

## Hiç, Metafizik, Nihilizm

### Özet

Bu makalede, Heidegger'in nihilizmi metafizi in, metafiziksel Varlık deneyiminin, özsel boyutu olarak kavrayı nı tetkik ediyor, ve akabinde, bu olguya Heidegger'in ne tür kar ılıklar verdi ini ele alıyoruz. Heidegger nihilizmi metafiziksel dü ünme biçimi içinde köklenmi olarak dü ünür, bu nedenledir ki metafizik ve nihilizm asli bir özde lik arzederler. Çerçevesi içerisinde Varlık'ın, açık veya örtük olarak, sanattan bilime, Batı kültürünün tüm sahalarında, deneyimlenip, ifadelendirildi i bu dü ünme biçimi bize Batı gelene inin derin tarihini ya da hareketini vermektedir. Nihilizm metafizik için esas olan varolanlara dayalı dü ünü ün hükümranlı ndan ne et eder. Bu ise, Hiç'in, gizlenme boyutu olarak, asli bir unsuru oldu u Varlık'ın gizlenme-açılmaya dayalı karakterinin (hakikati) kaybedilmesini beraberinde getirir.

### Anahtar Sözcükler

Varlık, Hiç, metafizik, nihilizm, Batı gelene i

## Nothing, Metaphysics, Nihilism

### Abstract

In this article, we explore Heidegger's understanding of nihilism as the essential dimension of metaphysics, of metaphysical experience of Being, and in the following, we address his responses to it. Heidegger takes nihilism as rooted in the metaphysical way of thinking, hence metaphysics and nihilism standing in a primordial identity. Such metaphysical way of thinking as a framework in which Being is experinced and articulated, explicitly or implicitly in all areas of Western culture, from art to science, gives us the deep history or movement of Western tradition. Nihilism grows out of the hegemony of the entitative vision definitive for metaphysics that involves the loss of un-concealing character (truth) of Being, of which Nothing, as concealment dimension, is an essential element.

### Key Words

Being, Nothing, metaphysics, nihilism, Western tradition

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The principal goal of this article is to interconnect the three issues in Heidegger's thought, 1) the question of Nothing<sup>2</sup> 2) the question of metaphysics 3) the question of nihilism, on the basis of the overarching question, the question of Being. This points toward the phase Heidegger's thought has entered after *Being & Time*. Roughly put, one significant change draws attention: Heidegger abandons existential analysis (*Daseinsanalytik*, the focus of *Being & Time*) in favor of a growing interest in history and metaphysics (as the history of Being). A talk of meaning (of Being, of human existence) is replaced by a talk of the truth of Being (*Wahrheit des Seins*), while metaphysics is viewed as the historically intensifying eclipse of this truth. In this sense, metaphysics is nihilism deeply effective in the Western history as a tradition starting with the late Greek age. Nihilism means that it is not the truth of Being but the truth of beings that rules (in human comportment towards Being) and does that as a history in which the question of Being is never truly raised, never realised in its emergency (*Not*).

However, if all forms of disclosure of Being are essentially historical (1967: § 72, § 73, § 74), and Being in such history is determined by metaphysics as something sunk in oblivion (*Vergessenheit*), then the question of Being must be set in focus as an encounter with metaphysics, primarily as a history (tradition). For this, one needed to transform the questioning developed in *Being and Time*. Thus Heidegger comes to realise that the question of Being can best be understood and posed by situating it in an ontologically conceived historical context, the historical context of Western ontological texts. Actually this was nothing more than the radicalization of the project of *Destruktion in Being and Time* (1967: § 6). Indeed, Heidegger's thought after *Being and Time* can be interpreted as an investigation into and confrontation with metaphysics, and, to that same extent, with nihilism itself.

Initially, metaphysics is viewed basically in a Kantian way, i.e as a general condition of being human, as a "transcendental" happening in *Dasein*. From the 1930s onwards, more specifically with *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), history gains foreground in the interpretation of metaphysics (as informed with some Spenglerian pessimism, then prevalent in the German intellectual circles). Metaphysics becomes the key word, say, revealing the mysteries of Western decline (*Untergang des Abendlandes*). It signifies the Western ontological paradigm which guides shifting historical epochs (as shifting understandings of Being) in each of which "fallenness" gets increasingly intensified. Now, Heidegger's opposition to metaphysics is so radical and decisive that it characterizes his middle and later philosophy. Historical impact of metaphysics on humanity happens in such a way that it drives away all authentic possibilities of meaning. This is because its horizon is thoroughly guided by an emptied and dead (abstract, ossified) Being (that is, Being presupposed as entitiness, *Seiendheit*) which in turn is responsible for the Western life as a life devoid of meaning and decision. Put another way, metaphysics is nihilistic. Nihilism is the inner attitude, the

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<sup>2</sup> Heidegger's word is *das Nichts*. To distinguish *das Nichts* from *die Nichtigkeit*, which is quite important in *Being & Time*, we will render the former as "Nothing" (with the uppercase) and the latter as "nothingness". Nothing is related to Being itself and must in each case be understood in relation to Being itself, while nothingness refers to (in *Being & Time*) finitude and the ontological lack which is the essential ground of all ways of Being for *Dasein*. Sometimes I will use "nihil" to designate both.

hidden horizon of metaphysical interpretation of Being. Nihilism then emerges as a basically historical question, indeed the defining question of Western ontological tradition (1999a: 206, 210, 211, 216; 1977a: 218).

Critique of “theoretical attitude” (*theoretische Verhalten*) in *Being & Time* ends up as an ever deepening critique of metaphysics. As we know from *Being & Time*, “Theoretical attitude” as such is the source of confused problems (e.g the problem of external world) and of the forgottenness of Being in the Western tradition in that it remains blind to the disclosedness of Being (hence, misses the phenomenon of the world, the finitude of Dasein, the primordial sense of truth) but focuses exclusively on beings already lighted up thanks to such disclosedness. It takes all entities as *vorhanden* (present-at-hand), that is, “merely standing there” shorn of all practical/ temporal/ existential significance. Put in the idiomatic of early Heidegger (who is heavily influenced by Dilthey), it de-vitalizes life, i.e decontextualizes Being-in-the-world. We might say it is an inauthentic/fallen interpretation of Being.

