
Martin Nitsche

THE TOPOLOGY OF METAPHYSICAL VIEWPOINTS IN THE LIGHT OF HEIDEGGER'S RETURN TO ARISTOTLE

It would be simplistic to view metaphysics merely as a philosophical discipline with its own specific topic, such as the explication of the being of entities, the explication of human experience in its entirety, etc. However, metaphysics does have an immanent tendency to be the »whole« of philosophy »at once«, for its analysis sets the frame of the meaningfulness of any experience and of any theoretical or practical attitude. The task that defines metaphysics is the effort to explain, and thus to ground, the experiential world as a meaningful life-environment. Already from the Aristotelian beginning, this defining task is pursued within metaphysics by following two different viewpoints: first, the viewpoint of the relational framework, which by its perspective aims at meaningfully justifying the structural features of the environment as a whole; and second, the viewpoint of the ground, aiming at that which provides support for all meaningfulness.

Thus the term »metaphysical viewpoints«, as used in this study, refers to two things: to the viewpoint of the relational framework (in other words, the viewpoint of the environment), and to the viewpoint of the ground (in other words, the viewpoint of the supports).

By speaking of a »topology« of viewpoints, the choice of the title wants to suggest that every viewpoint correlates to a standpoint, one that opens the perspective

relative to each viewpoint. Topology, as understood here, interprets viewpoints as standpoints and inquires into the impact of the spatial character of a standpoint (as an area in the relational space) on the viewpoint, the thematic viewpoint.

This means that the traditional effort of metaphysics, thematically aiming at understanding the meaning of the whole (the universe) and at finding firm (even indubitable, for some) grounds of experience, is interpreted here with an emphasis not on specialized issues of content (such as the whole and the ground, or the one and the many, and other issues), but rather on the possibility to form, by thought and by speech, the actual environment of our life.

The hermeneutic space of this study is constituted by Heidegger's methodical »return to Aristotle« (*Rückgang zu Aristoteles*), well evident from § 7 of *Being and Time*, and presented in a more extensive form in the record of the 1925/1926 Winter Semester course on *Logik. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit*. However, we do not intend to analyze this return by itself; rather, the return simply provides us with a context that makes visible the problem we intend to make thematic. In § 7 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger employs the return to Aristotle – in a manner that is generally known – for the sake of a re-definition of the phenomenological method, and he emphasizes in this context that the function of the Aristotelian *logos* is, first of all, *apophantic*. Only with respect to *apophansis* is it possible to understand the *logos* as, among other things, a judgement or a ground. In general, the phenomenological interpretation of the traditional ontological topics ends by emphasizing spatial aspects: the *arkhai*, the origins and causes of traditional metaphysics are understood by phenomenology as coordinates of a phenomenal environment that allows human beings to find their way, to attain orientation. In particular, in his interpretation of the Aristotelian *apophansis* Heidegger understands the *logos* as an apophantic space, a space of evidence for human understanding. Heidegger's reading of Aristotle thus suggests that the mutual link between the two metaphysical viewpoints – i.e., the viewpoint of the overall framework and the viewpoint of grounding – can be accessed and analysed by an interpretation of the *logos*.

88

This is why the particular goal of the following study is to provide several partial analyses of how both Aristotle and Heidegger in the context of his return to Aristotle explain the role of speech within the justifying grounding of the life-environment of human experience. Our attention will be focused on the topological significance of these two explanations. This means we shall be asking in what way a different configuration of the two metaphysical viewpoints leads to different standpoints of understanding, and thus, to different life-attitudes.

First, we shall attempt to analyze in several steps Aristotle's concept of the *logos* and Heidegger's teaching that the denied ground (*der Ab-Grund*) is the place of the origin of speech. Then, in concluding, we shall attempt to summarize Heidegger's debate with Aristotle, and to provide, while keeping this summary in mind, a resulting outline of the link between speech and grounding, one that puts the emphasis on the goal striven for by both thinkers in their thought: that the speech-character of grounding be fully respected.

1.

In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle several times sets the task of metaphysics as an »inquiry into the origins and the causes of *ousiai*«. Let us quote in full two of these passages, as both also demonstrate the link between *ousiai* and speech. In Book IV, Chapter 2, we read:

The proper subject is always that which is first, on which the rest is dependent and after which it is named. If this really is the *ousia*, then the task of the philosopher will be to inquire into the origins and the causes of *ousiai*. (*Met.* IV 2, 1003b16 f.)

