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# HEIDEGGER AND THE APORIA OF HISTORY

F r a n ç o i s R a f f o u l \*

## Introduction

It is striking to note that when the question of history first emerged in Heidegger's path of thinking, namely in the 1915 essay, "The Concept of Time in Historical Science,"<sup>1</sup> it was in contrast with and in opposition to the motif of nature and natural sciences; as if history in its proper being could only be accessed from such a break with nature, an "other" of history that nonetheless will continue to haunt Heidegger's conceptualization of history. Nature will figure as history's aporia, and will be visible including and perhaps especially when Heidegger attempts to subordinate nature to (historical) time: it is in order to overcome this aporia that Heidegger attempts to ontologize history away from the natural, the biological, the ontical. In Heidegger's attempts to think what is most proper to historical time and to reappropriate the ontological senses of history, one can still read this original aporia and its persistent effects, through the transformed oppositions of the mobility of life (*Bewegtheit*) versus natural movement (*Bewegung*), the break with the theoretical and the grasping of historicity as Life's self-reflexion, historicized facticity versus natural factuality, the *Geschichte/Historie* distinction, authentic temporality versus inauthentic or natural time, time of the psyche versus natural time. This original tension, if not contradiction, constitutes both the origin of the thinking of the historical in Heidegger's work and its very aporia: History remains in a relation to nature as to a non or

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\* Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, M. (2007), "The Concept of Time in the Science of History," (translated by Thomas Sheehan), in: *Becoming Heidegger* (ed. Kisiel, T. and Sheehan, T.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, pp.60–72. Essays from this volume will hereafter be cited as BH, followed by page number. I wish to thank Gregory Schufreider for his help in the writing of this essay. My thanks go as well to Andrew Johnson for his telling comments on a draft of the essay.

pre-historical ground that both threatens it and makes it possible. I will attempt to follow this aporia, from its first articulation in the 1915 lecture through Heidegger's overcoming of the epistemological horizon of the question, and the eventual subordination of nature under historical time in *Being and Time*. I will make forays in later texts from the thirties with the introduction of the notion of earth – that some commentators have claimed points to an archaic pre- or non-historical “nature” or “essence” – and question the reversal that one notes in Heidegger's thinking with respect to the relation between nature and history: far from being subjected to historical time, nature as “earth” will be said to be the “ground” of history. Ultimately this raises the question, if not of the historicity or nonhistoricity of the human, of the aporia of history itself as an inappropriable event, as we will see this original aporia reinscribed in the seizing of history as eventfulness, and its happening from a withdrawal. It will ultimately appear that we are no longer facing an opposition or an aporia, but the secret origin of historical time as such, always originating from an opaque ground, a withdrawal and a mystery, designated in the thirties by Heidegger as *earth*. History would be here “primal history,” emerging “from nature as *earth*, which is deeper and more mysterious than the nature discovered by science.”<sup>2</sup> This is why the opposition between nature and history ultimately proves inadequate, still too representational and epistemic: The opposition between nature and history was but the ontic characterization of the ontological being of history as arising out of a secret ground.

### I. The Access to Historical Time: The Break with Nature

In the formal trial lecture which he delivered in Freiburg on July 27, 1915, “The Concept of Time in the Science of History” (“*Der Zeitbegriff in der Geschichtswissenschaft*”), Heidegger leaves behind the logical questions that had occupied him in earlier works (whether in *The Doctrine of Judgment in Psychologism* or in his 1916 habilitation thesis, *The Theory of Categories and Signification in Duns Scotus*) to focus on the motif of

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<sup>2</sup> Polt, R. (2010), “Being and Time,” in: *Martin Heidegger. Key Concepts*. Durham, UK: Acumen, p.76.

the historical, first grasped in a concrete, pre-phenomenological manner. For the concept of time in historical science rests upon a lived, phenomenological and concrete experience, which Heidegger begins to explore in an otherwise epistemological essay. This is why it is to correct to state that even though these reflections take place within an epistemological horizon, they nonetheless already anticipate the ontological inquiries of the twenties regarding the being of time and history.<sup>3</sup> In fact, in his opening remarks, Heidegger from the outset draws the limits of an epistemological approach, as he explains that the “emphasis on epistemological problems is born out of a legitimate and lively awareness of the need and value of critique, but it does not permit philosophy’s questions about ultimate issues and goals to achieve their intrinsic significance” (BH, 61). Thus it is legitimate to note that if Heidegger does share with Dilthey the view that there is a radical difference between the methods of the natural and human sciences, yet “over and above the purely epistemological problem, some ontological considerations already appear about what constitutes ‘true’ time, which is not physical time, and which is characterized by diversity and heterogeneity.”<sup>4</sup>

Heidegger begins by defining the object of his inquiry, namely, the determination of the concept of historical time: “we shall single out and clarify a specific individual category (or basic logical element): the concept of time.” More specifically, “What we need to articulate is this determination of the concept of ‘time in general’ as the concept of ‘historical time’” (BH, 62). Significantly, Heidegger proposes to access the meaning of historical time in contrast with the concept of time in natural sciences: “The peculiar structure of the concept of time in the science of history will no doubt stand out more clearly if we contrast it

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<sup>3</sup> In fact, one could claim that this early essay anticipates several key aspects of *Being and Time* (where it is mentioned by Heidegger), and significantly echoed in the contrast between original versus natural time. See John van Buren’s clarification in his Editor’s Introduction to (2002) *Supplements*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, p. 5. Also, in his editor’s Introduction to *Becoming Heidegger*, Theodore Kisiel stresses appropriately that this essay represents “the proto-development of the distinction between the origination time of the unique self and the derivative time of science and the clock”. *Becoming Heidegger*, Editor’s Introduction, p. xviii. I will return to the question of original time versus natural and clock time later in this essay.

<sup>4</sup> Dastur, F. (1998), *Heidegger and the Question of Time* (translated by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew). Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, p.2.

with a very different articulation of the structure of time. To do so, we shall briefly characterize the concept of time in natural sciences – specifically physics” (BH, 63). One finds there the first characterization of the time of historical sciences, which is defined in distinction with the time of natural sciences.<sup>5</sup> At issue is to approach the concept of time in a way that is irreducible to a “purely logical or chronological apprehension” (Jollivet 2009: 26). Historical time is not reducible to the logical, but points to life itself in its specific eventfulness. As we indicated, this represents both the origin of a reflection that will always seek to think the specific and proper being of historical time, and a constitutive internal limit through which historical time is each time confronted by an aporetic situation: the relation to and distinction with nature. At every stage of Heidegger’s reflections on historical time, one will encounter this aporia, necessitating the analyses to always more distinguish proper ontological history from inadequate, ontic or inauthentic representations. In this first essay, Heidegger thus finds access to the problematic of history through a break with nature, that is, in the context of epistemological questions and disciplines, with natural sciences. More precisely, Heidegger attempts to determine the specific nature of the concept of time which intervenes in historical science, in contrast with the concept of time one finds in natural sciences. While time in the natural sciences is constituted as a homogenous, spatialized universal flow, allowing for measurement of motion (“the relation of motion and time has to do with *measuring* motion by means of time”, he explains, BH, 65), and therefore reduced to being “a mere parameter,”<sup>6</sup> historical time is characterized by a *qualitative heterogeneity*, engaging a lived meaning.