To understand the transition from theoretical viewpoint to metaphysics, one should view metaphysics as the theoretical viewpoint wholly historicalized, i.e determined with a historical content and structure, which Heidegger takes in the sense, determined by the Greek experience of Being that is crystallized in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Enchanted by the presence of beings, Greeks have been lost in a presence-centred vision on entities and forgot the a priori happening which made such presence possible, namely the disclosure of Being itself. If (1) such a priori happening is a temporal phenomenon, (2) Dasein is a temporally structured openness (*Da*) for it, (3) finitude and mortality as *Sein zum Tode* is the ground of temporality, and (4) such ground (finitude) is actually the abyss of ground (*Ab-grund*) in Dasein, then all presence of entities is bound up with an anticipation of absence (non-being, nothingness) as temporalizing Dasein: Dasein by standing in the *Ab-grund*, by being an entity of *Ab-grund*, by virtue of its “uncanniness”, is related to meaning, makes sense of things. *Da* actually proves to be the site of *Ab-grund* and only by way of this it is the site of transcendence.<sup>3</sup> *Ab-grund* is determined (*bestimmt*) by the voice (*Stimme*) of Nothing which manifests itself in the mood (*Stimmung*), *Angst* as Dasein’s most disclosive and thus distinguished relation to Being. The role of “nihil” (as Nothing/absence) is essential for any form of presence of entities. As *Being & Time* suggests, if it is embraced by an act of resolution (“*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*”), authentic meanings and possibilities are opened for humans (1967: 262-267, 302-310).

Accordingly, metaphysics forgets “*nihil*” at the heart of human life and of the disclosure of Being, and gets absorbed in the presentness of entities (*Anwesenheit*), i.e in the given/disclosed entities, and never questions how they are *already* disclosed in the first instance, i.e how we can have an understanding of what it means to be in the first place, as prior to and essential for our engagement with entities. Heidegger suggests that bringing the *nihil* to the light is, however, capable of revealing such question. “*Nihil*” has two mutually corresponding aspects in Heidegger 1) as *Nichtigkeit* (i.e nothingness): it belongs to Dasein and signifies the essential ground in which Dasein finds itself as a thrown but never accomplishable project, viz. finitude and

<sup>3</sup> For the theme of *Ab-grund*, transcendence and Dasein, see Heidegger’s treatise “Vom Wesen des Grundes” (1976: 123-175): “On the Essence of Ground” (1998: 97-135).

ontological lack as clarified in *Being & Time*. To say that nothingness is the essential ground of all ways of Being for Dasein is simply to say that Dasein is groundless (abysmal, *abgründig*). *Nichtigkeit* thus refers to the groundlessness of Da-sein. 2) as *Nichts* (i.e. Nothing): it belongs to Being itself. Nothing stands for the concealment dimension of Being: it is not simple negativity, but Being itself as No-thing, that is, not something entitative. *Nichtigkeit* is an occurrence, a disclosure of Being as *Nichts*. Such occurrence is basic for all meaning and possibility for Dasein without, yet, providing any ground or certainty.

It follows that, for Heidegger, Nothing offers a revealing perspective to delve into the inner character of metaphysics and to expose its marked tendency to “congeal” Being. Indeed, metaphysics has come about when the Greek thinking has congealed Being in theory, in the steel net of concepts, that is, has experienced it as “constant presence” (*beständige Anwesenheit*). For ossifying Being, exclusion of Nothing plays a specially functional role. Because in doing so, temporal character of Being (*a-letheia*) becomes ruled out. Heidegger’s basic position, thus, seems to amount roughly to this claim: nihilism is rooted in the metaphysical omission of Nothing from thinking. If and only if Nothing becomes an explicit matter for thinking again, then Being in its fundamental difference from beings (ontological difference) can be brought into the area of thinking, only then there may arise the possibility of an authentic path from it beyond entities to Being itself.

Now it is time to provide a fuller characterization of Nothing (*das Nichts*) and metaphysics chiefly on the basis of the texts (1) “Was Ist Metaphysik?” (1929), “Nachwort zu “Was ist Metaphysik”” (1943) and “Einleitung zu “Was ist Metaphysik”” (1949), (2) *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1935), and then examine the spectre of nihilism deeply pervaded in these texts, in the light of the article, “Zur Seinsfrage” (1955) which is written in a dialogue with Ernst Jünger’s ideas on nihilism.

In the provocative lecture, “What is Metaphysics?”, Heidegger moves with many of the theses made in *Being & Time* concerning *Angst*, *Befindlichkeit*, death, Dasein. However it is no longer the nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*) of *Being & Time* as finitude of Dasein that is in the fore-ground. Rather Heidegger now dwells on the discourse of *das Nichts* (Nothing) conceived as Being itself as “concealed”. This is consonant with Heidegger’s growing concentration on the *Sache selbst*, Being itself. Heidegger in his philosophical itinerary has ventured many “paths” to such core issue of thinking, and for him the “path-character” of (non-theoretical, transformational) experience of ontological thinking is more essential than mere ideas formulated about Being (hence the motto of Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe*, “*Wege, nicht Werke*”). And in “What is Metaphysics?”, Heidegger attempts at a thinking of Being via the route of Nothing.

First of all, Heidegger’s phenomenology of Nothing in “What is Metaphysics?” draws upon and expands on his analysis of finitude in *Being & Time*. According to Heidegger, Dasein’s belonging to *Sein-zum-Tode* already means Dasein’s intimate connection with Nothing, Dasein’s “thrownness” (read, existence) into “the arena of Nothing” (read, *Da*). Thus while Dasein escapes from death and remains insensitive to his movement toward death in its average everydayness in which it is sunk into the

world of *Das Man*, Dasein actually avoids facing Nothing.<sup>4</sup> When, here and there, at rare moments, Dasein experiences the terror of nothing, it lives *Angst* (essential anxiety, or dread). *Angst* is Dasein's ontologically most revealing attunement or disposedness (*Befindlichkeit*) in the world, because it is informed by the pure seriousness of the terror of Nothing. *Angst* demands "decision" to be made about one's existence, a decision which would be decisive for one's future projection in the light of which things would appear in their proper weight (i.e authentically). This contrasts with the indecision ("staggering") of fallenness. Normally and ordinarily, Dasein is in "fallenness", i.e sticks to the manifestness of beings while forgetting the source of such manifestness (that is, the revelation of Being itself). Being becomes an issue for Dasein only in the face of Nothing/ death; only when Dasein becomes "aware" of its inherent finitude, Dasein questions the meaning of Being: the question, "what is it all about?", becomes pressing. But this fundamental experience does not (and cannot) come through rational reflection of any sort (through distantiated contemplation, that is, metaphysics), but through "basic moods" (*Grundstimmungen*) such as *Angst*, boredom, wonder. Among them, *Angst* is distinguished in that it reveals Nothing, that is, it is *the* mood of death, in which what is other than beings comes to attention. Nothing, thus as No-thing (i.e nothing entitative), belongs to Being, to what is *other* than beings. Heidegger writes, "The Nothing is not just the source of the counterconcept of *beings*; rather, it primordially belongs to the essence of Being itself" (1976: 115). One may well conclude Nothing (and its mood, *Angst*) is finitude put into work.

