- Heidegger's *Kehre* reconsidered in light of the *Seinsfrage*

Heidegger's turn is often explained, slogan-wise, as a shift in focus from Dasein to Sein - a shift often associated with a shift from activity to passivity, from man throwing meaning into an open future (Heidegger before the turn) to man as receiving meaning from Being (Heidegger after the turn). On this background, many have seen the late Heidegger as one of the pioneers of postmodernism, replacing man's autonomy with an opaque (but talking/meaning-giving) force called Being, leading to a dehumanization of man by the denial of man's ability to be responsible and accountable for his actions and intentions. On this background, the evaluation of Heidegger's late philosophy has not been univocal. Firstly, modernists such as Pippin¹ or Habermas² have been able to hear the marching steps from the German soldiers in the thinking of the late Heidegger, whereby Heidegger's gehören (listening to) is interpreted as gehorchen (submitting and obeying). In other words: They interpret Heidegger's turn as a turn away from rationality, autonomy and enlightenment and back to a more rural and irrational understanding of subjectivity. Secondly, right-Heideggerians³ have praised the more passive descriptions of man in Heidegger's late philosophy and used it to read the late philosophy as an attempt to reenchant the world vis-à-vis a view on man as belonging to an anonymous and almost God-like force named Being. In other words: Exactly the same interpretation as the modernist reading, only praising instead of criticizing the conclusions. Thirdly, the left-Heideggerians⁴, who also put an emphasis on the passive and event-like depiction of man, but not because they point at the event of meaning, but because the same event always also produces empty spaces, openings, differences (Being as absence) creating possibilities for social inclusion and justice. In other words: What these very different interpretations have in common is an understanding of Heidegger's turn according to which the turn is a turn to a more passive conception of man as a receiver of meaning, and what separates them is how they evaluate this conception.

In this article I shall present a different reading of Heidegger's philosophy after the turn, claiming that whatever is at stake after the turn it is not a simple shift from activity to passivity. Instead, I shall argue that Heidegger seeks a new way to answer the Seinsfrage, a way leading him to introduce the idea of what I shall call pre-projective meaning. This may come across as a very passive description of man and meaning insofar as Heidegger before the turn identified man's activity with the existential-temporal organization of meaning. However, I shall argue that, despite the pre-projective conception of meaning, Heidegger succeeds in retaining a space for human activity and responsibility vis-à-vis man's capacity to respond to and be responsive for the pre-projective meaning given to us. On this background, the overall aim of this article is to present a third position between the right- and left Heideggerians claiming that the late Heidegger introduces an understanding of human activity/freedom, which on the one hand (similarly to the right-Heideggerians) puts an emphasis on the gift from Being, the meaning of what there is, while on the other hand (similarly to the left Heideggerians) that Being also brings us an openness for making a critical stance toward its own gift possible. In order to work out this reading I have to examine the Seinsfrage and how Heidegger answers it before and after the turn.

1. THE SEINSFRAGE

When claiming that the *Seinsfrage* is the enduring question in Heidegger's thinking, I follow both Heidegger himself, Gadamer⁵, Richardson⁶ as well as more recent readings such as Capobianco⁷ who all claim that the *Seinsfrage* is the enduring matter in Heidegger's thinking both before and after the turn. So, what is the *Seinsfrage* about? In my view, Capobianco gives us a fine indication when he writes:

"This "it", that "gives" (*gibt*) so richly and so inexhaustibly is Being itself (*Sein selbst*) as the temporal-spatial emerging and shining-forth of beings in their beingness as gathered in the ensemble. Being as "manifestness" or "manifestation" (*Offenbarkeit*), this is the matter itself (*die Sache selbst*) of Heidegger's thought – which, remarkably enough, is at risk of being "forgotten" all over again."⁸

