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MARTIN HEIDEGGER

WHAT IS METAPHYSICS?

Translated by

R.K.Gupta

**PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
St. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE
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R.K.Gupta

Lecturer in Philosophy

St.Stephen's College

Delhi

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October 1987

Publications of St.Stephen's College Philosophical Society

1. **Random Incursions into Philosophy** by S.K.Bose
2. Martin Heidegger - **What is Metaphysics?** translated by R.K.Gupta

Translator's Note

The present translation contains (1) Heidegger's lecture 'What is Metaphysics?' which he delivered in the University of Freiburg in 1929, (2) the 'postscript' which he added to it in 1943, and (3) the 'Introduction' which he added to it in 1949.

I am extremely grateful to John Hodge and to my friend Ken McGill for the enormous help which they gave me in thoroughly checking this translation from the point of both content and style.

What is Metaphysics? is a very, very difficult work in thought as well as in writing. The travails of a reader may be a little less, if he first read the lecture, then the postscript, and lastly the introduction.

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INTRODUCTION

Return to the Ground of Metaphysics

Descartes wrote to Picot, who translated Principia Philosophiae into French: Ainsi toute la philosophie est comme un arbre, dont les racines sont la Metaphysique, le tronc est la Physique, et les tranches qui sortent de ce tronc sont toutes les autres sciences..... (Opp.ed.Ad.et.Ta. IX 14.)

So as to keep to this metaphor we ask: in what soil do the roots of the tree of philosophy find their hold? From what ground do they and through them the whole tree receive their nourishing sap and power? What element, concealed in the ground and soil, permeates the sustaining and nourishing roots of the tree? What does metaphysics rest and move in? What is metaphysics looked at from its ground? What really is metaphysics in its ground?

Metaphysics thinks beings (Seiende) as beings. Whenever it is asked what a being is, a being as such is being viewed. Metaphysical representation owes this view to the light of Being (Sein). The light itself, i.e., that which this thinking experiences as light, comes no longer within the view of this thinking. For this thinking represents beings always and only as beings. From this standpoint, metaphysical thinking no doubt asks about the source of beings and about the originator of light. The light itself is held to be bright enough by the fact that it is responsible for every view of beings.

In whatever way a being is interpreted - whether as Spirit in the sense of Spiritualism, or as Matter and Force in the sense of Materialism, or as Becoming and Life, or as Idea, or as Will, or as Substance, or as Subject, or as Energeia, or as Eternal Return of the Self-same - in each case a being as a being appears in the light of Being. Whenever metaphysics represents beings, Being has become illumined. It has come into unconcealment (Aletheia). Whether and how a being brings with itself this unconcealment, whether and how it even brings itself about in metaphysics and as metaphysics, remains hidden. Being is not thought in its revealing essence, i.e., in its truth. However, in all its answers to the question about beings as such, metaphysics speaks through the unnoticed manifestation of Being. The truth of Being can thus be called the ground in which metaphysics, as the root of the tree of philosophy, is held and out of which it is nourished.

Since metaphysics asks about beings as beings, it remains with beings and does not pay attention to Being as Being. As the root of the tree it transmits sap and power to the trunk and its branches. The root spreads into the ground and soil, so that the tree, for the sake of its growth, may come out of it and leave it behind. The tree of philosophy outgrows the root-soil of metaphysics. The ground and soil is undoubtedly the element in which the root of the tree lives; this element, however, cannot be absorbed in the growth of the tree as its part and parcel. Rather the roots, down to the finest fibres, lose themselves in the soil. The ground is the ground for the root; in it the root forgets

about itself for the sake of the tree. But the root, even though it surrenders itself in its own way to the element of the soil, still belongs to the tree. It gives its element as well as itself over to the tree. It does not pay attention to the soil as root, at least not as if it were its nature to grow out of and expand in this element. Presumably, therefore, the element is also no element unless the root permeates in it.