Indeed, Dasein, concretely taken, is this temporality itself: time (as temporality) lies at the core of Dasein's own Being. "More primordial than man is the finitude of Dasein in him" ("Ursprünglicher als der Mensch ist die Endlichkeit des Daseins in ihm; 1991: 229). This implies that Dasein's experience of Being, i.e disclosure of Being at the openness (*Da*) of Dasein, remains temporal, that is, finite. Because Being is simply *not*, without its relation to Dasein, Being itself too is marked by finitude. This is another way of saying that Being is not constant presence (not *Ousia*, not *Seiendheit*, in contradistinction to the whole Western tradition), but finite disclosure. And this is the case because Dasein is first and foremost a "thrownness" into the realm of Nothing. The pre-theoretical impact of Nothing in the mood of *Angst* reveals to Dasein the unfamiliar dimension of Being and the fact that there is more to Being than simple presence. Dasein is drawn beyond the presence, happens as transcending the present. This happening (transcendence as Dasein's transcending the present) is Dasein's essence: Dasein's transcending what is present in such a way that it lives into a future/possibility-oriented disclosure of meanings (i.e existence) means its transcendence *towards* the absent. The back-ground of all forms of presence, of appearance of things is the hidden and unfamiliar dimension, absence or No-thing<sup>5</sup>. Insofar as Dasein exists (i.e ek-sists), Dasein remains related to such back-ground of presence, to the realm of No-thing, which Heidegger calls "*Hineingehaltenheit in das*

<sup>4</sup> For Heidegger's detailed treatment of *Das Man*, see 1967: §§ 27, 35.

<sup>5</sup> This unfamiliar dimension, this realm of strangeness and hiddenness Heidegger calls variously in various texts: No-thing (*Nichts*, in "*Was ist Metaphysik?*"), abyss (*Ab-grund*, in "*Vom Wesen des Grundes*"), earth (*Erd*, in "*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*"), concealment (*Verborgenheit*, especially in "*Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*"), expropriation (*Enteignis*, in the *Beiträge*).

*Nichts*” (1976: 115). On the basis of this alone Dasein is allowed to engage with the presence of entities. Then temporality is a dynamic relationship, say a symbiosis of presence and absence occurring in the “*Da*” of Dasein. All disclosure of Being, all presence points towards a primordial (i.e prior and basic) “closedness”, a primordial absence. This way of taking things brings to focus the absential dimension of Being as something vital to it. It is this “primordial closedness” (or hiddenness) which is the actual sense of *das Nichts* in Heidegger. In the article *Nachwort zu “Was Ist Metaphysik?”* (1943) Heidegger writes “The Nothing, as other than beings, is the veil of Being” (1998: 238). In this sense, Nothing is already an indispensable dimension of the emergence of meaning, that is, of human life, while its appropriation is imperative when it comes to the possibility of an authentically meaningful human life determined by an authentic sense of Being (i.e primordial togetherness of Being and Nothing). Metaphysics is in one sense an obviation of Nothing and nihilism the resulting loss of Nothing.

Accordingly, Heidegger identifies Nothing as the primordial concealedness of Being. The idiom of concealment (*Verbergung/Verborgenheit*) and unconcealment (*Unverbergung/ Unverborgenheit*) of Being bears its stamp on Heidegger’s writings from 1930 on, simultaneously with his critique of metaphysics. It seems that Heidegger, with the essays like “On the Essence of Truth” (1930), “The Essence of Truth: Plato’s Cave Allegory and the Theaetetus” (1931-32), radicalizes the implications of the conception of truth (*Wahrheit* as *A-letheia*) developed in *Being & Time* (see 1967: § 44) and before. From beginning to end, Heidegger’s meditations on truth is an inseparable element of his meditations on Being and his encounter with metaphysics. Thus, in the writings belonging to his middle and late period, Heidegger often considers metaphysics and nihilism as the destruction (*Zerstören, Verstören*) of *A-letheia* in theoretical reflection, for theory has no sense of the radical mystery essential to *A-letheia*. He, in these texts, discusses how the loss of the radical mystery of Being due to the sway of metaphysics, is fundamental to nihilism, how *A-letheia* (truth as such, the truth of Being) gives way to *homoiosis* (the ontic truth, correspondance, correctness). Taken literally, *A-letheia* means unhiddenness as well as becoming aware of something which has previously gone unnoticed. This literal sense guides Heidegger in his binding up truth and Being. To have a glimpse of the phenomenon of *A-letheia* in Heidegger’s thought, let us briefly examine his account of truth in *Being & Time* and its deepening in the two significant articles mentioned above, for without taking Heidegger’s idea of truth into account, his critique of metaphysics is simply not understandable, and neither is his thesis concerning nihilism.

Truth in the primordial sense is the disclosedness of the world (world of finite and practical meanings) with which we are immediately/practically familiar. In fact, Heidegger uses four key expressions in the same context; the disclosedness of the world (*Erschlossenheit der Welt*), the disclosedness of Dasein (*Erschlossenheit des Daseins*), the disclosedness or manifestness of entities (*Erschlossenheit des Seiende* or *Offenbarkeit des Seiende*) and disclosedness of Being (*Erschlossenheit von Sein*). It is however the last one which is of pivotal significance for Heidegger’s account of truth. I shall briefly explain.

The basis of intelligibility for anything Dasein does is an already disclosed world as the immediately accessible space of back-ground meanings and assumptions which underlies and makes possible Dasein's all sorts of engagement with entities. Only in virtue of being situated, in an ineliminable way, in a world, i.e in a world of back-ground meanings and assumptions, Dasein can encounter other entities as meaningful (or not) and make assertions about them. Such world is a holistic, unitary space of practical/existential meanings. No assertion can make sense in complete isolation, i.e as free from a disclosed world, but presupposes it, in subtle ways, for its truth. Therefore, Heidegger considers the idea of truth logic works with (that is, truth as the truth of assertions) as derivative truth which he names "mere correctness" (*Richtigkeit*), because it depends on an already disclosed world as the framework of everyday intelligibility. So, the true context of clarifying the essence of truth is neither logic (the level of assertions) nor epistemology (the level of subjectivity), but ontology (the phenomenological level of disclosure of Being) (see 1967: 230).

Insofar as disclosedness of world means disclosedness of Dasein, Dasein is the disclosive entity, the loci of truth, of *a-letheia* (as indicated above) such that truth "*ist nur, sofern und solange Dasein ist*". Heidegger, in his writings written on Truth in its fundamental relation to Being, focuses on *a-letheia* in its literal sense i.e as unhiddenness or unconcealedness. Its non-literal sense (i.e truth as correctness) represents only the rupture from the essence of truth, the oblivion from the original (*ursprünglich*) belonging together of Being (*Sein*) and truth (*Wahrheit*) (1967: 196).