The quote is a summary of the preceding argument that »being is attributed in many ways, yet always with respect to one origin« which is the *ousia* as »the first on which the rest is dependent« (*to prōton ex hou ta alla ertētai*). This definition of *ousia* is then further developed by the addition: »and after which it is named« (*kai dia ho legontai*).

The link between *ousia* and *logos* is a crucial part of any description of the overall framework of the relational space needed for human experience to be meaningful. Human beings freely experience »various modalities of the way [particular] being is« without losing themselves in this accidental variety. That is why Aristotle calls attention to the direct link between human experience and *ousia*: the link provided by naming the *ousia* or uttering the *ousia*. The *ousia*, for Aristotle, is of a double character: 1) it is the necessary relational ground of the various (accidental) modalities of the way the particular experienced being is; 2) it provides a unifying name for all these modalities of experiencing. This double character of the *ousia* becomes apparent when we ask the »silly« question: where is it, in fact, that the *ousia* really is? Is it there where the experienced being is, i.e. »beneath« the variety of the experienced modalities of being? Or is it rather there where the naming of this being occurs, i.e. »prior« to this variety, in the speech of the cognizing human person? Or again, to put it differently: is the *ousia* to be understood as substance – or rather, as the first category? The questions thus formulated miss the point especially by putting a disjunctive emphasis on the idea

that the *ousia* has to be *either* substance *or* category. This disjunction, should it be accepted, would be closely bound to the conviction that the ontological functions of substance and category are mutually exclusive, and with the resulting notion that even though using a single term, Aristotle in fact expresses two different matters – while in fact it is precisely the functional unity of substance and the first category that establishes the ontological skeleton of the dynamic relational environment within which human experiencing occurs.

In our quote, this is demonstrated also by the specific context of the declared intention to »inquire into the origins and the causes of *ousiai*«. The *ousia* is designated here as »the first« that, from the metaphysical perspective (as we have already pointed out), fulfills a double function: our experiencing of the (accidental) rest is »dependent« on it, and it is named after it. Now we have to ask: Why should we strive for an understanding of the origins and the causes of the *ousia*, if the *ousia* itself is already designated to be »the first«, and why thus strike the problematic path of looking for causes of the first, or looking for something that comes *prior to* the first? Of course, both Aristotle and the medieval exegetic tradition refuse, by various methods, to relativize the significance of that which is first. I believe that the search for the origins and the causes of the *ousia* as that which is first consists in the effort to demonstrate the contribution of the *ousia* for establishing a rich relational environment that can be described by means of the structure of origins and causes. Thus, origins and causes – including the first cause – are not antecedent to that which is first for human experiencing; rather, they develop and unfold that first.

90

The emphasis on understanding the *ousia* as a relational environment is clearly visible also from the other passage we select for our analysis of the link between speech and ground in Aristotle. At the end of Book XII, Chapter 2, the text lists the basic types of origins and causes:

Thus, there are three kinds of causes and three origins: two are the opposites, that include the concept (*logos*) and the shape (*eidos*), the other privation (*sterēsis*) and the third one is matter (*hylē*). (*Met.* XII 2, 1069b32 f.)

If metaphysics looks for the origins and the causes of substances, then this list outlines one potential Aristotelian model of the structure of the *ousia*: the *ousia* is composed of matter and form, the latter being dynamized by its relationship of opposition to its own essential lacking in matter. However, our present considerations highlight the privileged standing of the term *logos*: without further explanation, concept is listed here as an immanent part of the structure of the *ousia*. The functional unity of the *ousia* as both substance and the first category,

suggested above, returns here via the relational identification of shape and concept. It is one more sign that for Aristotle, the relationship between the agent of cognition and being is not extrinsic. Rather, Aristotle understands the *ousia* as a specific relational space (*eidōs/logos – sterēsis – hulē*) for the movement of human cognition.

The intention of this study is topological, not metaphysical – which means that our focus here is not primarily the connection between being and knowledge (and/or speech) but rather the application of metaphysical viewpoints dependent on adopting a particular thinking standpoint.

Our topological intent guides to the overall exegesis of Aristotle's metaphysics as sketched above: thinking moves around in the space of the *ousia*; this space is thought's natural environment; and therefore, one of the determining features of this environment is the *logos*.¹ Within this topological space, one can then follow the way thinking applies the metaphysical viewpoints of the whole and the ground – and only thus can we reach, among other issues, the metaphysical problem of the link between being and cognition.

2.