In other words: In Capobianco's reading Heidegger's Seinsfrage concerns what we could call the dimension or space of appearance/unconcealment/manifestation as such. To explain what this is about, we can begin with the fact that Heidegger often repeats the Leibnizian question of why there is something and not simply nothing. This question puzzled Heidegger throughout his thinking. In Heidegger's version this question is (of course) not a question about the creation of the physical universe, but a post-Kantian question concerning appearance. A rephrasing of the Seinsfrage might therefore sound as follows: If Being were pure positivity, there would be nothing appearing but utter opaqueness. Therefore, to ask why there is something appearing and not nothing is also to ask, why there is both something and nothing, i.e. how is the inner constitution of the space of appearance, when it contains both positivity and negativity? Why and how is there someone to whom the things and I itself appears? In my view, everything in Heidegger serves to answer this question, including seemingly existentialistic stuff, interpretations of poems etc. Accordingly, I also agree when Wrathall in the same line of thought argues:

"The question in individuating and understanding ontological structures was always "what does this contribute to opening up a world and letting entities show up as the things they are?". Put differently, "what disclosive function does it perform?"⁹

Heidegger was occupied throughout his life with the question why and how the dimension of manifestation is and why it has been forgotten both in everyday life and within the history of philosophy. Supposing Wrathall is right, which I take him to be, an integrated part of the *Seinsfrage* concerns how the *Seinsvergessenheit*, the concealment and withdrawal of unconcealment, contributes to the unconcealment of Being. Therefore, the *Seinsfrage* concerns how unconcealment happens, and an integrated part of that question concerns the way in which concealing itself as such contributes to the process of unconcealment.

Now, turning to the turn, it was already indicated above that Heidegger's turn is often interpreted as the turn from Dasein to Sein, and it is common among scholars more or less to accept Heidegger's own explanation, namely that the direction of questioning in Being and Time (BT) was the right one, namely the Seinsfrage, though its answering remained too confined within the horizon of subjectivity. On the one hand, I agree on this point. On the other hand, I think it is valuable to investigate the question from the perspective of the Seinsfrage itself. Or, to put it a bit differently: From the perspective of the late Heidegger's critique of metaphysics it is of course easy to argue what was needed in BT. But to what extent is it possible to identify an *inner* tension in BT between the Seinsfrage and the basic assumptions in BT constituting the space of possible answers, which might have initiated the turn from within the position of *BT*? The aim of the next part is to argue that it is possible to identify such a tension as well as to show how the turn itself can be interpreted as a response to this tension.

2. THE SEINSFRAGE BEFORE THE TURN - THE TEMPORALITY OF EXISTENCE AS THE PROJECTIVE ORGANIZATION OF APPEARANCE

In order to identify this tension in BT, we have to consider how Heidegger answers the *Seinsfrage* in BT, i.e. how BT explains why there is something and not nothing. So how did Heidegger answer this question in BT? Is BT even *trying* to answer this question? Is it not about mortality, anxiety and inauthenticity? And what do those 'existential' phenomena have to do with the Leibnizian question? To see the connection between the *Seinsfrage* and the more 'existentialistic' focus of BT, one has to remember that the basic argument in the completed part of BT in paraphrase goes like this: To understand Being as such, we first have to investigate the Being of that being whose Being has such a character that it is aware of and understands its *own* Being. Heidegger calls the Being of this self-aware being 'existence' and argues that Dasein's basic experience of its own existence is the fact that it is and 'has to be'.¹⁰ Later in *BT* Heidegger concludes that Dasein's Being is not something opposite to time but, on the contrary, its Being is time i.e. temporally organized, and its simultaneous openness toward future and past confronts it with how it is to be itself. In other words: the connection between the *Seinsfrage* and the existentialistic scope in *BT* consists in the fact that Being manifests itself through Dasein's temporally structured being (existence), which opens Dasein to the 'there is' and thereby also to the I itself and the many different beings in the world.

For now, I shall not go any further into the description of the relation between future/understanding, past/mood, etc. What is of importance here is that Heidegger at this point took the retention-protention structure he was already familiar with from Husserl's analytics of the inner time-consciousness, arguing that every now always already also contains something which *is* by *not* being anymore and something which *is* by having *not* yet been. On this line of argument, Husserl was already suggesting an explanation of time as the unity of presence and absence, i.e. positivity and negativity.