In natural sciences, as Heidegger states, “*the function of time is to make measurement possible*” (BH, 66), and time “is a necessary moment in the *definition* of motion.” Indeed, as Heidegger expresses it “concisely put”, the “object of physics is law-governed motion” (BH, 65). In such an approach, time becomes a homogeneous flow, reduced to a “homo-

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<sup>5</sup> Servanne Jollivet stresses the irreducibility of historical time from the paradigm of nature: “Purely qualitative, this usage [from historical science] excludes the simple transposition of the method proper to natural sciences.” Jollivet, S. (2009) *Heidegger, Sens et Histoire*. Paris: PUF, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Dastur, F., *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, p. 2.

geneous ordering of points, a scale, and a parameter” (BH, 66). Time becomes the measure of motion. Further, time in this context is reduced to simply function as the “condition of possibility for mathematically determining the object of physics (i.e., motion)” (BH, 66). This in fact is harmonious with the traditional metaphysical account of time, which is always understood in terms of the measurement of motion, within the general context of a philosophy of nature (hence Bergson’s critique of spatialized time). Heidegger makes the point in the Kassel lectures: “Time, says Aristotle, is what is counted in motion with respect to the before and after. This definition has remained essentially unchanged into modern times. Kant, too, determines time by starting from an apprehension of nature” (BH, 270).

In contrast to this “natural” time, time in history engages *events*, Heidegger also specifying that the object of the science of history “is human beings” (BH, 68). Indeed, Heidegger uses the word *Ereignis* in the 1915 essay to name such historical event (BH, 71). He makes the claim that time-reckoning systems in calendars always begin with a historically significant event (he gives the examples of the founding of the city of Rome, the birth of Christ, the Hegira), that is, with a “historically significant event [*Ereignis*]” (BH, 72).<sup>7</sup> The starting-point of time-reckoning is a qualitative event. Heidegger then differentiates historical time from the time of physics by such reference to the event: “Consequently, the concept of time in the science of history has none of the homogeneity characterizing the concept of time in the natural sciences. That is also why historical time cannot be expressed mathematically by way of a series, for there is no law determining how the time-periods succeed one another” (BH, 71). Heidegger thus severs historical time from a quantitative approach, and approaches it in terms of a qualitative eventfulness. “*Time-periods [Zeiten] in history are distinguished qualitatively*” (BH, 71). Certainly, Heidegger concedes, the historian works with a concept of time as a certain “ordering of points,” that is, he or she works with historical dates, with “quantities” such as the number 1515 for the battle of

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<sup>7</sup> Compare with that passage from the 1934 summer semester course: “History [*Geschichte*] is an event [*Ereignis*], insofar as it happens” [*geschieht*]. Heidegger, M. (2009), *Logic as The Question Concerning the Essence of Language*. Albany, NY: SUNY, p. 74. Hereafter cited as GA 38, followed by the page number of the translation.

Marignan. Yet, such a number is not treated as a *quantity* (that is, as an element within the numerical series from 1 to infinity, or as a number per se), and the historian is not interested in dates as dates, but considers them only insofar as they refer to meaningful events.<sup>8</sup> A date thus has “meaning and value within the science of history only as regards its historically significant content” (BH, 71).

Such content is given by the event, which Heidegger also thematizes as the presence of life in history, as when he explains that the “qualitative factor of the historical concept of time is nothing but the congealing – the crystallization – of an objectification of life within history” (BH, 71). A decisive passage, as Heidegger clearly states that the concept of historical time needs to be grounded in the phenomenological event of life itself, and that the concept itself is grounded in a phenomenological pre-theoretical domain. Therefore, the question “when” has two different meanings in history and in physics. When asking about the “when” of a historical event (*Ereignis*), “I am asking not about its quantity but about its place in a *qualitative historical* context” (BH, 71). What is specific to the concept of time in history is that it designates *an event*: “Thus the concept ‘the famine in Fulda in the year 750’ indicates a very specific individual event [*Ereignis*] and accordingly is a historical concept” (BH, 67). This is why historical dates are only “convenient tokens for counting,” but in themselves have no meaning. What gives them meaning is a *qualitative* determination. This also implies that history as a science, as historiography, rests upon and presupposes historical reality itself (which still demands to be elaborated and clarified ontologically), making necessary Heidegger’s distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte*.

## II. The Break with the Theoretical: The *Historie*/*Geschichte* Distinction

This original determining distinction between history and nature will be radicalized in the following years in Heidegger’s ontologizing of

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<sup>8</sup> We leave aside here the whole discussion in section 79 of the so-called “datability” (*Datierbarkeit*) that Dasein deploys in its concerned existence in the world (and the time-reckoning that is the ground for such dating), and which is the existential basis for historical dating. See SZ, p. 407.

the problematic of history. For the epistemological horizon proves inadequate to the appropriate raising of the question of historical time. Indeed, as early as 1919, in an early Freiburg lecture course, Heidegger explained that “the theoretical itself and as such refers back to something pre-theoretical,” so that, on the way to an originary phenomenology of the facticity of life, later renamed *Dasein*, “the primacy of the theoretical must be broken.”<sup>9</sup> Such pre-theoretical basis is approached by Heidegger as life, and more precisely factual life, so as to avoid any psychologism, a life that will be characterized as “ultimate fact.” What is indeed most striking is how in that period Heidegger identifies life as *the* fundamental Fact, the central concern of his thought, the very matter of phenomenology. Phenomenology, for Heidegger at that time, is a phenomenology of life itself. In *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, Heidegger states from the outset: “‘Factual life’: ‘life’ expresses a basic phenomenological category; it signifies a basic phenomenon.”<sup>10</sup> Far from reducing it to an ontic, regional domain, subordinated to a prior, more originary, ontological level, Heidegger on the contrary approaches life as the fundamental fact — indeed as “something ultimate” (PIA, p.62) — to which all thought must return as to its ground. He also places himself explicitly within the tradition of life-philosophy in its various forms, which is the foreshadowing of a genuine phenomenology of what he terms “factual life”. He recognizes, for instance, that some of his analyses “came forth already in modern life-philosophy”, a philosophical movement which he praises in these terms: “I understand [life-philosophy] to be no mere fashionable philosophy but, for its time, an actual attempt to come to philosophy rather than babble idly over academic frivolities” (PIA, p.61).

Heidegger thus seeks to establish that life in its givenness is not a theoretical object, does not take a theoretical distance with itself, but rather interprets itself in a radically immanent manner.<sup>11</sup> Such life is “lived life”

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<sup>9</sup> Heidegger, M. (2002), *Toward the Definition of Philosophy* (GA 56/57: translated by Ted Sadler. London: Continuum), p.50.

<sup>10</sup> Heidegger, M. (2001), *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, p. 61. Hereafter cited as PIA, followed by pagination of the translation.

<sup>11</sup> On this point, see my (2008), “The Facticity of Life and the Need for Philosophy,” in: *Re-thinking Facticity*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, in particular pp. 73–77.

