an extension outside the enclosed sphere of mental representation into a direct involvement with the things that present themselves to us in our daily affairs (thus, a kind of intentionality)
and then later is shown to rest upon the extension of Dasein across a temporal horizon, so that one’s present existence is never really just a matter of the immediate present but also involves being caught up with the future and the past as constitutive dimensions of any present moment as well. Thus, Dasein is essentially historical, and its understanding of any kind of entity—whether a physical object, a piece of equipment, a number, or an artwork—will reflect this temporal dimension as well.

The structures or invariant features of such existence are the focus of Heidegger’s attention in *Being and Time*. They are called “existentials” to distinguish them from “categories,” which identify the structure of entities other than Dasein. The task is to show how various existentials all have a fundamentally temporal dimension. In the same way, the “Da-” (German for “there” or “present”) of Dasein is now terminologically connected to the “ex-” or “out of” in “existence” as the other name for the being of Dasein in a similar way. The “Da-” or “there” of Dasein signifies that it is not an enclosed but an open realm, something “ex-” or outside of itself, so that “Dasein” and “existence” point to the same phenomenon. Dasein is the site where beings are encountered. It also signifies Dasein’s “being-there” for itself in its self-awareness. However, this self-awareness is not a reflective self-representation of mental life at a moment along Cartesian lines but rather the temporally extended practical and emotional awareness of oneself in terms of one’s own possibilities, options, and impossibilities, projects and fears, circumstances, past, and limitations; all these forms of awareness are inconceivable apart from the temporal character of Dasein. The “ex-” of Dasein’s existence then refers not just to its being outside of its own “mental space” but also to its temporal extension, its constant and pervasive involvement not just in what is but in what has been and is about to be.

The temporal character of Dasein also explains much of Heidegger’s methodology. If historical situatedness is an essential feature of Dasein’s factual existence, then phenomenological analysis of what presents itself must also involve implicit reflection upon the history of how things came to present themselves the way they do. It is not enough for phenomenology simply to reflect on how things present themselves to us in immediate experience, since it turns out that experience itself is never anything simply immediate but is itself rather the result of a long history, the influence of which does not disappear merely because we might not be aware of it. Indeed, the opposite is the case: This history will be all the more pervasive and will limit what we can see all the more strongly if we do not actively make the effort to reconstruct this history, to make it explicit and become aware of how it has come to influence us the way it does. Hence, the concrete analysis of phenomena also involves an active encounter, a “destruction” or, to borrow from the French translation of the term, the “deconstruction” of the tradition that provides the background for the place where we find ourselves today. Throughout *Being and Time*, Heidegger actively seeks points of comparison with the philosophical tradition that preceded him, and in fact the unpublished second part of *Being and Time* was to have consisted of a study of Kant, Descartes, medieval ontology, and Aristotle.

The first division of part I proceeds first through an analysis of the entities we
encounter in our everyday dealings in the world. Heidegger contrasts two basic kinds of entities: first, objects thought of in terms of physical location, extension, and other "objective" properties such as those described in the natural sciences. Heidegger's calls these "simply present" objects *vorhanden* (usually translated as present at hand). Their opposites are the things we encounter in our daily affairs and that we understand immediately in terms of their functions. As soon as we enter a room, we recognize this thing as a chair (something to sit on), that one as a toy (something to play with), this thing as useful, that as useless. Heidegger describes these kind of entities as *zuhanden* (ready to hand); it is important to note that even descriptions of things that do not fit easily into this framework also point to this kind of being since terms such as "useless" or "unsuitable" make sense only for someone who already understands use and suitability. The important point about ready-to-hand objects is that they reveal the context dependency of the objects we encounter in our daily lives.