As noted above, the disclosedness or unconcealedness of Being (*Unverborgenheit des Seins*) is the principal focus of Heidegger's understanding of truth. This sense alone refers to *a-letheia*, the essence of truth, and makes other senses possible. Unconcealment of Being first opens a world of meaning for Dasein in which entities are manifested in this or that way and Dasein is disclosed to itself within a certain self-understanding. Heidegger notes that "Unconcealedness of Being first makes possible the manifestness of beings" (1998: 103). The former, i.e *a-letheia*, refers to ontological truth, while the latter can be named as ontic truth. Ontological truth is the essence (*Wesen*) of truth in the sense that it makes possible the latter. *A-letheia*, ontological truth, unveiledness of Being itself is what Heidegger, in 1930s, calls the truth of Being (*Wahrheit des Seins*) and takes later on as the sole matter of thinking. Without a proper inkling into the import of this theme for Heidegger's thinking, his work after *Being & Time*, i.e his critique of metaphysics, remains simply not understandable. Metaphysics remains outside the possibility of an experience of the truth of Being for various reasons. One of them is the understanding of truth that guides implicitly the ontological focus of metaphysics in its approach to beings: it covers up the truth of Being. This understanding of truth is based on ontic truth, (i.e on the manifestness of beings) by tacitly presupposing that truth is a matter of propositions that succeed in corresponding to entities. It takes the derivative sense of truth (correctness) as truth *itself*.

Heidegger argues that Western (or degenerated Greek) logical notion of truth, *Richtigkeit*, builds on "correctness of representation" (*Richtigkeit des Vorstellens*). The latter is actually the metaphysical notion of truth, that is, has arisen, in the late Greek age, in particular in the thought of Plato, out of a metaphysical experience of Being as

Being of beings (*idea* and *ousia*), rather than as Being itself. Because metaphysics is an entity (or presence) centred thinking, Being comes to attention only as Being of beings (as presentness, *Seiendheit*, *Ousia*) and the only thing thinking is supposed to do is a correct representation of entities, that is, forming a correspondance (*homoiosis*, *adaequatio*) between mind and entities. What is more, if it is a matter of re-presenting the entities, this can be done only through the perspective of now (“the present”) in which future becomes not-yet-present and past no-longer-present. This amounts to the collapse of the “original temporal structure” (temporality) with metaphysics, and with this, the possibility of authentic meaning. By contrast, temporality is at work in the essential sense of truth, *a-letheia*. *A-letheia* then, as opposed to metaphysics, is the moment of authentic meaning.

The original Greek experience of Being and thereby of truth, revealed in the literal sense of this word, *a-letheia*, needs then to be re-experienced: Being, coming to presence, as an event of *a-letheia*, shines forth from its prior absence, which is not mere absence but really its “self-concealment.”<sup>6</sup> Every manifestation or presencing of beings as such and as a whole rests on and issues from the prior dimension of revelation of Being itself, which, yet, in favor of the manifestness of these beings, conceals itself. So this un-concealing movement of Being, this mystery, as *a-letheia*, as conditioning all coming to presence and withdrawing from presence on the part of entities, is the very character of Being: Being itself remains intrinsically a mystery, and the happening of this mystery (*a-letheia*) is central to all ways of our making sense of things (i.e. meaning). In the *Contributions*, for example, Heidegger interprets *a-letheia*, the concealing-unconcealing movement of Being, as a counter-movement, an interplay (*Zuspiel*) and the world as its arena (1989: 169).

Truth and Nothing, hence, are connected: it is this absential dimension of Being (*lethe*, the primordial hiddenness) which is what Heidegger means by the word, *das Nichts* (Nothing) and which Heidegger, in the light of ontological difference, urges us to bring into the area of thinking, to make a question for thinking, as an indispensable part of a thinking about Being itself. Being forgetful of the ontological difference and preoccupied with beings, metaphysics (the sovereignty of intellect, *Verstand* or *ratio*) flees from *Nihil*, whereas the sort of thinking Heidegger urges us to undertake appropriates the ontological difference and, simultaneously, the Nothing as belonging to Being itself.

Man belongs to “Nothing”, because man is the *Da*, the loci of truth (disclosedness), the open space for the happening of unconcealment as an emergence from concealment, from the dimension of No-thing. Heidegger, in this connection, holds that concealment is the heart of unconcealment and the concealing-unconcealing interplay of Being is the very truth of Being itself. Genuine Nothing as concealment is a happening (*nichten*) at the heart of Being. Let us take three different remarks on Nothing from three different works: (1) “Nothing is neither negative nor is it a “goal”; rather, it is the innermost trembling (*Erzitterung*) of Being itself, and therefore more real (*seiender*) than any entity (*Seiende*)” (1989: 266) (2) “Being (*Seyn*) is Nothing. The Nothing nullifies (*nichtet*). Nullifying refuses every explanation of entities with respect to

<sup>6</sup> Hence, Heidegger’s hyphenation *A-letheia* to stress the *lethe* dimension as indispensable. We write it hyphenated to indicate this point.



entities. Refusal however grants the clearing (*Lichtung*) within which entities can go in and out, can be manifested and concealed as entities. The Nothing inspires dread (*ent-setzt*). And this dread out of entities and away from every appeal to them is the original (*anfänglich*) attuning (*Stimmen*) through which human beings (and the gods) are *determined*" (1998: 168). (3) "Nothing is absence that interrupts presence and thus 'nullifies' (*nichtet*) it. Insofar as Nothing 'nullifies', it confirms itself as a distinctive presence, veiling itself as such presence" (1976: 402-403; 1998: 304). That is to say, the happening of Nothing (*Nichten des Nichts*) is the event of Dasein's transcendence, Dasein's going beyond all beings which constitutes its essence. But it is this going beyond beings which makes the room, in the first place, for the revelation of beings. Entities rise into presence, into the level of sense through Dasein's transcendence which is made possible by *Ent-setzung*, by the retreat of the entitative ground beneath Dasein's feet, i.e. by the happening of Nothing as a happening of concealment at the heart of Being.

Nothing, consequently, has an ontological privilege because of its "disconcerting" power for a thinking absorbed in beings. Once more, the above quotation brings to attention the essential reciprocity between Being and Dasein which Heidegger, in an interview<sup>7</sup>, emphasizes as the chief trait of his philosophy: the fundamental happening in Being itself (that is, the happening of Nothing, *nichten*, as the innermost trembling of Being itself) corresponds to a distinguishing ontological happening in Dasein as *Angst*. Nothing, as the cause of essential anxiety (*Angst*), shatters our usual and paradigmatic, unquestioned and unreflected understanding of Being as "permanence in presence". Therefore it has a very authentic potential to call attention to the true essence, i.e. truth, of Being as the inseparable twofold of concealing-revealing counter-movement.