(*Toward the Definition of Philosophy*, 40), not in the sense of a psychical process, not as *Erlebnis*, but indeed and already as *Er-eignis*, appropriative event. “The experiences are appropriative events in so far as they live out of one’s ownness, and life only lives in this way” [*Die Erlebnisse sind Er-eignisse, insofern sie aus dem Eigenen leben und Leben nur so lebt*] (*Toward the Definition of Philosophy*, p. 64, tr. slightly modified). And since life understood as *Ereignis* constitutes the essence of the historical as such,<sup>12</sup> one can see how the opposition between quantitative time and qualitative historical time from the 1915 lecture finds itself rethought in terms of an originary hermeneutics of factual life: historical time now designates life’s proper motion (*Bewegtheit*) – distinguished from the *Bewegung* or natural movement of natural entities – in its restlessness and self-unfolding, which Heidegger also calls a relation of effectuation or enactment (*Vollzug*).<sup>13</sup> He calls this movement “historicity” (*Geschichlichkeit*), borrowing the term from Count York via Dilthey. In fact, one needs to approach life essentially as a motion, a specific movement. Heidegger writes: “In our rough characterization of life, we have often spoken of actualization, nexus of actualization. Elsewhere, people

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<sup>12</sup> We thus read in this 1919 course that life “is itself *historical* in an absolute sense”. *Toward the Definition of Philosophy*, p. 18. One notes here the clear break with Husserl and a certain anhistoricity of Husserlian phenomenology, which Heidegger explicitly denounces in the 1923 summer semester course, Heidegger, M. (1999), *Ontology. The Hermeneutics of Facticity*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, p. 59. Referring to “the absence of history in phenomenology,” Heidegger pokes fun of its presuppositions: “one naively believes that the subject matter will, no matter what the position of looking at it, be obtained in *plain and simple evidence*.” However, phenomenology must become a historical method, and “for this it is necessary to disclose the history of the covering up of the subject matter,” Heidegger adds, anticipating on the *Destruktion* as method of ontology which will be thematized in *Being and Time* and *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*.

<sup>13</sup> On the historicity of life as enactment, see Martin Heidegger’s (1998) “Comments on Karl Jaspers’s Psychology of Worldviews,” in: *Pathmarks*, (ed. William McNeill). NY: Cambridge University Press, p. 28. As Eric Nelson notes, “Heidegger first discussed history in terms of the priority of event (*Ereignis*) and enactment (*Vollzug*), which are used in his early lecture courses in opposition to the traditional concepts of subject and object, and in terms of the difference between “lived history” (*Geschichte*) and historical science (*Historie*) in the situation of crisis and engagement with *Lebens-* and *Existenzphilosophie* after the First World War.” “History, Event, and Alterity in Heidegger and Levinas,” in: *Between Levinas and Heidegger* (ed. Eric Sean Nelson and John Drabinski), under contract with SUNY Press. The emphasis is placed on “historical life” in its motility and facticity as opposed to the science of history, which presupposes it while ignoring it.



speak of process, stream, the flowing character of life. This latter way of speaking is motivated by and follows a fundamental aspect in which we encounter life, and we take it as a directive toward the ensemble of the basic structures of life as *movement*, motility” (PIA, 85). Also: “The movedness [*Bewegtheit*] of factual life can be provisionally interpreted and described as *unrest*. The ‘how’ of this unrest, in its fullness as a phenomenon, determines facticity” (PIA, 70).

Implicit in these distinctions is a critique of the reliance on the metaphysical and epistemological primacy of natural sciences, as well as the beginning of an ontological derivation of nature as such. Heidegger takes issue with the positioning of objectivity – and nature – as the standard model for being. He articulates such a critique in the following way: “It is not the case that objects are first present as bare realities, as objects in some sort of natural state, and that they then in the course of our experience receive the garb of a value-character, so they do not have to run around naked. This is the case neither in the direction of the experience of the surrounding world nor in the direction of the approach and the sequence of interpretation, as if the constitution of nature could, even to the smallest extent, supply the foundation for higher types of objects. *On the contrary, the objectivity, ‘nature,’ first arises out of the basic sense of the Being of objects of the lived, experienced, encountered world*” (PIA, 69, my emphasis). Objectivity, nature, are here derived from a more primordial sense of being, namely, life in its facticity.

For Heidegger, this break with the theoretical, with the epistemological, in a new approach that he referred to in the 1919 course as a “primordial science” (*Urwissenschaft*)<sup>14</sup>, appears clearly in the opening pages of the 1925 summer semester course, *History of the Concept of Time*, the sub-title of which reads: “Prolegomena to the Phenomenology of History (*Geschichte*) and Nature (*Natur*)”. Heidegger begins by noting the epistemological horizon of the very distinction between nature and history, through their respective empirical disciplines, natural sciences and human sciences. However, he immediately raises a doubt with respect to the self-sufficiency or legitimacy of this scientific approach: for on the one hand, “history and nature would be accessible only insofar as

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<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, M. *Toward the Definition of Philosophy*, in particular pp. 17–26.

they are objects thematized in these sciences,” which would not give us “the actual area of subject matter out of which the thematic of the sciences is first carved;”<sup>15</sup> and on the other hand, due to this situation in which history as a science misses the “authentic reality of history,” one may stress that “it might well be that something essential necessarily remains closed” to the scientific way of disclosure. Second, Heidegger attempts to refute the opposition between nature and history, treating it as a strictly scientific division (“the separation comes first from these sciences”), one which would not be validated phenomenologically (“the separation of the two domains may well indicate that an original and undivided context of subject matter remains hidden,” HCT, 2). Instead of remaining with the “fact” of these scientific divisions, it is a matter of leaping ahead “into the primary field of subject matter of a potential science and first make available the basic structure of the possible object of the science” (HCT, 2, slightly modified). This does not mean, Heidegger clarifies, a phenomenology of each of these disciplines, nor a phenomenology of their respective areas, domains of being or subject-matter: “Here it is not a matter of a phenomenology of the sciences of history and nature, or even of a phenomenology of history and nature as objects of these sciences” (HCT, 2). In other words, the scope is neither a phenomenology of science, nor an investigation as a regional ontology.

It is a matter instead “of a phenomenological disclosure of the original kind of being and constitution of both” (HCT, 2). How can this be achieved? Heidegger answers: “by disclosing the constitution of the being of that field”. This would constitute the “original science” of which Heidegger spoke in the 1919 course (here referred to as “a productive logic,” HCT, 2), because it investigates a domain prior to its scientific thematization. And what is that primary field prior to the domains of nature and history? Original Dasein. Indeed, sciences must receive “the possibility of their being”, Heidegger tells us, “from their meaning in human Dasein”. And original Dasein means: original historicity and temporality. This is why the next section is titled, “Prolegomena to a

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<sup>15</sup> Heidegger, M. (1985), *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (GA 20; translated by Theodore Kisiel). Bloomington, In: Indiana University Press, p.1. Hereafter cited as HCT, followed by page number.

phenomenology of history and nature *under the guidance of the history of the concept of time*" (my emphasis), as both nature and history can be said to stand under the horizon of time. The task is to reveal the horizon within which history and nature can be set against, and find the "actual constituents which underlie history and nature" (HCT, 6). Thus, what Heidegger seeks to achieve is a grasp of nature and history before scientific thematization ("We wish to exhibit history and nature so that we may regard them before scientific elaboration", HCT, 5). This requires an overcoming of the theoretical or epistemological.