Insofar as metaphysics always represents only beings as beings, it does not think of (denkt an) Being itself. Philosophy does not concentrate itself on its ground. It leaves it constantly - through metaphysics. But it does not also totally elude it. Insofar as thinking sets out to experience the ground of metaphysics, insofar as it attempts to think of the truth of Being itself - instead of merely representing beings as beings - it in a certain sense leaves metaphysics. This thinking, looked at from the point of view of metaphysics, returns to the ground of metaphysics. But, presumably, that which appears to be the ground, when it is experienced in itself, is something different and as yet unspoken of - from which it would follow that the essence of metaphysics is different from metaphysics.

Thinking, which thinks of the truth of Being, is no longer satisfied with metaphysics; but it also does not think against metaphysics. Metaphorically speaking, it does not tear out the root of philosophy. It digs the ground and ploughs the soil for it. Metaphysics remains the First Philosophy. It never becomes the First Thinking. It is overcome in thinking of the truth of Being. The claim of metaphysics to administer the important relation to "Being" and to determine decisively every relation to beings as such in every way is untenable. However, this "overcoming of metaphysics", does not do away with metaphysics. So long as man is the animal rationale, he is the animal metaphysicum. So long as he considers himself the rational being, metaphysics, in Kant's words, belongs to the nature of man. But, on the other hand, if thinking succeeds in returning to the ground of metaphysics, it could bring about a change in the essence of man and thus transform metaphysics itself.

Thus when with the unfolding of the question of the truth of Being, we speak of the overcoming of metaphysics, it means: thinking of Being itself. This thinking of Being passes beyond the fact that we have until now not thought of the ground of the root of philosophy. The thinking of Sein und Zeit (Being and Time) (1927) is meant to prepare the way for this overcoming of metaphysics. However, that which puts this thinking on its way can only be that which it is proper to think. That and how Being is here related to thinking does not primarily and solely depend upon thinking. That and how Being encounters thinking depends upon Being. Thinking springs from Being and thus corresponds to it as such.

But why is this sort of overcoming of metaphysics necessary? Should in this way merely that discipline of philosophy, which until now was the root, be provided with a more fundamental foundation and replaced by it? Does it concern a change in the system of philosophy? No. Or, in returning to the ground of metaphysics, should a certain presupposition, which has until now been

overlooked, be discovered and reckoned with - a presupposition in the absence of which philosophy was not able to stand on its unwavering basis and thus be the absolute science? No.

With the advent or absence of the truth of Being something else is at stake:- not the idea of philosophy, not merely philosophy itself, but the proximity or remoteness of that element from which philosophy, as the representational thinking of beings as such, receives its essence and necessity. What is to be determined is whether Being itself, in terms of its own proper truth, can bring to pass its relation to man, or whether the departure of metaphysics from its ground will further prevent from coming into light the relation of Being to man in terms of this relationship itself, the essence of which is to bring man to belong in Being.

In its answers to its question about beings as such metaphysics has already conceived Being in advance. Metaphysics necessarily and thus constantly speaks of Being. But in this way Being itself does not come to be spoken of, because it does not reflect upon Being in its truth and truth as unconcealment and unconcealment in its true essence. For metaphysics truth always appears in the derivative form of the truth of knowledge and the statement of this knowledge. But truth in the sense of unconcealment could be more fundamental than the truth in the sense of veritas! Aletheia could be the word which gives a not yet experienced inkling in the unthought essence of esse! Should this be the case, then, the representational thinking of metaphysics would never reach this meaning of truth, no matter how much historical interest it might take in pre-socratic philosophy. For the point in question is not any kind of renaissance of the pre-socratic philosophy - such an intention would be vain and non-sensical - but to be aware of the advent of the as yet unspoken essence of unconcealment as what Being proclaims itself to be. During the period from Anaximander to Nietzsche the truth of Being remained concealed from metaphysics. Why doesn't metaphysics think of it? Does the neglect of this thinking depend only upon the kind of metaphysical thinking? Or does it belong to the essential destiny of metaphysics that its ground evades it, because whenever a being appears the essential or concealed element does not do so, and it does not do so far the sake of the being which appears?