There is again a crucial kinship between death and nothing for "death is the shrine of the nothing" (2000a: 180), a dimension where the presence giving (*wesend*) force of concealment dwells: "Death as the shrine of Nothing is the harbour of Being" (2000a: 180). As a result, it seems Heidegger's talk of Nothing fits together with his talk of authenticity and its methodological significance in *Being & Time*. Accordingly, appropriative anticipation (*Vorlaufen*) of death/Nothing (rather than mere anticipation) is of supreme ontological significance in that it is "individuating"/"authenticating" for Dasein by way of dissolving Dasein's *Verfallen* (absorption in *das Man*, supremacy of the standpoint of the present, self-evidence of the beings). No-thing which determines Dasein's *Angst* thus reveals the groundlessness of beings and uproots the self-evidence of the constant presence (of Being of entities). With the experience of No-thing, as *Angst*, one is freed from the yoke of beings and comes to an awareness that beings do not have any real ground in themselves, thereby are unable to provide any assurance and foundation for human life. And it is exactly here that metaphysics, as the Western way of thinking, becomes questionable in its whole essence.

<sup>7</sup> "The fundamental thought of my thinking is precisely that Being, or the manifestation of Being, *needs* human beings and that, vice versa, human beings are only human beings if they are standing in the manifestation of Being." "Martin Heidegger in Conversation," in (Neske and Kettering 1990: 82).

Nothing, in Heidegger's sense, as suggested, refers to the primordial hiddenness of Being, the unfamiliar absence dimension which reveals itself in the mood of *Angst* itself and which lies at the heart of all un-concealment of Being. Nothing in this sense deserves special respect. But "respecting nothing" as Polt puts it, "does not mean falling prey to nihilism, but allowing Dasein and Being (*Sein*) to come into their own" (Polt 2001: 60). Admittedly, it might sound nihilistic to welcome Nothing into the area of thoughtful questioning. (Not surprisingly, many have accused the basic position of "What is Metaphysics?" of nihilism.) For Heidegger, however, just the reverse is the case: it is antidote to the disguised hegemony of nihilism in metaphysics, to the underlying indifference to Being as a question of thinking. This involves, however, a direct and thinkerly ('*denkerische*') encounter with the question of nothing. By contrast, metaphysics avoids seeing *nihil* in the face and precisely hereby it becomes the source (*Wesen*) of nihilism. Once, Heidegger intimates, a thinking directly encounters Nothing and experiences it as an explicit matter, it can no longer stay metaphysical, cannot rest on the presence of beings as self-evident and final, but gets drawn to the essential happening of Nothing as Being itself. In that case alone the question of Being shows up as a supremely authentic question. The question of Being and the question of Nothing belong together, are radically inseparable in such a way that in this belonging-together thinking is restored to its original, non-metaphysical essence as a thinking which not merely furnishes propositions but experiences (that is, pays heed to what is directly experienced).

Thus, Being and Nothing are the same. "Pure Being and pure Nothing are therefore the same". This proposition of Hegel's ... is correct" (1998: 94; see also 1997b: 282-283). Here "sameness" (*Selbigkeit*), however, does not connote simple identity as it does in metaphysics. Rather as Heidegger tries to show in some of his discussions on Parmenides and Hegel, "sameness" in its primordial (i.e pre-metaphysical) sense means "belonging together" (*Zusammengehören*). Roughly put, two things belong together when they are bound up with one another, are radically inseparable. This implies that once you discard one of the two same things, the other one can no longer remain *itself*, i.e recedes into insignificance, triviality, forgottenness, in short, into "unbeing". By the same token, if No-thing is dismissed or trivialised by thinking, as is typically done by metaphysics, then Being, too, is driven into unbeing, no longer presences in its original essence, i.e as Being *itself*. The result is: "from its beginning to its completion, the propositions of metaphysics have been strangely involved in a persistent confusion of beings and Being." (1998: 281). Nihilism then appears to be a historically entrenched failure in Western culture, a failure in recognizing this sameness (belonging together, radical inseparability) of Being and Nothing. Nihilism means that Being is no longer *itself*, forced into unbeing, into a nil-status, into a mere "Being of beings". Let us briefly discuss some aspects of this phenomenon as examined in *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

As we pointed out at the outset, the late Greek philosophical experience of Being (Plato and Aristotle) has understood Being as "constant presence", and such experience has been decisive for the Western tradition. One of Heidegger's most important works, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), revolves around this thesis. This might sound some form of idealism: ideas shape up history. Actually, there is a quasi-Hegelian sense to Heidegger's attempt at thinking history and philosophy intrinsically connected through

an inner ontological bond. The inner structure of the Western history can be seen through the philosophical utterances of major thinkers (from Plato up to Nietzsche) and such history is essentially a history of the Western paradigms of understanding of Being. In fact, one can suggest, there is only one paradigm, namely the understanding of Being as “constant presence”: others are simply variations from this paradigm as its hardened forms (*epoché*). Early Greeks had a sense of the disclosure of Being as basing on and springing from a former hiddenness such that they named such experience with the word, *a-letheia*. This was a fundamental experience for the whole motivation of Heraclitus’ thinking, for instance: with extreme wonder, once, he is reported to have uttered “*Physis* loves to hide”<sup>8</sup>. *Physis* could be rendered as the happening of “coming to light”, “standing in the light”, “emerging”, “shining”, “radiation”, “coming to presence”, “presencing” etc. *Logos*, on the other hand, refers to the language dimension of the same phenomenon. It was Being as coming to language (or to lingual presence), the essential disclosure behind language, and as such “the foundation of language” and therewith the human essence. While early Greeks perceived the inner essence of this coming to presence in its intrinsic finitude, as resided in, issuing from and withdrawing into a more primordial and constitutive concealedness / absence / unintelligibility / closedness, i.e. as *a-letheia*, the post-socratic philosophers tended to treat such coming to presence as permanently standing in presence, as abiding in presence, i.e. as idea and *ousia*: the former designates such standing in presence in terms of the look/vision (1983: 189-190; 2000b: 192-193) and the latter in terms of endurance/already-thereness or presence at hand (1983: 201). In fine, with Plato and Aristotle, Greek (and Western) experience of Being has been alienated to *A-letheia*, assumed the shape of metaphysics.