This overcoming of the theoretical or epistemological – as well as the exhibiting of the ontological basis of historical time – is achieved through Heidegger's problematizing of the distinction between the terms *Historie* and *Geschichte*, a distinction which he had not made in the 1915 essay, and which we find for the first time addressed by him thematically in the 1925 Kassel lectures,<sup>16</sup> although already in the 1920–1921 winter semester course on the *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, we read: "We mean the historical in the way we encounter it in life; not in the science of history".<sup>17</sup> The problem lies in the fact that the question of history is usually approached from historical science (*Historie*), a discipline which for Heidegger *does not master its own subject matter*, historical reality itself (*Geschichte*). In *The History of the Concept of Time*, for instance, Heidegger reminds the reader that "the historiographical sciences are currently troubled by the question of historical reality itself," a situation presumably made worse by the fact that "historiographical sciences generally dispensed with any philosophical reflection"! (HCT, 14). One could add here that *Historie* is an investigation of ontic "facts" while *Ge-*

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<sup>16</sup> Heidegger, M. "Wilhelm Dilthey's Research and the Current Struggle for a Historical Worldview", in: *Becoming Heidegger*, pp. 238–274. It is interesting to note here that indeed Heidegger had used the terms – in particular the adjectives *geschichtlich* and *historisch* – interchangeably in earlier courses and lectures, for instance in the 1919/1921 "Comments on Karl Jaspers's *Psychology of Worldviews*" (translated by John van Buren) in: *Pathmarks*, pp. 1–38; see note 2, p. 365 for clarifications]. Heidegger wrote of "life as History (*Geschichte*)" (GA 58, p. 81), but also of "*historisches Leben*" or of life as being historical (*historisch*) in GA 56/57, p.21, tr. p. 18. I owe this last observation to Sophie-Jan Arrien, in: (2001), "Vie et Histoire (Heidegger 1919–1923)," in: *Philosophie*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, n. 69, p.57, note 20.

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, M. (2004), *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (translated by Matthias Frischt and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei). Bloomington, In: Indiana University Press, p. 23.

*schichte* designates the *being* of history. *Historie* presupposes *Geschichte*, while missing it.<sup>18</sup>

One knows how in §74 of *Being and Time* Heidegger makes the distinction between *Geschichte* and *Historie*, history as eventfulness of Dasein's being and history as the science of objectively present objects (*Objekts-geschichte*). History as *Geschichte* designates the absolutely originary history (*ursprüngliche Geschichte schlechthin*) whereas History as *Historie* designates the objectification of *Geschichte*. Thus, "whereas *Geschichte* refers to history articulated from the horizon of the question of the meaning of being, which is rearticulated as the history of the event and truth of being, *Historie* refers to the models of history found in the ordinary understanding of history as presence and re-presentation, and which continue to inform historiography and the philosophy of history."<sup>19</sup> Further, as Nelson stresses, the ordinary understanding of *Historie* "presuppose the 'vulgar concept of time' analyzed in *Being and Time* as underlying everyday and philosophical understandings of time — whether linear or cyclical. These understandings block access to the history of being, obscuring rather than clarifying the history that we ourselves are" (op.cit., *ibid.*)

We find in this distinction the opening of an access to ontological time, to a historical time "which we ourselves are," an expression used frequently by Heidegger, and also echoed in the famous question from the 1924 lecture, "The Concept of Time": "Am I time?," "am I my time"? (*Supplements*, 213). At issue in this distinction is the radicalizing of historical time, from an external object of inquiry (*Historie*, from the Greek *historein*, to enquire), to history as an event (*Geschichte*, from the verb *geschehen*, to happen), indeed as "the happening that we ourselves are" (BH, 271). This happening is to be distinguished from a *natural* happening, or *Vorgang* (from *vorgehen*, as in the processes or *vorgänge* of nature). It is striking in this respect that in a later critique of histori-

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<sup>18</sup> In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger returned to this question and reasserted that "the science of history does not at all determine, as science, the originary relation to history; instead, it always already presupposes such a relation." Heidegger, M. (2000), *Introduction to Metaphysics* (translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> Nelson, E. "History, Event, and Alterity in Heidegger and Levinas," op.cit.

cal science, Heidegger makes the point that such a discipline takes as its model natural sciences and its objectifications.<sup>20</sup>

This expression, the history “that we ourselves are” (or “We ourselves are history”), “we are history” (*Wir sind Geschichte*) is borrowed from Count Yorck, and is to be found used as a leitmotiv in the Kassel lectures, which engage Dilthey’s philosophy of history as they pursue a phenomenological inquiry into the senses of life and the “being of the human being.” Heidegger in these Kassel lectures begins by lamenting the fact that in post-Kantian philosophy, the question of the sense of historical being “died out,” due to the predominance of the mathematical natural sciences, and the reduction of philosophy to epistemology. The question concerning the being of history became all the more pressing, and Heidegger credits Dilthey for having revived such an inquiry, although Dilthey was not able to sufficiently distinguish his approach from the epistemological, and as a consequence could not raise the question of the being of history phenomenologically. As Heidegger puts it: “It is a matter of elaborating the being of the historical, i.e., historicity and not the historical, being and not beings, reality and not the real. It is therefore not a question of empirical research in history. Even a universal history still would not deal with historicity. Dilthey made his way to the reality that is properly historical and has the sense of *being* historical, namely, human Dasein. Dilthey succeeded in bringing this reality to givenness, defining it as living, free, and historical. But he did not raise the question of historicity *itself*, the question of the sense of being, the question of the being of beings. It is only with the development of phenomenology that we are in a position to raise this question overtly” (BH, 255). A few pages later, Heidegger emphasizes that “Dilthey never raised the question of the reality of life itself,” never “had an answer to the question of what it means *to be* historical” (BH, 258).

In order to gain access to the *being* of the historical, it became necessary to break with the theoretical or epistemological perspectives, and

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<sup>20</sup> Heidegger, M. (2002) “The Age of the World Picture,” in: *Off the Beaten Track* (ed. and translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes). NY: Cambridge University Press, p. 62. Let us recall here the distinction made by Heidegger in the 1934 course among three types of change: One speaks of “flow” [*Ablauf*] for the earth, of “process” [*Vorgang*] for life, and of “happening” [*Geschehen*] for human beings. GA 38, tr., p. 75.

distinguish more fully between historical science and history as such. This is what Heidegger attempts in the following way. He first recalls the phenomenological scope of his analyses, clarifying that the “fundamental attitude of phenomenological research is defined by a principle which at first seems self-evident: to the matters themselves” (BH, 256). The issue is to reveal the *phenomenon* of history. This is all the more necessary since the ontological structure of historicity is concealed by history as a science.<sup>21</sup> In terms of the question of history, it becomes a matter “of bringing historical reality itself to givenness so that the sense of its being can be read off from it” (BH, 256). This phenomenological task is only misleadingly self-evident, for the matters themselves are covered over by the unphenomenological representations concerning historical time, the epistemological perspective and the reductive outlook on natural time. “By way of preparation,” Heidegger then proceeds to distinguish *Historie* from *Geschichte*, noting that those terms, although from an entirely different origin, can “yet both get used interchangeably”. History as *Geschichte* designates “a happening that we ourselves are,” whereas historical science, from its etymological source, is an “ascertaining and reporting [of] what has happened,” and means “a knowledge of a happening” (BH, 271). The being of the historical is thus the happening that we ourselves are (“History happens to me; I am this happening”<sup>22</sup>), while historical science is the thematic investigation of such happening. To this extent, it is not simply a matter of distinguishing those two terms, but of showing how one is grounded in the other, *Historie* as we saw presupposing *Geschichte*.<sup>23</sup> This ontological foundation is further developed in *Being and Time*, where Heidegger proposes to reveal “the ontological genesis of historiography as a science in terms of the histo-

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<sup>21</sup> As Jean Greisch explains, “what is thus forgotten or concealed (*passé sous silence*) is the *phenomenon* of historicity which is such that, before the invention of a historical science, which only came to be at then end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, human existence was already constituted in a ‘historical’ manner in its ontological structure”. Greisch, J. (1994), *Ontologie et Temporalité*. Paris: PUF, p. 357, translation mine.