However, Heidegger was not satisfied with Husserl's epistemological framework. Therefore he transformed it hermeneutically/existentially which again led to the Care-structure of existence and its temporal organization. Thus, Heidegger dismissed Husserl's account of man's access to what there is, i.e. the opening of the is, since Husserl claims that our access is constituted epistemically vis-à-vis our capacity to remember and anticipate the movement of an inner or outer object, say a cat crossing a road. Heidegger, for his part, argues that the world to which we have access, the *is*, is not a neutral world of objects, but a lifeworld, a world of practice/freedom. And this world is not primarily opened by our capacity to remember and anticipate the change of objects, but because we are engaged in the world vis-à-vis our existentiality i.e. how the I projects itself in and as time. Therefore, according to Heidegger in BT, there is something appearing and not nothing because Dasein's Being is temporally organized, and this time has the structure of existence or Care (Sorge).

At this point, it is now of further importance that a part of the *Seinsfrage* concerns the possibility of philosophy itself, which Heidegger in *BT* conceives of as the understanding of Being as such. In this regard, Heidegger paid special attention to the question concerning what he termed *Seinsvergessenheit*; that is why Being as such, throughout the history of philosophy, was 'forgotten' by being interpreted as a-temporal (despite Being's temporal character). On this background,

we can reconstruct some of the most important assumptions in *BT* concerning the relation between life and philosophy as follows:

- a. Every understanding of something as something is founded in the temporal Care-structure of existence also the understanding inherent in philosophy.
- b. The analysis of human existence showed that man flees from his own mortality/temporality in everyday life. The everyday way of forgetting Being.
- c. Therefore, man has to fight against his own tendency to flee from himself. Authenticity.
- d. Since every understanding, also the one inherent in philosophy, is grounded in Dasein's Care-structure, the tendency in Dasein to flee from its own mortality/temporality repeats itself on the level of philosophy, because of which man as conducting philosophy has to avoid the tendency to *Seinsvergessenheit*. Fundamental ontology.

As it is well-known, Heidegger did not write the last parts of BT, but even today it is still rather disputed, exactly why Heidegger never wrote it; what initiated the turn. In this regard it has been discussed intensely how to interpret Heidegger's turn: Did he get some new insights after BT which made him depart from the line of thought in BT (Young¹¹); did he recognize that the project as such was not realizable within the framework laid out in BT (Figal¹²); was the turn a part of the plan already in BT (von Hermann¹³); or did he return to some early insights which were put away in BT (van Buren¹⁴)? In a certain sense, I think most of these views, although they seem to contradict each other, point out important aspects of the turn, but in order to work out my own position, I shall primarily relate to Figal's interpretation which I am in a great depth to.¹⁵ According to Figal, Heidegger discovers in the Basic Problems-lectures from 1927¹⁶ that it is impossible to backtrack the explicit understanding of Being manifest in philosophy (such as Idea, Substance, Monad, Subject, etc.) to the understanding of Being within pre-philosophical life. This is the case, since the understanding operating in philosophy is not operating from the perspective of existence. Instead, philosophy is trying to understand practice, as Figal puts it.¹⁷ On this background, Figal draws two conclusions: 1) The project of BT turned out to be impossible, since Heidegger was not able to maintain his assumption that every

understanding of Being stems from the Care-configured temporality of human Being. 2) The turn and Heidegger's later philosophy do not dismiss his earlier Dasein analytics. Rather, it is a change of focus now solely concentrating on the *event* of philosophy, i.e. our explicit understanding of Being as such, which is now approached as a phenomenon *sui generis*.

Despite my inspiration from Figal I propose a slightly different interpretation. Figal argues that Heidegger's turn is initiated as he runs into troubles when trying to backtrack the temporality of philosophy to Dasein's temporal organization. I think this problem is a part of the turn, but not the first and primary one. This, instead, has to do with the fact that Heidegger discovers/remembers (cf. van Buren) the difference between being-in-the-world and the 'world'. The difference can be explained as follows: As being-in-the-world Dasein always already has a certain, but often vague and implicit, understanding of what it means that there is something at all. And this vague understanding of the totality of Being is not reducible to Dasein's thrown-throwing projections of understanding; rather it is there as a kind of background condition making Dasein's everyday projections possible. In this sense, we can say that the 'world' is the understanding of what there is before man has any projective intention with it when being-in-the-world. The consequence Heidegger draws from this insight is that the opening of and understanding of the *is* and of the world does not have projective character. Compared with Figal I shall therefore make the additional claim that what initiates the turn is not only that Heidegger seeks to explain philosophy as a phenomenon sui generis but also that Heidegger changes the focus of philosophy in order to understand the event of the pre-projective meaning of Being as such. As we shall see, Heidegger's alternative to his former Care-structure is his concept of truth as *aletheia*, that is the process of appearance explained as an event irreducible to anything else nor explainable in any definite vocabulary, since it concerns the dimension of appearance and thereby meaning and understandability as such.