Reflecting on the basic bonds taken up by concept (*logos*) within the *ousia* is specific in that concept is not understood here as uttered, i.e. as a word that sounds. The sonorous and the written form of speech is handled by Aristotle in the treatises included in the so-called *Organon*, and here it is understood as an instrument of expression, communication, making oneself understood et cetera. What is the connection between the ontological notion of speech as part of the relational space of the *ousia* and the logical notion of speech as an instrument?

A good and simple point of departure is presented right at the beginning of the *De interpretatione* (*Peri hermēneias*):

Spoken words are surely signs of experiences of the soul, and written words are signs of spoken words. And just like all do not have the same script, nor is their speech the same; however, that which is primarily designated by speech and script is common to all – namely, experiences of the soul and what the experiences represent, i.e. things. (*De int.* I, 16a3 f.)

¹ We leave to the side the question whether the life-environment of the *ousia* is one and common for all beings, or whether it is constituted by the overlaps between experiential spaces of individual beings; Aristotle's solution, however, would be closer to the latter alternative.

The relationship between shape and concept, characterized above according to the *Metaphysics*, is treated here as a representative relationship (*homoiōsis*) where experiences in the soul (*ta en tēi psukhēi pathēmata*) represent things (*pragmata*). Spoken and written words draw their existence from this basic representative relationship by being signs (*sumbola*) of experiences of the soul.

The relational space of the *ousia*, founded by the link *eidōs–logos* (or again, *pragma–pathēma*), and further structured by other causes (such as *hulē, sterēsis* etc.), thus by being symbolized acquires new levels (uttered speech, written text).² Our experiences and our knowledge (*epistēmē*) can thus move around quite specifically within the rich many-levelled structure of the space of the *ousia*. Within the founding representative relationship (*homoiōsis*), our soul – by experiencing – adopts the shape of the experienced entity and grasps its being. Within the symbolization of the experience by speech and script, we draw communicable words – sounds or legible marks – into the framework for understanding (and communicating) the basic relationship to being.

92

Further insight into the many-levelled nature of the relational space of our cognizing is offered by the introductory analysis of the *Categories*. In Chapter 2, Aristotle distinguishes statements and concepts by specifying that within that which is said (*ta legomena*) statements are said on the basis of connecting (*kata sumplōkēn*), while concepts without (cf. *Cat.* 2, 1a16). By reflecting on this distinction in the context of our previous argument, it is clear that the connecting of words into statements occurs within the relationship between the experience of the soul and its signs in spoken and written speech. However, that which is said without the need of connecting is rooted directly in the relationship *ousia–logos*. The connecting of words into statements characterizes the speech environment as a level that symbolizes the relational space of the *ousia*. No connecting occurs in the environment of the *ousia* itself; rather, it occurs only at the level that is linked to this space by means of symbolization.

This can be substantiated also by referring to the end of Chapter 4 of the *Categories*, where Aristotle mentions that it is only the assertive or denying statement – i.e., a statement created by connecting – that admits of truth or falsity (cf. *Cat.* 4, 2a7 f.). Thus, linguistic errors are committed on the symbolizing level of our cognizing – whereas in particular words, as signs of the *logos–eidōs* link, it is impossible to err.

2 Spoken sound and script »are signs« of the entire sign-connection *pragma–pathēma*, as it is impossible to be a sign of an experience of the soul without expressing the *homoiōsis*; thus, they enrich the relational space of human experience by adding further levels.

This quick survey of certain motives of Aristotle's thought has the purpose to show that uttering concerns not only substance but rather the broader relational connection *pathēma–pragma*, called *homoiōsis* in Aristotle. The *homoiōsis* creates a relational environment that is »common to all« (*De int.* 1), and when seeking orientation in it, we do not really err. It is needed to understand this environment if we want to understand speech; this is the point of origin for the uttering, expressing, symbolization that creates the apophantic environment, the home of logic and the space that admits of errors in our orientation.

The relational space of the *ousia*, within which human experience makes sense, includes, for Aristotle, two distinguishable levels: 1) the fundamental space of the link *eidos–logos* (or again, *pragma–pathēma*); it allows for a structured description by means of origins and causes in an inquiry into »being as being«; 2) the space of speech expressions, produced as signs of the experiences of the soul and as connections of these signs. While speech enters both levels, it is only its role in the latter that is theoretically relevant for Aristotle. Within the fundamental connections of being as being, human speech is passively related to being as a derived (since the fundamental bearer of shape is matter) recipient of shape. The proper space of speech, i.e. the space where speech, for Aristotle, fulfills its essence, is the logical space of speech expressions.