<sup>22</sup> We find a similar expression in *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, p.124, where we read: “History hits us (*Die Geschichte trifft uns*), and we are history itself”

<sup>23</sup> As Peter Warnek explains in his essay, “The History of Being,” “history, or more precisely ‘historiology’ (*Historie*) as a domain of research, operates within a pre-given sense of being, a determination of *what it is that it investigates*”. In: *Heidegger. Key Concepts*, p. 162.

ricity of Da-sein.”<sup>24</sup> This will involve, as we will see, a subordination of nature to historical time.

### III. The Subordination of Nature to Historical Time

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger notes once again the ambiguity of the term “history,” which designates both “‘historical reality’ as well as the possibility of a science of it” (SZ, 378). However, Heidegger’s focus is neither the science of history nor even history as an object of such science. Instead, Heidegger is interested in thinking “this being itself which has not necessarily been objectified,” namely, the historical itself. Heidegger explains in paragraph 72 that the problem of history cannot be raised from historical science or historiography, because in such an approach, history is taken as an *object* of science. The basic phenomenon of history is “prior to the possibility of making something thematic by historiography and underlies it,” so that the question of the relation between the two becomes the following: “How history [*Geschichte*] can become a possible *object* for historiography [*Historie*], can be gathered only from the kind of being of what is historical [*Geschichtlichen*], from historicity and its rootedness in temporality” (SZ, 375). Heidegger makes this point in three different ways in this section 72: first, by defining historiography as an existentiell possibility of Dasein (“from the kind of being of this being that exists historically, there arises the existentiell possibility of an explicit disclosure and grasp of history”), which betrays that it presupposes an existential basis that needs to be fleshed out. Second, by characterizing historical science as the “thematizing” (proper to any science) of a pre-given domain, as *Historie* is “primarily constituted by thematizing” (SZ, 392). Third, by characterizing this discussion in terms of ontological foundation (“the existential interpretation of historiography as a science aims solely at a demonstration of its ontological provenance from the historicity of Da-sein”, SZ, 376).

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<sup>24</sup> Heidegger, M. (1953), *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, p. 392. Hereafter cited as SZ following the German pagination; all citations of the work are from Heidegger, M. (1996), *Being and Time* (translated by Joan Stambaugh). Albany: SUNY Press.

This ontological foundation is of course the task of paragraph 76 of *Being and Time*, which is concerned with showing the “existential origin of Historiography from the Historicity of Dasein” and proposes to “inquire into the ontological possibility of the origin of the sciences [and here of historical science] from the constitution of being of Dasein” (SZ, 392), an existential derivation already posited in paragraph 3 of *Being and Time*. The presuppositions of the historicity of Dasein by historiography are several: one can for instance note from the outset that the very possibility of disclosing the past through historiography presupposes that “the ‘past’ has always already been disclosed in general” (SZ, 393). Although this may seem obvious, Heidegger stresses that the fact that “something like this [the fact that the past must be open to a return to it] and how it is possible is by no means obvious” (SZ, 392). Things such as “antiquities” can become historiographical objects only because they are already in themselves historical. As Heidegger explains, the historical character of antiquities is “grounded in the ‘past’ of Dasein to whose world that past belongs” (SZ, 380). This means that the historiographical disclosure (Heidegger uses the term *Erschliessung*) of history “is in itself rooted in the historicity of Dasein in accordance with its ontological structure, whether it is factually carried out or not” (SZ, 392). This is why historiography should not be given a positivist interpretation, as its objects are not “the facts” in their positivity, but rather the having-been of historical Dasein.

This is why, one notes in passing, history does not designate “the past” (*Vergangenheit*) in the sense of what has gone by, the bygone, *das Vergangene*, but rather the world of Dasein has having-been, *das Gewesene*, which ultimately for Heidegger is yet to come, and thus futural. “We see that beenness [*Gewesenheit*], insofar as it reaches over us and comes toward [*zukommt*] us, has future [*Zukunft*]” (GA 38, tr. 98). For Heidegger, history as happening “is determined from the future,”<sup>25</sup> or as he would also state in the “Letter on Humanism”: the “history of being is never past, but stands ever before” (BW, 194). Indeed, if the possible itself is the very meaning of Dasein’s existence, should not one see “behind” those alleged facts the presence of the possible itself? “Does

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<sup>25</sup> Heidegger, M., *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p.47.



historiography thus have *what is possible* as its theme? Does not its whole ‘meaning’ lie in ‘facts,’ in what has factually been?” (SZ, 394). In this sense, as Heidegger would state in that 1934 course, “we mean by ‘history’ not the past, but the future”: “To enter into history means, therefore, not simply that something that is bygone, merely because it is bygone, is classed with the past. Yes, it is, generally speaking, questionable whether the entering into history always means to be sent to the past, as it were... we mean by ‘history’ not the past, but the future” (GA 38, tr. 71). Decades later, in the Zollikon seminars, Heidegger would return to this question, maintaining the distinction between an ontic past and an ontological “having been,” and claiming that the confrontation with such having-been – no mere “retaining” — engages the future: “The present confronts what has been in relation to what is coming [*das Künftige*]”.<sup>26</sup> For Dasein to be “factually” does not point to “facts” but to a world-history. This is why remains, monuments, records, are all possible material for historical research and “can become *historiographical* material only because they have a *world-historical* character” (SZ, 394); that is to say that the acquisition, sifting and securing of material “does not first bring about a return to the ‘past,’ but rather already presupposes historical being toward the Da-sein that has-been-there” (SZ, 394). *The object of historical science is not “the facts”, but historical Dasein.*<sup>27</sup> This in turn presupposes the historicity of the historian’s existence, as one can also note further that a thematization of the past (historiography) presupposes the historicity of Dasein. This does not indicate a subjectivism in Heidegger’s analysis, but rather the fact that historiography is a possibility of existence: as Heidegger puts it, the central theme of historiography “is always a possibility of existence that has-been-there,” and thus rests upon the historicity of Dasein’s existence.<sup>28</sup> In short, the fundamental concepts of historiographical sciences – the epistemological problematic

<sup>26</sup> Heidegger, M. (2001), *The Zollikon Seminars*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, p. 220

<sup>27</sup> This is why, as Heidegger states, “what is philosophically primary is neither a theory of the concept-formation of historiology nor the theory of historiological knowledge, nor yet the theory of history as the Object of historiology; what is primary is rather the Interpretation of authentically historical entities as regards their historicity”. SZ, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Heidegger at that point refers to Nietzsche’s essay on the “advantages and disadvantages of historiography for life,” and the three senses of historiography that Nietzsche retains – the mon-

of the social sciences – ultimately “are concepts of existence” (SZ, 397). As we see, the epistemological problematic of historiography (*Historie*) rests upon and presupposes the ontological constitution of history (*Geschichte*). The question of the relation between history and nature is thus displaced from the epistemological horizon of the 1915 essay, to the ontological level.