Metaphysics speaks of Being constantly and in the most diverse ways. It itself stirs up and fortifies the impression that it is itself which raises the question about Being and answers it. But it never answers the question about the truth of Being, because it never raises it. It does not raise it, because it thinks Being only in representing beings as beings. It means the totality of beings, although it speaks of Being. It mentions Being, although it means beings as beings. Metaphysical statements curiously move from their beginning to end in a thorough-going intermixing of beings and Being. This intermixing is to be considered, of course, as an essential event and not a mistake. It does not in any way have its ground in a sheer carelessness of thinking or hastiness of assertion. As a result of this thoroughgoing intermixing, the representational thinking reaches a summit of confusion if one maintains that metaphysics raises the question of Being.

It almost seems that metaphysics, by the manner it thinks (*denkt*) beings, is unconsciously fated to be a barrier which blocks from man his primary relationship to Being.

But how would it be if the absence of this relationship between man and Being and the forgottenness of this absence has determined the modern age for a long time? How would it be if, because of this exclusion of Being, man were left ever more exclusively only with beings, so that he remained almost deprived of his relationship to Being and at the same time this deprivation remained veiled? How would it be if it is so, and in fact, if it has been so for a long time? How would it be if there were signs which hinted that in the future this forgottenness would become even more decisive?

Would there, in the face of this fate of Being, still be reason for a thinker to behave presumptuously? Would there still be reason for any one to deceive himself, and that too as a result of a self-caused and self-exalted attitude? Would, then, there be not enough reason that thinking, which thinks of Being, is horrified, and accordingly cannot but uphold the fate of Being in a state of dread in order to bring itself to endure the forgottenness of Being? But can thinking do it if this state of dread is considered a mere depressed mood? What does this fate of Being of dread have to do with psychology and psycho-analysis?

Suppose that along with the overcoming of metaphysics went the attempt to learn to pay attention to the forgottenness of Being in order to experience it and to admit and preserve this experience within the relationship of Being to man, then, the question "What is metaphysics?", in the emergency of the forgottenness of Being, might still remain for thinking the most necessary of all necessary questions.

Thus everything depends upon this that thinking becomes truer to its essence in good time. This it does when, instead of accomplishing a higher degree of exertion, it is attributed a different origin. In this way, the thinking which is caused and illuminated by beings as such and is thus representational thinking, gives way to thinking which is brought to pass by Being itself and thus belongs to Being.

Deliberations on how always still metaphysical representation and only metaphysical representation makes an immediate action possible effectively and usefully in everyday public life wander in emptiness. For the truer thinking is to its essence, and the more it accomplishes itself in terms of its relation to Being, so much the more completely does it itself pertain to an action suited to it, i.e., it thinks that which it is destined to think and therefore that which has already been thought.

But who still thinks of what has already been thought? One fabricates things. To enable thinking to grasp the essence of man in relationship to the truth of Being, to open for it a path so that it may properly reflect on Being itself in its truth - towards this aim is the thinking of Sein und Zeit en route. In order to answer the question about the truth of Being it is necessary to reflect upon the essence of man. For the tacit and yet to be demonstrated awareness of the forgottenness of Being implies the all-important assumption that Being is related to man and even to itself in accordance with its unconcealment. But how could this assumption become an explicit question, unless one did his best to determine the essential nature of man in terms of subjectivity or in terms of the notion of animal rationale? In order to express appropriately and in one word the relationship of Being to man as well as the essential relationship of man to the overtness ("thereness") of Being as such, the nomenclature "Dasein" - "overt being" - has been chosen for man. This has been done, although metaphysics uses this nomenclature (Dasein) for what is otherwise called existentia, actuality, reality, and objectivity, and even though the customary speech tends to talk of "human Dasein" in the metaphysical sense of the word. As a result, all reflection, which is pleased to maintain that in Sein und Zeit the words "overt being" have been used in place of the word "consciousness", is to be done away with. As if here the mere uses of different words were in question, as if what was in question was not the only and the unique thing, namely, to bring before thinking the relationship of Being to man and with this, from our point of view, chiefly an adequately essential notion of man for our leading enquiry. Neither do the words "overt being" appear in place of the word "consciousness", nor does the "thing" called "overt being" appear in place of the "thing" called "consciousness". Rather that is called "overt being" which is first to be experienced as the point or the place of the truth of Being and then thought in a corresponding manner.