Accordingly, to repeat, Heidegger is convinced that deep structure of Western history is metaphysics. In “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth”<sup>9</sup>, Heidegger attempts to explore the dimensions of the degeneration of *a-letheia* and the outbreak of metaphysics in Plato. Heidegger contends that metaphysics is motivated by a drive to “see”. But “seeing”, like cognition, is derivative: it rests on the manifestness of beings, which becomes in turn possible on the basis of unhiddenness of Being, i.e. *a-letheia*. Metaphysics has come about as the domination of seeing in the light *a-letheia* itself has granted and this happened in the thought of Plato. With Plato, thinking has turned into “seeing” (*idein*), a seeing which is instinctively and in a peculiar disengaged attitude directed toward the truly real (*idea*), i.e. what is permanent in presence (1998: 155-182). Truth has become a matter of seeing (*idein*) of the visible form (*idea*), a matter of “clarity and constancy of insight into essence” (1998: 229). Seeing of the seen (*idein* of the *idea*) is fulfilled in “correct vision” which is correspondance (*homoiosis*) between seeing (as apprehending/*noein* and asserting/*legein*) and what is seen (*idea*, essence). *A-letheia* (as well as *lethe*, i.e. hiddenness of Being) is lost to thinking, in favor of *homoiosis*. With the loss of (un)hiddenness, truth is no more understood in relation to the real sense of *A-letheia* (as concealing-unconcealing play of Being), but as *homoiosis* that is, as belonging to correct vision (thus to mind) and not to Being itself, even though the word (*A-letheia*) is still retained, and even though in this word still echoes the original Greek experience (i.e. *physis*) as “emergence of the hidden into unhiddenness,

<sup>8</sup> “*Physis kryptesthai philei*”, Heraclitus, fragment 123.

<sup>9</sup> This article, published in 1942, is Heidegger says, actually written in 1930 and presents in a summary form Heidegger’s meditations on truth in the late 1920s.

where unhiddenness itself, as revealing, constitutes the fundamental trait of Being present” (1998: 234). The words like *physis*, *a-letheia*, *logos* which had been the revelations of the original Greek wonder of Being have also been distorted through mistranslation in the process of the consolidation of metaphysical tradition. *Physis* has become *natura* (nature), *a-letheia veritas* (correctness), and *Logos assertio* (statement). And we see here a unitary phenomenon in which the structure of metaphysics has come about and been put into work in Roman, Christian and modern contexts. In sum, “The transformation of *physis* and *logos* into idea and assertion has its inner ground in a transformation of the essence of truth as unconcealment into truth as correctness” (2000b: 203; 1983: 198).

Accordingly, metaphysics has come about as a shift of focus from *a-letheia* (truth of Being) to correctness or correspondance (truth of beings), and the latter, metaphysics, as having its fate already decided in the former. *A-letheia* then names the beginning, indeed the lost beginning of Western history, in which Being occurs to early Greek humanity as *physis*. A beginning (*Anfang*) is the focal and vital moment of a history as a momentous happening (*Geschehen*) of Being. Being happens in the sense of *Wesen*: Being is *not*, but rather *west*. Beginnings are thus original (*anfaenglich*) and essential (*wesentlich*). History (*Geschichte*) in its original level, i.e in terms of beginnings, alone can be adequately understood. A beginning in turn belongs to a leap (*Sprung*) and takes its all movement from this leap as a primordial (*urspruenglich*) happening of Being itself. A beginning as a leap thus is momentous but as such short-lived. The Greek beginning, as indicated, is marked by an understanding of Being as *Physis*, which was pre-metaphysical. Its short life among the early Greeks is quite commensurate with the long process of decline its degenerated form, constant presence (*idea/ ousia*), has entailed.<sup>10</sup> Falling progressively outside this Greek beginning, the Western tradition, by necessity, has been a history of living out the (fallen/inauthentic/metaphysical) possibilities inherent in the degeneration of this beginning, thus determined by the onset (*Fortgehen*) of metaphysical understanding of Being (“constant presence”), from the ground up.

In this connection, “understanding of Being” must be conceived in the sense of *Being & Time*: it is not a formulated theory but a tacit framework embedded in our practical engagements. It is not an explicit ontology but the implicit one which in being more radical and essential than the former guides it from the beginning to the end. It is not a said doctrine but the unsaid dimension, the space of back-ground assumptions. As the “unsaid” of a thinker’s thinking it determines the whole focus of, the governing center of, the said in this thinking. If beings are seen only as beings and Being is resorted to only as Being of beings, beings themselves become the whole thing, and thereby become stripped of the meaning dimension (of the prior disclosedness of

<sup>10</sup> One should note that Heidegger’s cult of the (presocratic) Greeks has, largely, not been supported by historical material. However, Heidegger’s overall point in approaching Greeks might be of a different kind. About this, I agree with Julian Young, when he remarks: “What is really important about Heidegger’s Greeks is that they represent a possible *future*, not that they represent an actual past... remarks of the form ‘The Greeks did such-and-such’ are always translatable into statements of the form ‘We could become a community who do such-and-such’ ”. *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life*, Routledge, London and NY, 2003, p.201.

themselves thanks to the happening of Being in the openness of Dasein). Beings become neutral, objective entities suitable for the exercise of *theoria*. Then, the matter for thinking becomes one of capturing the unchanging blueprint, the atemporal structure that governs the presence of entities and explains the intelligibility of things first and for all under a total system. All this becomes possible on the basis of an understanding of Being as “constant presence”. In this understanding, Being is already disclosed as permanence in presence, but such disclosure remains outside the scope of metaphysics which contends itself with what it gives, that is, the entities standing in presence. Metaphysics in this sense “forgets” the source, but nonetheless remains dependent on its gift, the unconcealed entities. Metaphysics signifies this experience of Being and thus the inner (i.e ontological) character of the Western history as history of forgetfulness of Being.

Now, to connect this to the topic of Nothing again, Heidegger holds (in the articles written as introduction and afterword to “What is Metaphysics?”) that metaphysics’ defining focus on presence (of entities) is in perfect agreement with its flight from Nothing, from the “not” of beings, from the absential dimension of Being. As Pöggeler puts it “Nothing is excluded by metaphysics with the tacit objective of assuring the constancy of Being” (Pöggeler 1987: 162). If metaphysical thinking, that is, representation or “the domination of thinking as ratio in the sense of understanding as well as reason” (1983: 187) is exclusively focused upon the Being of beings as “constant presence”, then for it nothing can come into view only as “constant absence”, as something totally negative, as sheer non-Being. As we have already indicated, Nothing is not “*nihil negativum*”. Nothing rather belongs to the concealment of Being as the withdrawal (*Entzug*) of presencing. As absential dimension of presence, it is the veil of Being. Moreover, such concealment (*Verborgenheit*) of Being which conditions all presence (i.e presentness of entities to human understanding) is also sheltering (*Bergende*) in which Being keeps itself in its true character, in its radical mystery as proper to it.<sup>11</sup>

Metaphysics is the hegemony of intellect, *Verstand* or reason, whereas the question of Being can neither be addressed nor be appreciated so far as thinking remains determined by the confines of reason. We can surmise, already from *Being & Time*, the derivative character of reason (of cognition, of theory). Through the question of Nothing, the authority of logic, and therewith, the authority of reason becomes shattered. As we have seen the horizon of the question of Nothing lights up the question of Being. Because the way Being *is* (i.e becomes accessible to Dasein, happens in the openness of Dasein<sup>12</sup>) is captured by the phenomenon and word of *a-letheia* (the original and inseparable belonging together of concealment –lethe- and unconcealment-alethe- of Being), the question of Nothing is a natural component of and a basic

<sup>11</sup> As we will discuss it below more fully in relation to nihilism, (to Heidegger’s insistence that “Metaphysik ist eigentliche Nihilismus”), this refers to the radical mystery of Being as the truth of Being.