Most significantly for our concern, this ontological foundation of *Historie* in *Geschichte* has radical consequences for an understanding of the relation between history and nature as it leads to a grounding of nature in historical time. Indeed, as Heidegger explicitly states, “even nature is historical” (SZ, 388). Not historical in the sense of “natural history,” for, as he would say in the 1934 course, it is senseless and vacuous to speak of natural history. Nature, Heidegger insists, *has no history*, and “only the human being has history” (GA 38, tr. 67). Nonetheless, nature is in a certain sense historical when it appears as within the world, as an intraworldly object: “nature is historical as a countryside, as areas that have been inhabited or exploited, as battlefields and cultic sites.” (SZ, 388–389)<sup>29</sup>. The ontological foundation of historical science in historicity thus also implies the subordination of nature to history, via the reference to the world, or, to be more precise, the so-called “secondarily historical,” “World History” or the “world-historical” (*das Weltgeschichtliche*). As Heidegger explains, Dasein is the “primarily historical,” and the “secondarily historical” is “what is encountered within the world, not only useful things at hand in the broadest sense, but also *nature* in the surrounding world as the ‘historical ground’” (SZ, 381). Nature gives itself against the background of the world, which itself is unfolding temporally. “With the factual disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*] of Dasein’s world, nature has been uncovered [*entdeckt*] for Dasein” (SZ, 412). Whereas Dasein is “disclosed,” nature is “uncovered,” marking here the ontological distinction between the two.

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umental, the antiquarian, and the critical – to the historicity of Da-sein (“*The threefold character of historiography is prefigured in the historicity of Da-sein.*” SZ, 396).

<sup>29</sup> One also finds in (1997), *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, p. 14, the same characterization of nature as an intraworldly being.

Dasein's concern, which is always thrown, surrendered to night and day (for Heidegger nature thus also designates thrownness, and in fact will be described a few years later, as earth, as that in which historical Dasein is already thrown, *schon geworfen*<sup>30</sup>), is connected to the environment it is involved with, such as "the rising of the sun" (SZ, 412). What is significant in this description is that nature, i.e., the sun, gives itself in terms of and on the basis of concerned time: "Then, when the sun rises, it is *time for so and so*" (SZ, 412). Now, the time of concern, or the counting of time, is what Aristotle understood time to be, the counting of *natural* movement: the counting of time becomes "the counting of the now in relation to the now that is no longer and the now that is not yet. Time is thus that which is numbered in movement encountered in the horizon of the earlier and later, which is precisely the Aristotelian definition of time in Book IV of *The Physics*" (Françoise Dastur, HCT, 49).

What is significant here is that this conception of time as number of movement takes place within "the natural understanding of Being as *Vorhandenheit*" (HCT, 49). There is thus a profound affinity between the time of concern and the sphere of the natural. This is why it should not come as a surprise if Heidegger then defines "nature" as a kind of ready-to-hand, that is, an intra-worldly entity that is encountered within a world that has been disclosed under the horizon of temporality. "Concern makes use of the 'handiness' of the sun, which sheds forth light and warmth" (SZ, 412, modified). The sun is used in terms of the time-reckoning of Dasein: "The sun dates the time interpreted in concern" (SZ, 412, modified), such "natural clock" constituting the origin, Heidegger tells us, of "artificial clocks" as such (as these artificial clocks must be "adjusted" to the natural clock). The natural concept of time is hence a derivative mode of temporality, a mode of Dasein's concern with entities within-the-world. Natural time is derivative, vulgar time. Time as measured refers to Dasein's time-reckoning, also a function of concern. "The disclosedness of natural clock belongs to the Dasein which exists as thrown and falling" (SZ, 415). This reduction of natural time is

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<sup>30</sup> Heidegger, M. (1993), "The Origin of the Work of Art," in: *Basic Writings*, rev. and exp. Edition (ed. David Farrell Krell). San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, p. 200.

further emphasized in the text, for not only does Heidegger refer it to public fallen time, but he then also assigns it to so-called “primitive Dasein,” as opposed to so-called “advanced Dasein”! “Comparison shows that for the ‘advanced’ Dasein the day and the presence of sunlight no longer have such a special function as they have for the ‘primitive’ Dasein *on which our analysis of natural time-reckoning has been based*” (SZ, 415, emphasis mine). Natural time is in any case fallen temporality, and represents the leveling down of original temporality (*Nivellierung der ursprünglichen Zeit*). One knows how, in section 82, Heidegger is careful to note that time has traditionally been interpreted, from Aristotle to Hegel, within a philosophy of nature, which denotes the inauthentic approach to the concept of time, how “since Aristotle, time has been defined as physical time, the time of the objective world.”<sup>31</sup> Time is approached from within an ontology of the present-at-hand, to which nature belongs. As such, it is subject to a phenomenological destruction.

Nature thus gives itself within the world (the secondarily historical), and is thus grounded on Dasein’s historicity, i.e., the primarily historical! Therein lies the reduction of nature, which in fact could lead, in Heidegger’s most extreme formulations, to an expulsion or rejection of nature outside of the realm of history and historical Dasein. For instance, in *On the Essence of Truth*, Heidegger states: “Only the ek-sistent human being is historical. ‘Nature’ has no history.”<sup>32</sup> One finds a similar claim in the 1934 summer semester course, where Heidegger states that “nature is without history” (GA 38, tr. p.113). Certainly, nature can be in-time, as we saw, but it is not historical, it is outside history. As Heidegger states, one never speaks of a past or futural nature! (GA 38, tr. p. 85). Heidegger insists at length on this point, reiterating that, “In nature there is neither historicity nor unhistoricity, but it is without history [*geschichtlos*], not dependent on the happening [*Geschehen*]. Nature is without history because it is atemporal [*Zeitlos*]” (GA 38, tr.113). Certainly, he concedes, “natural processes are measurable and ascertainable by time. Nature, insofar as it is measurable by time, is in a certain manner in time”. But one needs to distinguish between “being-in-time” [*in-der-Zeit-Sein*] and

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<sup>31</sup> Dastur, F., *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Heidegger, M., “On the Essence of Truth,” in: *Pathmarks* (translated by John Sallis), p. 146.

“being-temporal” [*Zeitlich-Sein*], “which befits only the human being” (GA 38, tr., p. 113). Nature is within-timely, the human being – and, as we saw, only the human being – is Temporal.<sup>33</sup>

#### IV. The Earth as Ground of History

And yet, this early reduction of nature, subordinated to history, if not rejected in the nonhistorical, will lead to a paradoxical reversal of Heidegger’s hierarchy between nature and history, as nature will be said a few years after *Being and Time*, as earth, to be the ground [*Grund*] of the world, and thus of history if it is the case that “entrance into world by beings is primal history pure and simple”.<sup>34</sup> In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger would speak of the earth as the ground and native soil (*heimatliche Grund*) of the world and of historical Dasein, “that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this *ground* the *earth*” (BW, 168, my emphasis). The work of art reveals that the world rests upon the earth, which itself “emerges as native ground” (BW, 168). In this way, “upon the earth and in it, historical man grounds his dwelling in the world” (BW, 172). This paradoxical reversal might be the indication of a concealed aporia, the very aporia structuring Heidegger’s thought of history as contrasted and opposed to the natural. It is as if all these repeated attempts by Heidegger to subordinate nature to history might ultimately be aimed at overcoming or suppressing the aporia of an irreducible nature that could not be derived from historical time. Such an aporia would also threaten the ontological hierarchies that Heidegger sets up in *Being and Time*. At this point, as one commentator remarked, “one might try to resist Heidegger’s subordination of natural, linear time to the Temporality of Dasein”.<sup>35</sup> In fact, we note such resistance in Heidegger’s texts themselves.