Objects in our daily world are what they are because of the way that they fit into a specific context. Only in the context of certain human needs or desires do terms like "chair," "table," or "toy" make sense. Moreover, when we understand an object as ready to hand, we demonstrate not only an understanding of it but also and above all of the context or "world" that gives it relevance (or lack thereof). "World" in this technical sense, then, is an interrelated set of actual or possible concerns of Dasein: things that can or cannot, should or should not be done. Thus, to understand an object is to understand how it fits into a set of concerns that people might or do have and hence necessarily also presupposes an understanding of such possible concerns as such as well as some sort of stance toward them. We are not neutral toward such possibilities but rather positively or negatively disposed to them, often very intensely. The fundamental character of "worldhood" is then "significance" (*Bedeutung*), in terms of which objects within the world have their "relevance" (*Bedeutung*). Moreover, Heidegger asserts, such ready-to-hand objects are a better starting point as models for an ontological analysis because they illustrate most clearly the context dependency of all objects. In fact, Heidegger shows that even being-present at hand is really just an abstraction from (or a deficient mode of) being-ready to hand. For him the most basic kinds of things are not the present-at-hand objects and their so-called objective properties, since the very idea of such things arises only through an abstraction from the use-objects and their functional predicates that are the immediate objects of our attention in our daily lives. Hence, an understanding of the being of such ready-to-hand or merely present-at-hand beings is grounded in an understanding of a context that has significance for Dasein. Since this context or "world" consists above all is a set of ways that Dasein can conduct itself (even passively in the sense of having something happen to it), then it is Dasein's own self-understanding—that is, its understanding of its own being in terms of its possibilities and limitations—that grounds the understanding of the being of other beings within the world.

The most important form of Dasein's understanding of being is its understanding of the possibilities for existence that it itself envisages or projects. Such understanding is at the same time factual: It understands itself whether it chooses to or not and
finds itself in circumstances not of its own choosing. Nor is this understanding merely an intellectual matter; it always is attuned this or that way (even "lack of a mood" is a kind of temperament), with this or that interest, this or that emotional relationship to what lies ahead. Understanding and factual attunement (Gestimmtheit) are thus two of the three most fundamental traits of Dasein’s self-awareness, its Erschlossenheit (disclosedness to itself), as opposed to the "discoveredness" of objects within the world. Human existence thus exhibits the structure of thrownness, facticity, or emotional attunedness as well as that of envisaging, projecting, or understanding its own possibilities (that is, its world).

To these two conditions comes a third: namely, the falleness that sets the bounds of the thrown projection. Heidegger notes that our attention is normally object directed and not directed to the context that provides the background for grasping objects. For a context to function effectively as a context for action, we have to operate within it without thinking about it, so we necessarily lose sight of the world in favor of objects within it. We thereby also lose sight of ourselves as the source of significance or meaning and tend to see significance itself as a kind of brute object. Thus, it is also common for us simply to adopt the socially established practices, values, and beliefs that form the background for acting and knowing. We forget that such values, practices, and beliefs exist only because individuals establish, accept, and pass them on. For Heidegger, this is no accident but an essential feature of human existence that he calls "falleness." Along with attunement and understanding, this is the third primordial aspect of human existence as an implicit and prepredicative self-disclosedness. Together, these three existentiales make up the way that Dasein is "da" or there for itself. Taken together, they constitute the being of Dasein as "care." Whereas understanding is connected with the active moment of the "-wagen" or "throwing" (actare in Latin, still echoed in the translation of the German "entwerfen" as "projecting"), the passive moment of "being thrown" in the German "Geworfenheit" stresses the fact that any projections, any kind of activity of Dasein, always take place against a horizon that one did not actively choose but has always already discovered as the starting point or backdrop for those projects.