"The 'essence' of an overt being lies in its existence" - this leading proposition of Sein und Zeit (p.42) informs us of the sole idea implied in the words "overt being" in that book.

If one really supposes that in metaphysical language the word "existence" signifies the same thing as the word "Dasein", namely, the actuality of every actual object, from God to a grain of sand, then, our proposition, as understood in this rash manner, would succeed only in pushing the difficulty of what it is proper to think from the words "overt being" to the word "existence". In S.u.Z. the nomenclature "existence" has been used exclusively to signify the Being of man. By rightly thinking "existence" one can think the "essence" of an overt being, in whose overtness Being reveals and conceals itself, preserves and withdraws. But in this manner the truth of Being is not exhausted in an overt being nor rendered identical with it in the sense of the metaphysical proposition 'all objectivity is as such subjectivity'.

What does the word "existence" mean in S.u.Z.? It means a manner of Being, i.e., the Being of that being which stands overt to the overtness of Being, in which he stands as exposing it. This

exposing is termed "care". The ecstatic essence of an overt being is thought in terms of care just as, on the other hand, care can also be adequately grasped only in its ecstatic essence. What we have called exposing constitutes the essence of what is ecstatic as thought here. We would understand the ecstatic essence of existence inadequately if we conceived it as "standing beyond", and interpreted "beyond" as "away from" the imminence of consciousness or spirit. For in doing so we would still be conceiving existence in terms of "subjectivity" and "substance", while in fact "exposing" has to be thought as the exposing of the overtness of Being itself. The stasis of what is ecstatic rests, however strange it may sound, in standing inside the "exposition" or "thereness" of unconcealment, which is Being itself. In place of the word "existence", as used within the realm of thinking of and in terms of the truth of Being, one can most appropriately use the word "instanding". But, in doing so, we must above all consider the following notions together and as constituting the full essence of existence: 'standing inside the overtness of Being', 'exposing the fact of instanding' (care) and 'extending up to the ultimate limit' (Being unto death).

That being, which is in the manner of existence, is man. Man alone exists. A rock is, but does not exist. A tree is, but does not exist. A horse is, but does not exist. An angel is, but does not exist. God is, but does not exist. The proposition "man alone exists" in no way means that man alone is real and that every other being is unreal or a mere appearance or an idea of man. It means that man is that being, whose Being is distinguished by the fact that he, on behalf of Being, stands inside the unconcealment of Being as exposing it. The existential essence of man is the ground for the fact that he can represent beings as beings and have consciousness of what it represents. All consciousness presupposes ecstatically thought existence as the essentia of man, where essentia signifies man as man. Consciousness, on the other hand, neither makes beings overt nor endows man with the capacity to stand overt to beings. Whither and whence and in what open dimensions could the intentionality of consciousness move itself, if the essence of man did not already consist in the notion of instanding? What else can, in case one ever thinks earnestly, the word "being" in the expressions "being conscious" and "being self-conscious" mean except the existential essence of that which is insofar as it exists? Self-hood indeed characterizes the essence of that being which exists, but existence neither consists in selfhood nor is determined by it. However, as metaphysical thinking defines the selfhood of man in terms of substance or, what is basically the same thing, in terms of subject, the primary way which leads from metaphysics to the ecstatic-existential essence of man would have to proceed by way of the metaphysical definition of the selfhood of man. (S.u.Z. Sections 63 and 64).