3. THE SEINSFRAGE AFTER THE TURN – THE TEMPORALITY OF TRUTH AS THE PRE-PROJECTIVE EVENT OF APPEARANCE

In *BT* Heidegger attempted to answer the *Seinsfrage* by working out the structure and dynamics of Dasein. Therefore: as Heidegger breaks

away from Dasein as the explanatory resource to explain appearance, he finds himself in need of finding another way to explain the event of appearance – since there *is* in fact something and not only nothing. Now in order to do that, Heidegger after the turn makes different attempts, among which the most important are his concept of truth and later *'das Geviert'*. Within this article, I shall stick to his concept of truth (which he works out for the first time in a lecture given in 1930), since his concept of truth is what replaces the Care-structure as the answer to the *Seinsfrage*, while the fourfold belongs to his very late philosophy. In order to follow the movement of the turn it is therefore most obvious to choose the concept of truth as interpretative target.

In this regard, I have elsewhere made a much more comprehensive reading of Heidegger's concept of truth¹⁸, and at this point I therefore allow myself just to reconstruct Heidegger's thoughts on truth with a special focus on what I above termed 'the pre-projective understanding of Being'. So how does Heidegger account for this pre-projective understanding (the interpretational outset is the text *On the Essence of Truth* in GA 9)?

As in BT, truth is a matter of appearance, of coming into sight. However, there is a difference between *that* something is and *what* it is. Like in *BT* Heidegger still argues that in order for anything to appear as this or that, the most primordial level of appearance must reside at the level of pure possibility/openness. In BT it is argued that we have experiential access to this primordial level within the mood of anxiety, which, together with conscience, plays a central role in the transition from inauthenticity to authenticity. Hence, in What is Metaphysics, anxiety plays an even more central role, but we also see a change in 'the what' of anxiety, since the what of anxiety in *WiM* is not so much the experience of the naked being-in-the-world i.e. Dasein's confrontation with its own being possible. Instead, the what of anxiety in WiM is the experience of the ontological difference between Being and beings, so that man in anxiety is confronted with the gap between on the one hand the naked (that is; un-interpreted) 'that there is something at all' and the naked beings (including him- or herself), on the other. As such, Heidegger's interpretation of anxiety mirrors the turn's shift in focus from being-in-the-world to Being/the world as such. However, the anxious experience in WiM of the meaninglessness of everything is not how things and life used to appear to man, since beings usually appear as understandable/meaningful. Therefore, Heidegger concludes that the everyday appearing of beings hides or

covers its own ontological past. On this background, Heidegger argues in summa as follows:

- a. the state of openness and indeterminateness is the most primordial state within the process of appearing
- b. this state is not experienced in everyday life (but exclusively in the mood of anxiety)
- c. therefore, the primordial state of openness must have been covered in everyday awareness
- d. since we do not take any notice of all this; since we just take the world and the beings to be as they appear, the process of covering must in itself be covered i.e. withdraw itself.