This also leads to a reassessment of the concept of truth. Since any assertion about the truth or falsehood of any statement about an object (that is, a judgment) depends upon our familiarity with the object (ontic truth as discoveredness of objects) and since Heidegger has shown that this depends upon Dasein’s own self-awareness or disclosedness, he claims that the most original truth—namely, ontological truth—is Dasein’s disclosedness to itself. Heidegger follows Husserl’s lead in the Logical Investigations in defining truth as an event in which subject and object, knower and known come together, but he goes beyond Husserl in locating the ultimate condition for this coming together, the most originary truth, in a structure of Dasein. Moreover, since one reason for calling it "truth" is that it is the condition for the possibility of what we usually call truth—namely, the truth of judgments—it could also be called "un-truth," since it is the condition for the possibility of an untrue judgment as well. More important, given Heidegger’s views about falleness as an essential feature of human
existence, Dasein is always in another sense unaware of itself; it is never completely self-transparent, so that even in the ontological sense Dasein may be said to be “in the untruth” as much as “in the truth” about itself. Thus, one finds in Being and Time and in later essays such paradoxical formulations as “the essence of truth consists in untruth.”

As Heidegger's thought progressed, he built upon this analysis and added a verbal sense to the notion of Wesen (essence) as well. It, like truth, will be conceived dynamically, as the emerging of something into presence or truth. Since in Being and Time self-concealment is necessarily also a part of Dasein (and in later works it is part of the emergence of Being itself), Heidegger makes similar statements about the “non-essencing of truth”—that is, the failure or limitation of truth to emerge completely—such as at the end of his essay “Concerning the Essence of Truth.”

In the second division of Being and Time, Heidegger shows how the analyses of the first section reveal originary temporality to be the ultimate ground of Dasein and thus the horizon for posing the question concerning the meaning of being in general. He also tries to show how the issues of the truth and untruth of Dasein are tied to the phenomenon of death and questions of resoluteness and authenticity. For the most part, as fallenness shows and the history of philosophy demonstrates, Dasein fails to take on the responsibility of recognizing itself as the ultimate ground of significance and simply adopts whatever frameworks have been historically passed along and generally accepted. One flees the burden of creating or being the source of significance. We suppress the anxiety of not having anything else to rely on to provide significance for ourselves. Death, as Heidegger describes it, is the name for the nothingness of existence, not just in the fact that some day we will no longer be on this planet but that as long as we live we are confronted with the burden of constituting meaning and thus making the most fundamental decision about our lives. We are faced with this decision whether we want to be or not, and it also always presents itself to us from a certain starting point that we do not choose. Since we cannot rely on anyone or anything else to provide us with an ultimate grounding for the decision, we find ourselves confronted with nothingness when we seek a firm ground for establishing basic significance. Facing up to this certitude that we are the ultimate source of significance (conscience)—that we are the groundless ground—is equivalent to embracing death. Facing this resolutely constitutes authentic existence—that is, one that accepts the fallenness and finitude of human life, recognizes that there is nothing outside of oneself to provide an ultimate meaning or sense to life, and takes on the responsibility of making these choices as such. The connection between these themes and temporality lies in the concept of “original temporality,” which sees time not just as a flow of moments that life traverses but as points of decision. Each moment is an intersection of what has been with what is to be. The way this intersection occurs is determined through the way in which I set my priorities and live out my existence right now. Thus, original temporality encompasses the threefold dimensions (ek- stasies) of my own self-constitution at any moment if I face up to it, and these are the dimensions that are said to underlie the threefold structure of Dasein laid out in the...
first division of Being and Time; seen strictly as dimensions of time viewed as series of pointlike instances, they correspond to past (facticity), future (projection), and present (fallerness).

The middle and later works of Heidegger build upon and expand on these themes with two important adjustments. First, history comes to be seen not primarily as a human occurrence but as a set of shifts in the way that being shows itself; history thus ceases to be seen as a matter of authentic choosing by individuals. Instead, it is seen as “epochal,” as determined primarily through shifts that predominate for all members of a culture in a particular age. Thus, Heidegger becomes interested in the shifts from the way that being (or things in general) showed up for the Greeks, as opposed to the medievals, or for modern Western thinkers. As he began to look more closely at the question of why the world shows itself the way it does, Heidegger still maintained that beings within the world cannot themselves constitute the context out of which they have the being they do. He also continued to believe that differences in the way the world shows itself constitute the most important elements in the ways that we view our lives and the things around us. But increasingly, he came to the view that the way that the world receives the particular essence that it has in a particular age is not due to any decision of Dasein, either individually or collectively. If the way that the world along with the things within it shows up for us is not within our power, then that means that the world or being itself is the true agent in history, and not human beings. It is being itself in its history that sets out the important shifts in the way we think about ourselves, other persons, nonhuman things in the world, the earth itself, and the very possibility of the divine.