Now because the question about existence is only dwelt upon for the sake of the unique question of thinking, namely, the yet to be unfolded question about the truth of Being as the concealed ground of all metaphysics, the treatise which attempts to return to the ground of metaphysics is called not "Existence and Time" nor even "Consciousness and Time" but "Being and Time". This title is not be taken as corresponding to what is usually called 'Being and Becoming', 'Being and Appearance',

'Being and Thinking', 'Being and Ought'. For in all of these Being is still always represented restrictively, as if Becoming, Appearance, Thinking and Ought did not belong to it; but as they are obviously not nothing, they therefore belong to Being. In Sein und Zeit "Being" is not something different from "Time", insofar as "Time" is only the preliminary nomenclature for the truth of Being - the truth which is the essence of Being, and hence is Being itself. But why now "Time" and "Being"?

Thinking of the beginning of history when Being is itself revealed in Greek thinking we see that the Greeks in the very beginning experienced the Being of beings as the presence of what is present. (Anwesenheit des Anwesenden). If we translate einai as "being", then this translation is literally correct. However, we only replace one word-sound by another. If we examine ourselves, we would easily find out that we think neither einai in the Greek manner, nor 'being' in an adequately clear and distinct manner. What do we really mean when we use the word "being" instead of the word einai and einai and esse instead of "being"? We do not mean anything. The Greek and Latin and German words, all are equally mute. In clinging to the customary usage we only betray ourselves as heading into the greatest thoughtlessness which has ever entered the realm of thinking and which has dominated it up to now. The word einai says: being present (anwesen). This idea of being present is hidden deep in the original name of Being. But for us einai and ousia as par- and above all apousia says: this being present is unknowingly and concealedly governed by the present time (Gegenwart) and continuity (Andauern); it is time. Being as such is thus unconcealed through time. Hence time refers to unconcealment, i.e., to the truth of Being. But this time is not experienced in the changing or passing away of beings. It is completely different; it has not only been not thought by the metaphysical notion of time but also cannot be thought by it. Thus time becomes the preliminary thing to reflect upon for the first and foremost experience of the truth of Being.

Just as we find the concealed essence of time in the first metaphysical nomenclature of Being, so also do we find it in its last name 'Eternal Return of the Self-same'. In an era of metaphysics the history of Being is ruled by an unthought out essence of time. Space is not alongside this time, but also not merely in it.

An attempt to go over from the representation of beings as such to the thinking of the truth of Being must, starting from the representation of beings, also in a way represent the truth of Being. But the latter representation is necessarily of a different sort, and finally, as representation, is incommensurate with what it is proper to think. This attitude, arising from metaphysics and entering into the relationship of the truth of Being to man, is called understanding. But this understanding is thought in terms of the unconcealment of Being. It is the ecstatic project, i.e., the project thrown and standing inside the realm of the overt. The realm which delivers itself as overt in the project of understanding, so that in it something (Being) shows itself as something (Being itself in its unconcealment), is called meaning. (Compare S.u.Z. p.151) "Meaning of Being" and "truth of Being".

are identical.

If time belongs in a still concealed manner to the truth of Being, then each projected overtness of the truth of Being as an understanding of Being must look out in time for a possible horizon for the understanding of Being. (Compare S.u.Z. sections 31-34 and 68).

The foreword to Sein und Zeit, on the first page of the book, closes with the following propositions: "The concrete development of the question about the meaning of 'B e i n g' is the aim of the following treatise. The interpretation of t i m e as the possible horizon for every understanding of Being as such is its preparatory aim."