<sup>12</sup> For this happening, indeed the basic happening which opens and grounds history, Heidegger uses the verb, *west* (the third singular of *Wesen*). We cannot say Being *is* because Being is not a being. Instead Heidegger says Being essentially happens (*Sein west*). I use “is” above only provisionally.

occurrence in the question of Being. Accordingly, reason is entity-centred, i.e. takes the presence of beings for granted, which are lighted up by a transcendental happening of an understanding of Being (which is actually a “happening of transcendence” as the essence of Dasein, i.e. as Dasein’s intrinsic relatedness to Being and to its disclosure as the disclosure of meaning) and never questions the general ontological framework of the disclosedness of beings. For reason, Being itself never appears in the horizon of questioning. It is in this sense the true form of metaphysics. It is therefore opposed to thinking as thinking of Being. But this opposition is not to be taken in the sense of mere contrariness. It is much more than that. This opposition means the historically entrenched obstructiveness of reason for the occurrence of thinking, for the emergence of the question of Being. As Heidegger writes at the end of the article “Nietzsche’s Word “God is Dead””: “Thinking does not begin until we have come to know that the reason that has been extolled for centuries is the most stubborn adversary of thinking” (2002c: 199). And, Heidegger’s account suggests, as far as reason is the adversary of thinking, it is part of nihilism.

In keeping with what is said about understanding of Being, metaphysics and reason above, metaphysics seems to rest on, what I would call, a “totalitarian vision of reality”. This even entails repercussions at the socio-political level, for example: totalitarian ideologies and regimes of our modern age (from communism to national socialism, including liberalism or liberal democracies), their social engineering policies, total organizing drives, boundless violence (which Heidegger certainly deemed as the revelations of nihilism inherent in metaphysics) have been all disclosed in, guided by, a certain understanding of Being that is alien to the truth of Being, which is precisely the core problem for Heidegger. What is needed is simply to take Being into the area of questioning in the light of ontological difference. Metaphysics is not only entirely incapable and inappropriate to this end, but it also blocks the way to it by blocking the primordial bond between Being and Dasein: “It almost seems the case that metaphysics, because of the way in which it thinks of beings, becomes unknowingly the barrier that refuses human beings the primordial relation of Being to the human essence” (1976: 370; 1998: 281).<sup>13</sup>

In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger suggests that we should venture such questioning through the fundamental metaphysical question, namely “Why are there Beings at all, and why not rather Nothing?”<sup>14</sup> (Leibniz’s question) which exposes the inseparability and belonging together of the question of Being and the question of Nothing. However, in the following works such as *Contributions to Philosophy, Besinnung* and *Metaphysik und Nihilismus*, Heidegger comes to see that *die metaphysische Grundfrage* also belongs to metaphysics in taking the question of Being as a question about ground, an ontic question (viz. why-question), that is, via the path of beings: something more radical is required, namely, directly focusing on the question of truth of Being itself in its primordial bond with Dasein (the happening of such questioning thinking itself Heidegger would come to call *Ereignis* in the *Contributions*). But the way to such fundamental question can be undertaken through first posing another

<sup>13</sup> Kaufmann’s translation is slightly altered.

<sup>14</sup> “Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts”. With this question, Heidegger closes “What is Metaphysics?” and opens *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

question (the preliminary question), that is, questioning the understanding of Being which we ourselves currently have: how does it stand with Being?

The preliminary question, Heidegger holds, reveals the inner character of the kind of understanding of Being we currently have as nihilism. Recognizing such nihilism is the first step towards overcoming it, towards questioning the understanding of Being which currently determines the way we make sense of things. The preliminary question, “How does it stand with Being?” involves, in turn, the question of “how it stands with our Dasein in history, of whether we stand in history or merely stagger” (2000b: 217; 1983: 211). “Staggering” is another metaphor for the historical fallenness of the Western humanity, for its sunkness in a deeply rooted alienation to Being, i.e for nihilism. It implies loss of direction, goal and sense, i.e a state without decision. Thus “seen metaphysically, *we are staggering*. Everywhere we are underway amid beings, and yet we no longer know how it stands with Being” (2000b: 217; 1983: 211). This is intrinsically nihilism, because Being itself becomes a matter of triviality for it, an empty and indeterminate word, something already self-evident hence needing no further inquiry, a philosophically uninteresting abstraction, an issue of pointless confusion which can be removed only when one deals with Being in a logical manner i.e as the copula (“is”) of assertions. “merely to chase after beings in the midst of the oblivion of Being- that is nihilism”<sup>15</sup> (2000b: 217; 1983: 212). Thus conceived nihilism is even the ground of what Nietzsche attacks as nihilism in his book, *The Will to Power*. (2000b: 217; 1983: 212). It is the actual character of the Western understanding of Being, that is, of “the concept of Being that has been accepted up to now” (2000b: 218; 1983: 213). With nihilism, “what is at stake is nothing less than a determination of being-human that springs from the essence of Being (*physis*) that is to be opened up” (2000b: 219; 1983: 213-214). The metaphysical view of Being (i.e nihilism) itself rests on counterposing “Being and thought”, in which an objectifying and reifying relation to Being prevails, whereas the task Heidegger urges should be one of bringing together “Being and time”, in such a way that the latter serves as the explicit perspective (as temporality) for approaching the former (see 2000b: 230-231; 1983: 214-215). Heidegger closes *Introduction to Metaphysics* by referring to the scientific ideal as eclipsing the question of Being. Scientific ideal is a derivative of metaphysical interpretation of Being. From its very inception on, metaphysics remains determined by physics, the degeneration of *physis* into *hypokeimenon*, (the underlying, the already-there) and into *ousia*, “in the sense of abiding in presence” (1976: 266)) as well as by logic (the degeneration of *logos* into *kategoria*). Actually, logic and physics as the true form of metaphysics are intimately connected: the latter has arisen from the secession of *logos* from *physis*. Ironically enough, metaphysics has never been *ta meta ta physika*, that which goes beyond the entities.