Being and Time concentrates upon two forms in which the world presents itself to us: the world of the ready to hand and the present at hand. This led some commentators and critics to the mistaken view that Heidegger set forth (along with the analysis of Dasein) as an exhaustive ontology. Yet even there he had noted that “nature” in the sense of “mother nature,” as a sphere that can inspire the poets, cannot be reduced to either of those kinds of being. As Heidegger began to take up the realm of artworks and poetry, it became clear that they too do not fit into either of those worlds, nor does the realm of the divine. The earlier work had pointed out that the modern scientific orientation on the present at hand had threatened not only to overlook or dismiss the ready to hand, even though the former is merely an abstraction from the latter, but also to cause us to misjudge and omit what we also know about ourselves as very different from ordinary objects within the world.

As Heidegger began to look at the epochs in the history of being, he came to see this reductionist tendency as part of a larger development he calls the essencing, or emergence, of technology. For him, technology is not a set of human practices or even a basic worldview; rather, it is a form of being itself. It does indeed issue in mentalities such as instrumental reason and practices such as those of modern industrial society, but for Heidegger the underlying phenomenon behind such mentalities and practices is to be found in the very structure of being itself. For Heidegger, technology is that form of being in which everything shows up simply as a resource for human
disposal, as raw material (actually possessing the brute characteristics described in modern physical science) that can be manipulated to whatever ends humans choose. What exists are material things that are there for human manipulation and subject to the human will. Ultimately, technology leads to the view that even humans are mere resources, raw material for manipulation, possessing no inherent dignity or special place. Nor is there room for art or God in technology. If all there is is beings as raw material, then there is no being itself. The era of being as technology is the era in which being shows itself in such a way that the very question of being is occluded. Being has withdrawn itself, so that the first step on the way to overcoming technology is to reopen the question of being, to make this withdrawal itself a subject of inquiry. However, if being itself is now seen as the primary agent in history, then humans do not decide simply to make being different but must adopt an attitude of listening or responding to what shows itself in such a way that the space for something new might arise. This attitude of listening and being ready to respond is Gelassenheit (release), in which one would let being be as such and thus prepare the way for overcoming technology.

Along with this comes a new understanding of language, in which we no longer are seen as making language but as responding to language as one way in which being shows itself. Poetic language, as a language in which one is particularly attentive to language as such and thus to the way that being shows itself, takes on a prominent role from this perspective. Heidegger draws special inspiration here from Friedrich Hölderlin, who lamented his times and the absence of the holy as he intoned the hope for a new arrival of the gods and a renewed sense of the earth and the heavens.

In his own efforts to evoke another sense of being, Heidegger became wary of philosophers' abilities to capture being in concepts. Faced with the awareness of the elusiveness of the phenomenon he attempts to point to, Heidegger turned to interpretations of words such as physis and logos employed by the Greeks in what he takes to have been their own efforts to find names for it. He also searches for other names such as Es gibt (There is, or it gives) and Ereignis (the event of appropriation) that, first, evoke a transpersonal sense of the emergence of being as the epochal framework that provides the space for anything to emerge or be prevented from emerging in a certain age, and that also envisage an alternative to technology. For in an age mindful of being as such, there would be room for an alternative to technology, which sees humans as only dictating what things are and can be used as resources. In this alternative way or stance, each thing could emerge in its ownness (Eigenheit), and humans would be mindful of their limitations. It is in preparation for such a turn that the later Heidegger pursued his project of the thinking of being in his later works.