3.

93

We have attempted to show that the connection between justifying grounding and speech is not, for Aristotle, merely a linear matter of the expressing of the ground in language; rather, it is a complex and many-levelled structure, creating a specific relational space for the various movements of human cognition. The ground itself is not fixed in a single point; rather, it rests in a dynamic relational connection that is further differentiated into levels by speech. It is worthwhile in this context that Martin Heidegger, talking from his hermeneutic standpoint of destroying metaphysics, declares the need of a return to Aristotle (*Rückgang zu Aristoteles*). A crucial text here is his Winter Semester 1925/26 lecture series *Logik. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit*. One point made here is that Heidegger re-interprets the claim usually raised in interpreting Aristotle's logic, »judgement is the place of truth«, and modifies it into »truth is the place of judgement«,³ a formulation that, according to Heidegger, captures the Aristotelian standpoint more precisely. What is the crucial issue in this re-interpretation of the traditional claim, as undertaken by Heidegger?

3 »Satz ist nicht der Ort der Wahrheit, sondern Wahrheit der Ort des Satzes.« M. Heidegger, *Logik. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit.*, GA 21, Klostermann, Frankfurt a.M. 1995, p. 135.

The claim »judgement is the place of truth« neglects, for Heidegger, the relationship between being true and truth. For Aristotle, being true or being untrue is the quality of a judgement (i.e. of a connection of linguistic expressions for experiences of the soul) and of its relational logical space. However, truth (*alētheia*) is a characteristic of the relational space of being (*ousia*) as an environment that allows shape to appear to the human capacity of grasping it, i.e. to the *logos*. Thus, *alētheia* is for Heidegger a fundamental feature of the basic relational connection *eidōs*–*logos*, and determines the space that provides the connecting of words into judgements with its meaning.

When considering Heidegger's return to Aristotle, one can also recall his late concept of the *Geviert* (the »fourfold«). Here, Heidegger analyses the various levels of current human experience and sets apart four basic aspects (earth and heaven, the divines and the mortals) whose mutual interlinking and interdependence provides this experience with its fundamental framework. Humans themselves take part in this grounding coordination in two distinct respects: it is at the same time that humans, as mortals, participate in the interplay of the *Geviert*, and that they day-to-day experience it (from the outside, so to say), dwelling in what they encounter as things. Given that in formulating this concept Heidegger frequently refers to Aristotle (especially to his doctrine of causes, even in the traditional form of the so-called four causes), it could seem that the *Geviert* is a modern analogy of Aristotelian ontology, describing the relational framework of human experience in the coordination and the interplay of the basic aspects, and comprising humans, as mortals, with all that belongs to them – speech included.

94

For a small part, this idea is legitimate: the concept of the *Geviert* and Heidegger's exegesis of Aristotelian ontology are connected by the emphasis they put on the fundamental relational framework of human experience. However, for the far larger part it neglects that the meaning of »ground« differs in Aristotle and in Heidegger. As we pointed out, it is true that both are concerned with fundamental or founding connections. However, the difference (in a first outline) is that Aristotle primarily focuses on the relational connections of the being of that which is, whereas Heidegger attempts *not* to found the relational connections that frame the experience with that which is on being.⁴

This un-foundedness of the relational space in the late Heidegger is the topic of the following two parts of this study. We shall analyze this un-foundedness of the relational framework (in contrast to Aristotle's emphasis on the grounding

4 In his late popularizing essays, Heidegger several times employs the call »to think Being without [particular] being«, *das Sein ohne das Seiende denken*. The phrase emphasizes exactly the task to try and think the relational framework in which we experience being without ascribing to being the role of the ground.

in substance) as one version of the application of the topological viewpoint with respect to the ground.

4.

In his *Contributions to Philosophy (Beiträge zur Philosophie)*, Heidegger characterizes founding as connecting the »denied ground« (*Ab-grund*) and the ground (*Grund*).⁵ It is this very connection whence the relational framework acquires its founding nature and whence its firmness is derived.

For explaining the relationship between the denied ground and the ground, the crucial text passages are the following two paragraphs from the beginning of § 242 of the *Contributions*:

What is the out-ground? In what manner does *it* ground? The Out-Ground is the stay-away of the ground.