For those reasons, Heidegger chooses to make use of the Greek understanding of truth as *a-letheia* in order to explain the process of unconcealment. The use of the *alpha privativum* underscores that every truth-taking of something as something contains a kind of double negation. Not a Hegelian one, however, since what is negated in the event of truth is firstly the constitutive and primordial openness/possibility of meaning. So, something determined becomes unconcealed by concealing the earlier indeterminateness. However, how is this original state negated? How does the change from nothing to something happen? Heidegger answers after the turn by claiming that the transition happens when man is 'given' or 'receives' meaning making it possible to take something as something. Or, to put it a bit differently: Every time man comes up with a new idea, that is thinks something, it does not come up because man wants it or intends it. Rather, man wants and intends because he has got/received the idea. Heidegger therefore concludes that our understanding of something as something is not explainable as a human projection/construction, since every projection requires a meaning to project. This now occasions the question, who/what gives this understanding? - but insofar as every answer would be given to us from the very same 'source', Heidegger does not allow us to give any answers. He simply underscores that it is not an ontic something. However, what is allowed is to describe how it is given to us, which is why Heidegger after the turn is focused on working out how the dynamics of unconcealment happens. On this background, we can term this first negation or concealment within the process of truth/unconcealment the metaphysical-apophantic negation of the openness as such, since it concerns the transition from indeterminateness to determinateness, and it seems to me that one of Heidegger's decisive insight constituting the turn was that the meaning of something as something is not a human projection/performance, but something given to man from the giving it.

The second negation is the negation of the first negation i.e. the metaphysical-apophantic negation. This might sound a bit strange, but what Heidegger wants to highlight with his focus on the second negation is why beings in our everyday life do not appear in apophantic as-if-brackets, i.e. why we do not just see/understand beings *as if* they were like this or that but simply *as they are*. In other words, if the second negation was not performed, everybody would walk around not believing in what they were thinking, seeing, talking about etc. since we would know that every 'as' was founded in the constituting nothingness. Accordingly, concerning that part of the *Seinsfrage* focusing on the *Seinsvergessenheit*, Heidegger changes his view significantly after the turn, since *Seinsvergessenheit* is no longer explained as a kind of existential weakness caused by man's anxiety vis-à-vis his own mortality, but rather as an integrated moment within the process of unconcealment as such.

Therefore, compared to *BT* we can point out at least two central changes after the turn: Firstly, that both the process of unconcealment and the product of the unconcealment, the apophantic *as*, are not taken to be produced by Dasein's projective activity. Instead, unconcealment as such and what is unconcealed, i.e. our positive understanding of beings, are given to man through the pre-projective event of meaning. Secondly and additionally, insofar unconcealment is explained as a pre-projective process, *Seinsvergessenheit* is in a corresponding way no longer explained as a product of Dasein's projective activity, but as an indispensable part of the process of unconcealment as such.

At this point we can now return to the claim that Heidegger preserves a space for activity/freedom in his late philosophy. For in which sense is it possible to talk about activity in relation to unconcealment as a pre-projective process? Isn't pre-projectiveness almost the definition of passivity? In order to answer that question, we have to look more carefully at how Heidegger describes the relation between Being and man. He writes: "Offenbar ist der Mensch etwas Seiendes. Als dieses gehört er wie der Stein, der Baum und der Adler in das Ganze des Seins. Gehören heißt hier noch: eingeordnet in das Sein. Aber das Auszeichnende des Menschen beruht darin, dass er als das denkende Wesen, offen dem Sein, vor dieses gestellt ist, auf das Sein bezogen bleibt und ihm so entspricht. Der Mensch ist eigentlich dieser Bezug der Entsprechung, und er ist nur dies. [...] Solches An-wesen braucht das Offene einer Lichtung und bleibt so durch dieses Brauchen dem Menschenwesen übereignet."¹⁹

What is Heidegger saying here? As I see it, Heidegger's guiding intuition is that nothing 'comes to my mind' because I want, desire, dream it etc., since what appears, appears from itself, and in the specific configuration it appears. That is; I do not decide what I think – instead Being gives me something to think – and to project. In other words: Not even nothing could appear without man, since the openness of the clearing both requires Being and man: Being and beings as those, which manifest themselves; man as the one to whom the appearance happens, the one who receives this or that understanding of a given situation. To witness the appearing of Being and beings is what Heidegger calls 'thinking', i.e. the historical (but non-constructive) experience of what there is (non-constructive in the sense that man does not contribute to the historical formation of understanding).