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<sup>33</sup> Certainly, Heidegger concedes, “the occurrences on the earth, in plants or animals are certainly *flows* and *processes* in the framework of time, but stones, animals, plants are themselves not temporal in the original sense as we ourselves”. GA 38, tr. 110. Only the human being is historical, and the natural occurrences within the human being (“the changing of the gastric juices, of the blood circulation, the graying of the hair”, GA 38, tr. 72) do not constitute history.

<sup>34</sup> Heidegger, M. (1984), *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (translated by M. Heim). Bloomington, In: Indiana University Press, p. 209.

<sup>35</sup> Polt, R., “Being and Time,” in *Martin Heidegger. Key Concepts*, p. 74.

Apart from those enigmatic passages in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* where Heidegger states that “intra-worldliness does not belong to nature’s being,” a being “which on its own part already always is,” and which “is, even if we do not uncover it, without our encountering it within our world,”<sup>36</sup> the difficulty of deriving nature from history already appeared in the discussion in *Being and Time* of the relation between original temporality and within-time-ness, history and historiography (and time-reckoning). As we saw, Heidegger claimed that Dasein exists historically before historiography, that what is world-historical is always already there “in the occurrence of existing being-in-the-world even “*without being grasped historiographically*” (SZ, 389). However, what would it mean for this discussion if historical science was not simply an existentiell possibility but a constitutive feature of the phenomenon of history, if historiography was not simply derived from the ontological basis of history? Heidegger himself asks that question, when clarifying in the 1934 summer semester course the relation between “lore of history” (*Geschichtskunde*) and *Geschichte*: “*History* [Geschichte] is an event [Ereignis], insofar as it happens [geschieht] A happening [Geschehen] is historiographical, insofar as it stands in some lore, is explored [erkundet] and manifested [bekundet]. Is that which is historiographical only a supplement to the historical? Or is history only where there is historiography, so that the statement ‘No history without historiography’ comes about?” (GA 38, tr. 74). Heidegger is constrained to admit that long before the invention of historical science, Dasein, as a historical being, was using calendars and clocks that measure time and provide a structure to social time. While insisting on the ontological priority of historicity over historiography, insisting as well that world-time is derived from Dasein’s temporality, and that the time of concern, clock-time, is based on such original historicity (Dasein’s temporality is said to pre-exist all instruments that may measure it), Heidegger also has to concede that the intra-temporality of the time of concern – and thus natural time – is “equiprimordial” with historicity: “But since time as within-time-ness also ‘stems’ from the temporality of Da-sein, historic-

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<sup>36</sup> Heidegger, M. (1982), *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (translated by Albert Hofstadter). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p. 169.

ity and within-time-ness turn out to be equiprimordial” (SZ, 377).<sup>37</sup> Now, nature is clearly at the center of this problem, since for Heidegger nature is included within-time-ness: “In the same way, the processes of nature, whether living or lifeless, are encountered ‘in time’” (SZ, 377). Heidegger’s attempt to posit an ontological derivation of nature from history aporetically runs into the claim of an equiprimordiality between the two!

It becomes impossible to maintain – and this is indeed the very aporia that this essay is concerned with – the ontological hierarchy between history and nature, and to secure the foundation of nature, as intra-worldly, in history. This aporia, which threatens Heidegger’s very ontological analysis, including the paramount distinction between original and vulgar time, ontological and ontic time, opens this unavoidable question: if original temporality cannot unfold without the intra-worldly, natural time, what prevents us from radicalizing this proposition (and our understanding of the natural) and assert that in this case it may be nature that turns out to be that from which the historical itself emerges? Thus radicalized, would nature not represent an “archi-ontical” origin of historical time, an original sense of nature that Heidegger would name, a few years later, earth? Further, doesn’t the dimension of thrownness, itself rethought from the truth of being itself, raise anew the question of the origin of history, if it is the case, as we saw above, that the earth is described in “The Origin of the Work of Art” as that from which historical Dasein is thrown?

The question remains of how to conceive of such natural being, how to conceive of this non-derivation of nature from history: does it point to a metaphysical ground outside of the disclosedness of Dasein? Does it point to a non-historical ground of human existence, as Michel Haar argues in his two volumes on the earth and the human?<sup>38</sup> In these two

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<sup>37</sup> This is why, as he concedes in the 1934 course, “assuming that lore [*Kunde*] belongs to the inner constitution of the historical happening, then we must make clear *from the happening*, to what extent something like lore can belong to this kind of being [*Seins*]. GA 38, tr, p. 81.

<sup>38</sup> Haar, M. (1993), *The Song of the Earth* (translated by Reginald Lilly). Bloomington, In: Indiana University Press. Hereafter cited as SE, followed by page number. Haar, M. (1993), *Heidegger and the Essence of Man* (translated by William McNeill). Albany, NY: SUNY Press. Hereafter cited as HEM, followed by page number.

books, Michel Haar seeks to claim that there is a non-historicity or even extra-historicity of humans as earthy beings. He is constrained at first to recognize that for Heidegger the human being is essentially historical and that “Heidegger maintains that man is entirely and exclusively historical” (HEM, 176).<sup>39</sup> However, this is to immediately challenge this view, by suggesting that beneath history there remains a “preexisting situation,” leaving the trace of “prehistorical man” (HEM, 177). In fact, Michel Haar understands such element as a non-historical permanence, as “every transformation requires something that persists” (HEM, 177). For instance, he argues, although each epoch has its own fundamental mood, “the fact of finding oneself disposed and experiencing corporeal being-in-the-world according to constantly changing moods *belongs to every human being in every epoch*” (HEM, 181, my emphasis). Haar also appeals to a “transhistoricity” of Western man, as we are capable today of accessing the Greek epoch of astonishment or wonder. It should be noted that Haar supports his argument by appealing to the “nonhistoricity” of *Ereignis* (SE, p.3). However the term used by Heidegger in the passage cited by Haar is *ungeschichtlich*, a term that is not synonymous with atemporal or outside history altogether, but is a mode of historicity, as Heidegger explained in *Logic as the Question on the Essence of Language* (GA 38, tr. 113).

Haar believes that this extrahistorical or permanent element is represented in Heidegger’s thought by the notion of earth. For, as he puts it, “Generally speaking, the nonhistorical is always linked to the Earth” (HEM, 179). Earth, he continues, constitutes “the limit of history” (ibid). Dwelling, in particular, “instantiates an essential mode of the nonhistorical” for in it “something immemorial persists: the shelter” (HEM, 178). Sheltering establishes an intimacy around a hearth, a notion that once again is said to point towards the nonhistorical: “Is it not the immemorial character of the hearth that founds dwelling?” (HEM, 178). Dwelling around the hearth would constitute Heidegger’s reference to the non-historical: “To the degree that Heidegger writes that

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<sup>39</sup> Indeed, Heidegger wrote in his “Letter on Humanism” that the “thinking that thinks into the truth of being is, as thinking, historical” (BW, 238), and also: “the history of being is being itself”! Heidegger, M. (1973), *The End of Philosophy* (translated by J. Stambaugh). New York: Harper & Row, p. 82.