And what is the ground? It is the self-concealing adoption, for it is a carrying – and it is a carrying by virtue of the upward push-through of that which is to be grounded. The ground: the self-concealing in carrying upward push-through.⁶

Given the context of the »return to Aristotle«, let us start the exegesis of these two short paragraphs by a short remark on the mention of *das Zugründende*, »that which is to be grounded«. I believe that this peculiar term refers critically to the Aristotelian concept of the fundamental relational connection that allows human perceiving to relate to a being such that it makes sense. Traditionally, being that makes sense awakens the expectation that it is grounded and justified. It is such being that Heidegger means here by *das Zugründende*: that which is to be grounded, given that it makes sense. The ground itself, writes Heidegger, then makes us expect that it carry such being, that it be concealedly present in it, as carrying, and that in carrying it it will push through it towards our inviting grasp. The crucial issue in positing the out-ground, the »denied ground«, is Heidegger's emphasis on the need to think the ground not only with respect to the perceiving and grasping human mind nor exclusively with respect to the being that is grasped but rather and primarily with respect to the manner in which

5 In the *Contributions*, the way the relational framework is conceived here is crucial for the concept of the fourfold, first sketched also here; cf. M. Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie. Vom Ereignis*, GA 65, Klostermann, Frankfurt a.M. 1994, (referred to as *Beiträge*) p. 310. Quotations from *Beiträge* are translated by Martin Pokorny. He has also translated the text of the study from czech language.

6 »Was ist der Ab-grund? Welche ist *seine* Weise des Gründens? Der Ab-grund ist das Weg-bleiben des Grundes. Und was ist der Grund? Er ist das Sichverhüllende–Aufnehmen, weil ein Tragen, und dieses als Durchragen des Zugründenden. Grund: das Sichverbergen im tragenden Durchragen.« *Beiträge*, p. 379.

grounding as such occurs – which is to say, by the concealment of the ground, as expected by us, in the carrying push-through. The term *Ab-Grund*, the out-ground or denied ground, says exactly that in grounding as understood by the tradition, i.e. in the inviting relationship between the shape and the *logos*, the ground is *concealed*: the ground as such is pointedly expected and, therefore, »absent« (»the stay-away of the ground«, *das Weg-bleiben des Grundes*).

In critical terms, the quote points out that (Aristotelian) metaphysics fails to sufficiently think through the absence of the ground in the grounded. The ground conceals itself for the benefit of the grounded and its sense, or in other words, we experience not the ground but the grounded. This specific concealedness of the ground is understood by Heidegger as the »originary be-ance of the ground«, *die Ursprüngliche Wesung des Grundes*.⁷

Yet, Heidegger's idea here exhibits a further dimension, one that demonstrates the proper result of the previous critical argument. The out-ground has »its own manner of grounding«, *seine Weise des Gründens*. Since the out-ground is not »something else« besides the ground, but rather it is the ground itself thought in respect of its necessarily concealed own nature, we can express the same by saying that »the carrying push-through«, *das tragende Durchragen*, is *not* the only dimension of grounding, that grounding has several levels and one of them is approached by the phenomenological analysis of the ground's absence in the experiencing, expectant of the ground, of the grounded.⁸

In principle, such an analysis attains two results:

1) The self-denial of the ground for the benefit of the grounded is an originary dimension of the openness of the relational framework that allows human experience to make sense. In this context Heidegger sometimes speaks of »Emptiness«, *die Leere*.⁹ Thus, the denial »in a manner proper to it« grounds and founds the relational space of experience and carries its openness without »filling it up« by content-features of things, those for whose benefit it denies itself. Therefore, the openness of the relational space is primarily grounded by the denial and not by the »carrying push-through« of the justifying determination. In other words,

7 *Beiträge*, p. 379.

8 We employ the term »phenomenological analysis« along the lines of Heidegger's methodological argument from § 7 of *Being and Time*. According to it, the phenomenon is »something that does not show itself initially and for the most part, something that is concealed, in contrast to what initially and for the most part does show itself.« Cf. M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. by J. Stambaugh, J., State University of New York Press, Albany 1996, p. 31.

9 »Der Ab-grund als Weg-bleiben des Grundes in dem genannten Sinn ist die erste Lichtung des Offenen als der ‚Leere‘.« Heidegger, *Beiträge*, p. 380.

by means of the denial, the openness is founded as empty for the benefit of the justifying content-determinations of things (i.e., of grounds) that push through the openness and carry human experience of (present) things. Yet the exegetic model of filling an empty space with content-units of things cannot be used literally. In his reflections, Heidegger emphasizes rather the many-levelled nature of grounding that *both* opens by denying (into absence) *and*, in carrying, pushes through into presence.