But then one has to consider, whether this makes Heidegger vulnerable toward commentators such as Pippin and Habermas, who claim that the late Heidegger presents man too passively in his relation to Being, only an echo, ready to obey the SS-orders from Being, as Habermas puts it. However, due to his critique of metaphysics Heidegger was very careful when it comes to descriptions of man as be 'free', 'responsible' etc. since those labels would have meant a regression to an onto-metaphysical vocabulary. But Heidegger does something else: he introduces a more poetic language in order to talk about that which we cannot talk about adequately in the language of metaphysics, and through this more poetic language Heidegger describes man's relation to Being by different agrarian metaphors, such as being a shepherd²⁰, cultivating (hegen und flegen) etc. Hence, being neither a shepherd nor a farmer (despite growing up in the countryside) I shall claim that neither is only passively looking at nature. Instead, we can say that it is a 'physical' condition for the shepherd and the farmer that they only have the animals and the crops which they receive from the earth, and there is nothing they can do but wait until they have something delivered from earth. But how they receive the gifts of earth, dwelling and care-taking, or with the technical urge to control, and what they do to and with the gifts is what makes the difference between the good and the bad shepherd/farmer. In this sense, the shepherd and the farmer are assigned to what comes from the earth, while they are still able to make a difference depending on their capacity to receive and assess how to handle what has been given to them. This, of course, occasions further questions such as what motivates one to respond and assess as one does; in which way is there a relation between response and what afterwards is given to man? I have to save those questions for later. Instead, I shall conclude that despite the fact that the late Heidegger avoids any metaphysically laden concepts such as freedom, power, responsibility etc., he does not present man as purely passive and irresponsible in relation to Being. On the contrary, I would say. What he does is to work out a language beyond metaphysics which is able to address what it is like to be a person when we do not come up with our own thoughts, wishes etc., while still having some kind of 'influence' on and dialogue with our own thoughts and actions.

Accordingly, I think that neither the right- nor the left-Heideggerians are completely correct in their readings. On the one hand, Heidegger does highlight and affirm what is sent to us from Being (the position of the right-Heideggerians), but on the other side he does not claim that man is passively forced to accept everything sent from Being (what the left-Heideggerians problematize in Heidegger). Instead, he emphasizes that being human is always already to be confronted with the question how one will respond to that which has been given to him in the pre-projective mode of understanding. In that sense the late Heidegger develops a position, which is not as conservative as some might like, but also not as revolutionary as others might prefer. Instead, the position offers us a language of and an awareness about what human activity and responsibility etc. is, when man is not controlling but also not being controlled by his own understanding.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to argue that Heidegger's turn and its inherent shift in focus from Dasein to Sein is not identical with a simple shift from activity to passivity. In order to argue that, I claimed, with many other interpreters, that the *Seinsfrage*, how there is something and not nothing, is the enduring question in Heidegger's philosophy. Additionally, it was argued that the decisive difference between before and after the turn is that Heidegger before the turn answers the Seinsfrage by explaining the *is* as opened by the temporality of Dasein's being, whereby the openness depends on Dasein's projective activity, while Heidegger after the turn claims the openness to be the result of what was termed the pre-projective event of meaning. This, however, made it obvious, as many have done, to conclude that Heidegger after the turn promotes an understanding of man as passive and subjected to Being. Against this dominating interpretation of Heidegger's late philosophy, I argued that Heidegger's emphasis on the pre-projective constitution of the openness still holds a place for man's freedom, though it is a new way to approach freedom, namely as the question about what man is able to do when he is not projecting his own understanding, nor in power concerning what he takes to be the case. This, however, opened up several further questions concerning the dynamic between Being and man, a more precise description of what it then means to be 'active' etc., but those questions will have to be taken up in another contribution.

Cf. Pippin 1991 Cf. Habermas 1985 Such as Barbaric 2016; von Hermann 1994; Young 2001 Such as Caputo 1987, Raffoul 2010, Vattimo/Zabala 2011 1999 1963 2010 2014, p. 7 2011, p. 2 BT p. 42. 10 11 2001 1999 12 1994 13 14 1994 15 Cf. Figal (1999), pp. 79-93 16 Published as GA 24. Ibid., p. 88. 17 Cf. Ziethen (2014), chapter 4. 18 19 Identität und Differenz, p. 18 20 Cf. Letter on Humanism

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