As a consequence, Heidegger’s account suggests that metaphysics is nihilism at the deepest level, that is, in its basic comportment towards Being. In metaphysics Being counts for nothing: metaphysics does not take Being as such as an explicit matter, rather when it seems to speak of Being it actually speaks of Being of beings, not of Being *itself*. Metaphysics is structured from the very outset as a quest for the *knowledge* of

<sup>15</sup> “In der Vergessenheit des Seins nur das Seiende betreiben -das ist Nihilismus.”

entities, as a “will to knowledge”<sup>16</sup> (1998: 296; 1976: 393), whereas Being itself is no object for knowledge, nothing representable, nothing suitable for the cognitive mastery. Metaphysics is structurally blind to Being. Being thus expelled from the area of thinking leaves the knowledge driven enterprise of metaphysics without any possibility of authentic meaning. Thus Being (and meaning) abandons humanity in its forgetful/fallen/staggering ways with entities and entities turn emptied: the world is darkened. This is the theme of “abandonment of Being” (*Seinsverlassenheit*) and of “darkening of the world” (further metaphors for the phenomenon of nihilism). In the article “On the Question of Being”, Heidegger argues that nihilism today is “the normal condition of humankind” (1998: 296; 1976: 393). We need to enter into a critical encounter with the essence of nihilism which requires we question in depth “the metaphysical position of the human being” (1998: 296; 1976: 393). In response to Jünger, Heidegger sees “the totalitarian character of work” in the modern world as a manifestation of nihilism and in origin metaphysical. As suggested above, this is part of the “totalitarian vision of reality” inherent in metaphysics (even “reality” itself, from the Medieval *realitas*, namely “thingliness”, is a thoroughly metaphysical concept indicative of a thinking whose sole aim is conquering things or entities.)

Nihilism, the actuality of metaphysics, is consummated in the modern world, thus prevailing in many diverse and hidden forms. The fact that it is consummated makes it unrecognizable, a “condition of normality” in which it hides “unusually broad” potentials for the modern mankind. This is above all the condition of extreme danger, in the vicinity of which perhaps lying the possibility of the sudden emergence of a “planetary catastrophe” (1998: 297; 1976: 394). Hence nihilism is not a modern phenomenon at all, but modernity represents its culmination, its most dangerous consummate stage. Rather as the essence of metaphysics, it is as old as metaphysics itself. Nihilism is rooted in the history (*Geschichte*) of Being (in the Greek beginning) in which Being discloses/destines/sends (*schickt*) itself as a destiny (*Geschick*), as an understanding of Being which reveals entities but in favor of such revelation keeps itself concealed. Accordingly, nihilism is rooted in such concealment which makes entity-focused understanding of Being almost self-evident, thus quite easy for humanity to succumb to. Metaphysics is the general name for the various forms of such sending/destining. Nihilism prevails as our understanding of Being, as a certain unconcealment of Being in which Being remains totally veiled to historical humanity.

“Being and Nothing are not given alongside one another. The one employs the other in a kinship whose essential fullness we have as yet scarcely pondered” (1998: 317; 1976: 419). The possibility that we may some day come to a position to put directly into question the essence of metaphysics and of nihilism, and to assume thereby a critical encounter with this twin phenomenon rests on our rediscovering this primordial kinship between Being and Nothing. “The *essence* of the nothing, in its former kinship with ‘Being,’ can arrive and be accommodated among us mortals” (1998: 310; 1976: 410). So the question of Nothing and the question of nihilism are inseparable. And they both point toward “a path that leads to a discussion of the essence of Being (*Wesen des Seins*)” (1998: 306; 1976: 405).

<sup>16</sup> In point of fact, Heidegger views “will to knowledge” as an aspect of “will to power” (*Wille zur Macht*), in reference to Nietzsche with whom metaphysics becomes a fulfilled nihilism.



The difficulty is that such path is prevented by the historical domination of metaphysics especially in the form of determining our relation to “language”. Then one fundamental route to the overcoming of metaphysics and nihilism is through a transformation of our essential relation to language, through finding appropriate saying (appropriate to Being), that is, through retrieving the original essence of *logos* which “the logic and dialectic that come from metaphysics are never able to experience” (1998: 309; 1976: 409). Then it follows that if there is a problem of (lack of) meaning in the modern times, it is because of the historical domination of metaphysics. One should remember (1) that meaning (*Sinn*) is actually another name for the disclosure of Being and strictly speaking, Being is the meaning dimension (see 1967: § 32, § 44, § 65) and (2) that metaphysics blocks the essential bond between Being and Dasein. (Neither Being nor Dasein is independent: Being needs Dasein to be *itself* and Dasein needs Being to be itself. Then the bond between the two is an essential one, i.e enable them become their essence. The happening of such bond Heidegger would call *Ereignis*.) Heidegger is convinced that metaphysics, this paradigmatic Western way of thiking, this entity-focused thinking can give no authentic meaning to our lives. Nor can it be found in sciences or in any sort of logically oriented thinking for they belong to the essence of metaphysics, issue (historically) from the metaphysical understanding of Being and continue its obliviousness even more thoroughly. Therefore, sciences (including logic and mathematics) are only the parts of the nihilistic picture. They could be possible only when Being is metaphysically determined, only when it is fixed and degraded into “constant presence”.

Metaphysics, as the perspective of the present and as the (disinterested) “seeing” of beings in “constant presence”, is focused on beings *as* beings, thereby remaining blind to Being dimension in whose light first it encounters beings and can transcend (*übersteigen*) them. Even though metaphysics occurs as this transcending of beings by Being itself, metaphysics is prevented to ever experience this occurrence of transcendence, i.e its own essence (1998: 319; 1976: 422).<sup>17</sup> Being, while giving the presence of metaphysics (i.e the presence which it takes for granted), itself remains hidden to it. For the very simple reason; the counter-movement of temporality, as the un-concealing play of Being and thus the absential dimension of Being (No-thing), lies beyond the scope of metaphysical representation, beyond thing-oriented ways of thinking. Consequently, metaphysics comes to have four intervoven elements; thinking as “seeing” in the sense of representation, Being as constant presence, truth as correspondance and time as the present.

Determined by such structure, metaphysics has given rise to three interconnected forms of thinking: (1) representational form, which is driven to make entities permanently “present” to the seeing belonging to the mind that is in turn “immediately presented to itself in introspection” (Guignon 1993: 6), (2) objectifying form, which takes beings as objects to be known by an objective, disengaged, distantiated knower, i.e on the basis of subject-object relation and (3) calculative form, which is oriented to deal with beings to be mathematically determined with the ultimate end of guaranteeing

<sup>17</sup> “... der Metaphysik verwehrt, als Metaphysik jemals ihr Wesen zu erfahren”, “Zur Seinsfrage”, in 1976, p. 422.

cognitive mastery over them and thereby making them objects of unbounded exploitation.

In this light, I think, one can interpret one of Heidegger's basic arguments (that nihilism consists in the essence of metaphysics, i.e metaphysics in its destinal unfolding, as history of Being) and his turn to an archeology of nihilism (an archeo-logy, or *Destruktion*, to use Heidegger's word in *Being and Time*), to an attempt at exploring large-scale world-historical dimensions of metaphysics, the origin and epochs of *Seinsgeschichte*.

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