2) For Heidegger, the out-ground is a time-space (*Zeit-Raum*). This claim stems from his analyses of the dynamic nature of the denial. Properly speaking, the ground is absent for human experience – which absence, by itself, opens the difference between the present and the absent (in the manner of emptiness). Yet Heidegger also views the denial dynamically, as a pull-out, *Entrückung*: while the ground is present for human experiencing, it also pull away from it into absence. Thus, the pull-out endows human experiencing with a peculiar dynamics: it draws it into an open field where the experiencing moves around. In other words, the fact that we do experience means we are pulled towards experiencing. (In this context, Heidegger uses the neologism *Berückung*, »the pull«, as a correlate to *Entrückung*, »the pull-out«, both derived from *der Rücken*, »the back«, and *rücken*, »to push along«: by turning its back on human experience, the absent ground pushes it along.) For Heidegger, the relationship between the experiencer and the experienced (or the justified) is not extrinsic; rather, to experience means to be first drawn, by the pull-out, into the relational space where both experience and grounding make sense. The very nature of being human (the need to experience, let us say) and the very nature of the ground (i.e., the denial) thus, for Heidegger, enter into a peculiar countersway, *Gegenschwung*, whose dynamics establishes the relational structure of the open field as a »network of the pull-out and the pull«, *Entrückungs-Berückungsgefüge*.¹⁰ Subsequently Heidegger interprets this network as time-space, where the pull-out constitutes the ek-static nature of temporality, the pull constitutes the structural nature of spatiality.¹¹

Heidegger situates the basic relational framework into the difference between the presence and the absence of the ground in respect of human experience. What this framework rests on, i.e. its origin, is the denial of the ground for the benefit of the grounded, described in more detail as the dynamic interplay of the pull-out and the pull. It is from this dynamic bond that grounding, in the sense of justifying determination, takes its fixity. At the same time, this dynamic bond does *not* have the character of footing: we are not to understand it as the

¹⁰ Cf. *Beiträge*, p. 371.

¹¹ Cf. e.g. *Beiträge*, p. 385: »Raum ist die berücksende Ab-gründung des Umhalts. Zeit ist die entrückende Ab-gründung der Sammlung. Die Berücksung ist abgründiger Umhalt der Sammlung. Die Entrückung ist abgründige Sammlung auf den Umhalt.«

hupokeimenon of human experience with being – primarily because the human need to experience participates in this bond directly, as that which is pulled into this bond by the pull-out. Humans understand the fundamental dynamic bond »from the inside«, not externally, as a footing.

5.

Speech is speech. This phrase does not guide us to anything further that speech would be grounded in. Nor does it tell us anything about whether speech itself is ground for something else. The phrase 'speech is speech' lets us hover above an abyss as long as we endure it and stay with what it says.¹²

The quote comes from Heidegger's 1950 single lecture *Die Sprache*, later published in the collection *Unterwegs zur Sprache*. It belongs with the group of texts where Heidegger lays out in a more popular form the ideas formulated in his unpublished texts from the decade starting approximately in 1936 (the *Contributions to Philosophy* are dated 1936/37). For a first-time reader, the popularizing style obscures that the abyss, *Abgrund*, above which »speech hovers«, refers to the notion of the denied ground or the »out-ground«, *Ab-Grund*. The incantatory phrase »speech is speech« is not the crucial thing here; rather, Heidegger only seeks to awaken the curiosity of the audience for the argument that is to follow.

98

In the negative exposition, the text at two points weakens the direct link between speech and the ground. To follow what speech is grounded in, or in what way can it itself provide the ground, is not what Heidegger wants to do. In the context of this paper, we can read this as a turn away from the Aristotelian links: *logos-eidos*, or the linguistic experiences in the soul and their expression by sound and script (*ta en tēi psukhēi – ta en tēi phōnēi pathēmata*). The claim that speech has no ground also means that the proper sense of the ground does not consist in its potential to be captured by speech (i.e. *logos-eidos*). And as an aside we can add that the cited claim matters also for the critical revision of Aristotle's definition of human being as *zōon logon ekhon*, as envisaged by Heidegger.¹³

The focus of Heidegger's attention is the bond between speech and the denied ground, *Ab-Grund*. The dynamic tension between the denied ground and the ground, which is to say, between the presence and the absence of the ground,

12 »Sprache ist Sprache. Der Satz bringt uns nicht zu anderem, worin die Sprache gründet. Er sagt auch nichts darüber, ob die Sprache selbst ein Grund für anderes sei. Der Satz: Sprache ist Sprache, läßt uns über einen Abgrund schweben, solange wir bei dem aushalten, was er sagt.« M. Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Neske, Stuttgart 1997, p. 13.