'being is the hearth', he himself acknowledges the nonhistorical aspect of being" (ibid), or the archaic. This interpretation is pursued in *The Song of the Earth*, where Haar claims that being is not reducible to its history, and that history conceals a reserve and an opacity "which can never be exhibited" (SE, 2), which never sees the light of day. Without constituting a substantial metaphysical ground, the earth, according to Haar, "possesses... its own essence which, in relation to being, can be thought at least negatively as the dimension that in itself rebels against phenomenality, namely as the pre-historical or nonhistorical dimension" (SE, 100, my emphasis). Arguing against the ontological derivation of nature in *Being and Time*, Haar insists that "the essence and genuine origin of this nature cannot, by definition, be situated 'in the world'" (SE, 10) and he even go so far as referring nature to the tradition of the thing in itself! "Just as the Kantian phenomenon leaves the residue of the thing in itself, the phenomenological transparency of the world leaves a residue: the *being* of nature" (SE, 10).

We are nonetheless allowed to ask: Is there such a permanent non or extra-historical substrate in Heidegger's thought, a "deep nonhistoricality of Dasein" which Haar does not hesitate to describe as the "quasi-eternity of embodied being-in-the-world"? (HEM, 181). It is very doubtful. Heidegger himself explains that nature, although atemporal and outside history, nonetheless can in a certain sense "enter into history." How? In the sense that nature, for instance, as a landscape, "is site and abode of an historical process" (GA 38, tr, p. 113). The earth, Heidegger explains, can neither enter into history, nor step out of it, because the earth "has nothing to do with history." (GA 38, tr. 71). And yet, "the southern Balkan peninsula entered into history more than two thousand years ago. A mountain chain, a river can become [a] site for world-historical decisive battles. We speak of 'historical soil,' [we] say that an entire region is, as it were, laden with history" (GA 38, tr. 72). The earth is the soil [*Der Erdboden*] of history, a soil which then "also enters into history" (ibid). No substantial separation between earth and history (the world is earthy, the earth is worldly), but a singular intertwining, indeed a strife (*Streit*). As Heidegger explains in "On the Essence of Truth," "Beings as

a whole reveal themselves as φύσις, ‘nature,’” and history “begins only when beings themselves are expressly drawn up into their unconcealment and conserved in it”.<sup>40</sup> In that sense, the earth cannot constitute a separate, substantial nonhistorical ground. This is what Heidegger shows in “The Origin of the Work of Art”. The earth represents a self-secluding element and world the open region, and yet they are essentially intertwined: the earth cannot subsist on its own without the openness of the world and the world cannot float away from earth; the world is grounded on the earth, the earth juts into the open region. Heidegger explains that “World and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated. The world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through world” (BW, 174).<sup>41</sup>

Earth and world belong together as the co-belonging – and original strife, *Urstreit* – of clearing and concealing. That relation is one of tension and resistance. The world, resting on the earth, attempts to overcome it; the earth, as sheltering and concealment, draws the world toward it. In the creation of the world, the strife “must be set back into the earth,” and the earth itself “must be set forth and put to use as self-secluding” (BW, 189). Such strife is not destructive but constitutive of both earth and world, for in “essential strife, rather, the opponents raise each other into their self-assertion of their essential natures” (BW, 174). The world “lets the earth be earth”. In the end, history itself is rethought as the strife between earth and world, as the between of earth and world, as Heidegger makes clear in *The Contributions to Philosophy* when he describes history [*Geschichte*] as “the strifing of the strife [*Bestreitung des Streitiges*] of earth and world.”<sup>42</sup> History happens in, and as, this original strife of earth and world. The earth thus cannot constitute,

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<sup>40</sup> Heidegger, M., “On the Essence of Truth,” in: *Pathmarks*, p. 145.

<sup>41</sup> In the highly evocative words of David Kleinberg-Levin, “Nature is always historical, never visible as such, never encountered outside the violent constructs of our historically situated consciousness; conversely, however, the world that we have built, forging a historical existence in irreconcilable struggle against Nature’s forces of destruction, can never escape its violent conditions and mortifying alembications.” David Kleinberg-Levin, Brochure for the Exhibition of the Photographic Art of Olivier Mériel, Candace Dwan Gallery, September, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, M. (1999), *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* (translated by Parvizi Emad and Kenneth Maly). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p. 66.

as Michel Haar suggests, a prior, prehistorical, “quasi-eternal,” metaphysical element.

For Heidegger, after the turn, history is no longer approached as Dasein’s historicity but as the history of being itself (*Geschichte des Seins*), as the between of world and earth. History is thought from *Geschick*, the sending (*schicken*) of being in its epoquality, an *epochē* which is a withdrawal. As we saw, through a genuine *Kehre* in thinking, Heidegger claims in *The Origin of the Work of Art* that earth (now no longer understood as nature giving itself within the world but as counterpart to the world), constitutes the ground of history, as “that which bears all” (BW, 188). What was constantly referred back to history as to its ontological ground now becomes the ground of the historical. Neither historical nor unhistorical, the earth is without history in the sense of being archi-historical, pre-historical, the ground of history, the “obscure ground of our abode” (Haar, SE, 57). But what kind of ground? The non-historical ground of history, as Michel Haar suggests? Or as a ground that grounds insofar as it withdraws? Haar distinguishes four senses of “earth” in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” the fourth one being that of “ground”, or *heimatlicher Grund*. Haar notes that the choice of this term shows Heidegger’s continuity with metaphysics (the term is “the same as the metaphysical term designating the foundation and reason for being”, SE, 61), although he also notes that for Heidegger *Grund* means rootedness in the sense of a ground ‘containing a reserve, the nourishing soil’ (ibid). In fact, the “native” (*heimatlich*) ground is not tantamount to a natural basis, but points to the phenomena of home and homelessness (*Heimat*, *Heim*, *Heimlich*, *heimatlich*, *heimish*, and also *Unheimlichkeit*, *heimatlosigkeit*, *Unheimlichkeit*), and thus of a historical dwelling, thereby engaging a human and historical existence. The earth can thus be said “prehistorical” only in the sense that it is the site of history, but in no way does it constitute a metaphysical separate foundation “before” history. Haar may thus be conflating the reserve of history, its proper withdrawal, with a non-historical ground while absolutizing it. For what does Heidegger mean by the earth as ground?

The earth grounds insofar as it withdraws. The earth in “The Origin of the Work of Art” essentially *withdraws*. As Andrew Mitchell shows, in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” the earth “supports and bears pre-

cisely by withdrawing”.<sup>43</sup> The earth as a withdrawal of the ground, as a remaining-away [*Weg-bleiben*] of the ground, as *Ab-grund*, a “groundless ground.” It is the soil for historical eventfulness to happen: the earth is the ground of history insofar as it withdraws in its self-seclusion. History happens from a withdrawal, as Heidegger would claim with respect to the sendings of the epochs of being. History does not rest upon the earth as on some substrate, but occurs from the withdrawal proper to the “sendings” of *Ereignis*. The aporia of history is in the end the presence of such withdrawal as possibility and origin of historical happening. The tension between nature and history turned out to designate the strife of earth and world, as the very possibility of a history always marked by a certain opacity and withdrawal.

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<sup>43</sup> Mitchell, A., “The Fourfold,” in: Martin Heidegger. Key Concepts, p. 212.