Heidegger exerted a powerful influence from the start. Even before Being and Time, his Marburg lectures made a deep impression upon the theologian Rudolf Bultmann, the young Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Hannah Arendt. Early readers of Being and Time were drawn by the emotive language and the powerful account of such phe-
nomena as anxiety, death, and authenticity that provided the spark for much of early French existentialism, especially for Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Through the French existentialist readings, Heidegger was introduced to a large number of American readers, who saw his work primarily in terms of existentialist concerns with authentic existence and rejection of modern mass society. Heidegger's presence played a large role in the final demise of Neo-Kantianism as a powerful movement in Germany and shifted the emphasis in phenomenology away from Husserl and toward his own work and the issues raised there. Taken together with work by Jaspers, Heidegger's work helped establish new movements in existential psychology, best known through Binswanger. Through Gadamer, Heidegger influenced hermeneutics, now an international philosophical movement. In recent years in America, the links between the early Heidegger and pragmatism have been recognized by a range of scholars, and the relevance of Heidegger's work for cognitive science has been pointed out above all by Hubert Dreyfus.

The later Heidegger's epochal thinking has been decisive for a range of French thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida. For many in Italy, France, and America, Heidegger's attempt to overcome the traditional methods and concepts of philosophy inspired them to seek a new way to philosophize, much more akin to literature and mythic forms of expression—so much so that much of what is currently called 'Continental philosophy' in North America refers not just to figures and themes but to a style of philosophizing modeled after Heidegger's later essays. Most recently, Heidegger's critique of technology has served as a source for some of the most sweeping and profound efforts in environmental philosophy, providing a secular framework that calls into question the entire modern project of technology and material domination of nature and looks to concepts such as Ereignis for a radically different framework for thinking about environmental issues. Finally, within philosophical scholarship itself, Heidegger's readings of the Greeks, medieval philosophy, Kant and the German idealists, and Nietzsche still give rise to numerous important and original attempts to read these traditional figures in new ways. All of these developments continue in spite of renewed discussion about the significance of Heidegger's personal involvement with National Socialism during his tenure from 1933 to 1945 as the first rector of the University of Freiburg under the Nazi regime, which has raised questions about the relationships among Heidegger's political views, his character, and his philosophy.

Nevertheless, with the ongoing appearance and reception of a substantial body of new work by Heidegger in the *Gesamtausgabe*, his influence is likely to continue to increase during the coming decades.

**Bibliography**


CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Our discussion of Continental philosophy of science is here limited in that philosophers who embrace analytic philosophy, logical positivism or logical empiricism, pragmatism, and Popperianism have been discussed above in chapter 8. The same is true for what Foucault and Derrida have contributed to philosophy of science, which is touched on below.

Within this circumscribed field, then, the ideas of Pierre Duhem had a profound influence on a number of twentieth-century scholars. As a physicist, Duhem (1861–1916) focused on thermodynamics. Later, he turned to the history of astronomy and to physics, and his research there prepared him for his work in philosophy. In this area, *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory* (1906) is his most important publication. In it, Duhem clearly separates physics from philosophy but does not adopt a negative attitude in regard to metaphysics. In his view, history shows that physical theories are not able to teach us anything about the very nature of physical reality; they do not genuinely explain natural phenomena. A physical theory is, rather, a system of mathematical propositions deduced from a small number of principles, with the aim of representing as simply, as completely, and as exactly as possible a whole domain of experimental laws. This position brought him close to the positivist and conventionalist views of both Mach and Jules Henri Poincaré. In developing these basic ideas in detail, Duhem paid little attention to the experimental side of physics.

Henri Bergson (1859–1941) was also highly influential on European philosophers before World War II. One of his first publications, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Time and free will; 1889), was directed against the so-called psychology of association and contributed much to its decline. *Matière et mémoire* (Matter and memory; 1897) was meant to show the independence of the psychical from the physical. His most important work, *L’évolution créatrice* (Creative evolution; 1907), contains his metaphysics. Yet it, too, has had a deep influence on the philosophy of the sci-