13 *Beiträge*, p. 3.

is articulated in *Die Sprache* as *der Unter-schied*, or the »cleft in the midst«. The *Unter-schied* is localized in between the thing and the world, i.e. between what is present in respect of our experiencing (= the thing) and what can be understood as the basic relational framework of our experience (= world).¹⁴ The *Unter-schied*, thus localized, is the place of speech, the place where »speech speaks«. By the phrase »speech speaks«, Heidegger attempts to capture the very nature of speech without the usual anthropomorphic bias, yet without denying that those who utter and express are always humans. By uttering, human being relates to the speaking of speech. This relationship is characterized by Heidegger by the term *entsprechen*, or »respond by speech to speech«, which is, however, not to be understood in the direction of accordance (the usual meaning of *entsprechen* = correspond to, be in accord with), but rather along the lines of spatial specification: »to speak out of ...«, namely out of speech.

Even in our very brief summary of the basic contours of Heidegger's lecture on *Die Sprache*, the simple question easily arises: Human beings utter words; but *what* is it that speech speaks, and what is it that humans respond (*entsprechen*) to? Of course the little word »what« is a mere auxiliary here: what we are asking about is nothing thing-like, the less object-like. What matter is: *what* is it that is happening in the *Unterschied*, the »cleft in the midst«.

The *Unterschied* is the place of constituting the connection of thing and world. »Speech speaks« this constitution. The very term, »speech«, is best understood as a spatial characteristic: in a specific context it characterizes the *Unterschied* as a place or a space, and this context is the human relationship towards the connection of thing and world, as expressed by the articulation of speech. Speech is the space where the human relationship to the connection of thing and world takes place. We do not go too far when we say that by »speech«, Heidegger designates here the relational space of human experience. And that is the point of gravity of Heidegger's argument in the lecture on *Die Sprache*: the relational space of human experience in itself and by itself »speaks«, i.e. is of a speech-like nature. How are we to understand this? In principle we may state two dimensions of this provocative finding:

1) That the relational space of human experience »speaks« means that it makes sense as the framework of *human* experience. Speech is a specifically human matter. Using the terminology of the *Contributions to Philosophy*, as expounded above, we could state the same by saying that the being-denied of grounding justification makes sense as pulling humans into the relational space of grounding.

¹⁴ »Der Unter-Schied ist weder Distinktion noch Relation. Der Unter-Schied ist im höchsten Fall Dimension für Welt und Ding.« Heidegger, *Unterwegs*, p. 25.

2) That the relational space of human experience »speaks« also means that human speaking in some way speaks this speech. Heidegger describes this by using the term *entsprechen*, or »respond by speech to speech«, recalling the Heraclitean agreement with the speech of essence (*homologeîn*, fr. B50). To respond in this way, or to utter the »speaking« of speech, is an expression of the fact that what we experience is directly speech, not grounded being. In other words, what we experience is word itself in its own deniedly pulling nature.

6.

In their ontological thought, both Aristotle and Heidegger inquire into the relational space of human experience and seek to describe its structure. Both show evident effort to respect, in providing this description, the essential function of speech.

In this essay, we have pursued two interpretative viewpoints, namely the viewpoint of the relational framework of human experience and the viewpoint of the ground. Let us attempt a summary of this interpretative procedure in presenting an exegesis of Aristotle's and Heidegger's ontological reflections.

100

Aristotle's description of the experiential space is rooted in the capturability of being by speech, expressed by Aristotle as the relationship *logos-eidos*. Structurally it is the target of the rather extrinsic relationship of uttering the *logos* by sound and script, and of the rather intrinsic relationship of shape (*eidos, morphē*) to matter (*hylē*). From the interpretive perspective of the relational framework, the fundamental link is the relationship *logos-eidos*; both the argument on uttering from the treatises of the *Organon* and the more detailed metaphysical and physical analyses of the being of being are rooted in it. However, from the viewpoint of the ground (a viewpoint that does not clash with the previous one), the structural emphasis shifts towards being as experienced substance and towards an analysis of its internal make-up. In the Aristotelian description of the relational framework, the *ousiai* fulfill the role of firm points of orientation that welcome the human need to find our way, or to attain orientation, on the basis of understanding. Given that humans are animals essentially determined by speech, the human need to find our way and to understand is also speech-like. Therefore, substance welcomes speech, its inner structure includes the element of openness (*eidos* as open to the *logos*); and yet in the last instance it is not legitimate to say that speech directly participates in the constitution of substance. From the viewpoint of the *ousia*, i.e. from the viewpoint of the ground, speech enters this structure from the outside.

But it is differently from the viewpoint of human experience: here, speech related to substance establishes the very skeleton of the relational framework of experience. The Aristotelian solution of the link between speech and grounding is a system of two viewpoints; in an inchoate form, it already contains the polarity that later metaphysics will re-structure into the relationship of subject and object. This is the crucial difference from Heidegger's attempt to provide a description of the very same link. Heidegger's description pursues one viewpoint only: not the first one (ground, substance), nor the latter one (humans and human experience) nor some third one that would synthesize the other two.¹⁵ Even though Heidegger's viewpoint is the relational framework of human experience (i.e. one of the viewpoints in Aristotle), his standpoint (i.e. the place whence the viewpoint is being applied) is, in contrast to Aristotle, not the experiencing human being but rather the *Unterschied*, the »cleft in the midst«, the place of the difference between the presence and the absence of that which is experienced.

Heidegger does not attempt to sketch the inner structure of the ground; he merely says it is denied for the benefit of the relational framework. One could say that in Heidegger, all the traditional factors of ontological structures are subordinated to the viewpoint of the relational framework. Therefore, his choice of the standpoint of thinking is neither human being nor the ground but rather the relational framework as such. The structure he considers is so to say self-carrying: it is rooted in the »cleft in the midst«, or again in the denial – and thence it has in fact no rooting in any firm foundations. The rooting of ontological structures in the relational framework equals rooting in the sense of metaphysical thinking: in human experience, the idea of the ground makes sense, and therefore Heidegger considers it in this framework, namely as the carrying push-through; yet this »making sense« gives no justification for stabilizing the ground as a carrying soil of the relational framework. One could object that there *is* a justification after all, namely the thing we experience and its stability. However, once we take account of the viewpoint of the relational framework, the stability of that which is experienced loses its fixity and proves to be changing – at various times, in various relational contexts and so on. To root the sense of experience in the relational framework equals to claim that the agent of experience provides no ultimate support for ontological structures either – even though, of course, it is taken account of in these structures as a factor.

15 Similarly to Hegel, Heidegger's metaphysical expositions avoid choosing between the standpoint of the subject or the object. However, Hegel adopts a standpoint (of the Absolute) such that it comprises and employs both previous standpoints, and that by in itself it becomes a third standpoint. Heidegger's approach is different in that the standpoint of the middle does not turn into an independent viewpoint; rather, it is the place (*Ort, topos*) whence the two previous viewpoints can be applied and made valid.

In trying to consider the ontological structure of human experience from the viewpoint of the metaphysical notion of the ground, we have to appreciate Heidegger's effort to make sure that this structure be self-carrying, i.e. both rooted and unrooted in its own sense, characterized by the adjective »denied«. It is due to this manner of being rooted (or, from a different perspective, lacking roots) that we do not neglect the speech-character of grounding, i.e. that speech does not play the secondary role of an external factor.

The rootedness in sense is, as such, rootedness in an originally and throughout speech-like network. Sense always has the character of speech – even in the non-anthropocentric structure of the denied ground, whose dynamics (pull-out/pull) is welcoming toward humans. Given that the relational framework is rooted in its own sense, it follows that speech establishes the structure of this framework.

To conclude, let us attempt to have a look at the structure of the relational framework – the same framework that has served above as the standpoint for theoretical description – from the standpoint of humans and their experiencing.¹⁶ The whole of the relational framework of my experience is of speech-like; thus, in principle, all that I experience can be grasped. However, speech is no possession of mine (the definition *zōon logon ekhon* is invalid); on the contrary, it is that towards which I am being pulled when I find a way in my environment.

102

Thus, in Heidegger, the viewpoint of the meaningfulness of the relational framework can be applied also from the standpoint of human being who experiences and perceives this meaningfulness – without impacting the validity of the complementary description of that same framework from the standpoint of its meaningfulness as such (i.e., from the standpoint of the *Unterschied*). The key conclusion regarding our interpretation of Heidegger's analyses is that describing the relational framework from human standpoint does not lead to a transformation of the ontological viewpoint, nor does it posit human being as the ground (the subject) of their own experiential framework.

16 Intentionally we make this description in first person singular, in the manner that determines the style of formulating the standpoint of human being in the Cartesian tradition and that, for this standpoint, remains a formulation that can provide instructive contrasts.