Philosophy could not have easily brought forth a clearer piece of evidence for the extent of the forgottenness of Being, in which all philosophy is sunk but which has come to entertain a fateful claim on the thinking of S.u.Z., than that somanbulastic self-assurance with which it passed over the proper and unique question of S.u.Z.. Thus the point in question is not some misunderstanding about a book but our abandonment by Being.

Metaphysics discusses what beings are as beings. It contains logos (a statement) about on (a being). The later term "ontology" defines its essence, if indeed we understand it in its proper meaning and not in the manner of academic rigidity. Metaphysics moves in the realm of on heiov. It represents beings as beings, the totality of beings as such, the beingness of beings (the ousia of the on). But it represents the beingness of beings in a twofold way: firstly, in the sense of their universal characteristics (on katholon koinon), but at the same time, in the sense of their highest and hence in the sense of their divine being (on katholon akrotaton, theion). The unconcealment of beings as beings has been worked out in this two fold manner in Aristotle's metaphysics. (Compare Met. I ', E, K).

Because metaphysics represents beings as beings, it is in itself the truth of beings both in their universal and highest characteristics. It is in its essence ontology in the narrower sense as well as theology. This ontotheological essence of real philosophy (prote philosophia) must be grounded in the manner in which on as on makes itself overt for it. The theological character of ontology is not based on the fact that the Greek metaphysics was later taken up by the Christian ecclesiastical theology and transformed through it. Rather it rests on the manner in which beings as beings have revealed themselves from the beginning. This unconcealment of beings first made it possible for the Christian theology of Greek philosophy to place itself on a strong footing - whether to its advantage or disadvantage, this the theologians might themselves decide from the Christian experience in considering what is written in the first Corinthian Epistle of the Apostle Paul: ouchi emoranan ho theos ten sophian; "Has not God stultified the wisdom of the world?" (I. Cor. I, 20) But sophia tou kosmon is what is Hellenes zetousin (1, 22), what the Greeks are seeking. Aristotle calls prote

philosophia (real philosophy) explicitly as zetoumene, the sought. Would Christian theology once more resolve to realize the words of the Apostle, and accordingly stultify philosophy?

As the truth of beings as such metaphysics has two forms. But metaphysics does not know the ground of this fact nor the origin of this ground; and that this is so is not a mere accident or a result of some omission. Metaphysics possesses this character by the fact that it is what it is, namely the representation of beings as beings. It has no choice. As metaphysics it is naturally deprived of the experience of Being, because it always only represents a being (on) as the latter shows itself (hei on). It is not aware of that which in this on, insofar as it is unconcealed, has concealed itself.

Thus it is necessary in good time to think renewedly about what is really meant by the word on, being. Accordingly the question about on has been recalled to thinking. (Compare the foreword to S.u.Z.) But this recollection does not merely repeat the Platonic-Aristotelian question; on the other hand, it enquires into what is concealed in on.

Metaphysics is grounded in what is concealed in on, even though in its representation it is dedicated to on hei on. Thus in inquiring into this concealed element we seek, metaphysically speaking, what is fundamental for ontology. Hence, the thought of Sein und Zeit (p.13) has been called Fundamental Ontology. But this title, as any other title, may be misleading. Metaphysically it says something correct, but just for that reason it may lead to a mistake. For what is sought is to go over from metaphysics to the thinking of the truth of Being. So long as this thinking addresses itself as Fundamental Ontology it stands in its own way and obscures it. The title "Fundamental Ontology" tends to lead to the opinion that thinking, which tries to think the truth of Being and not, like any other ontology, the truth of beings, is itself a kind of ontology. As a matter of fact, thinking of the truth of Being as an attempt to return to the ground of metaphysics at the very beginning leaves the realm of any kind of ontology. As against this, any philosophy which mediately or immediately represents "transcendence", is necessarily and truly ontology - whether it obtains a basis of ontology or whether it claims to reject ontology as a conceptual freezing of experience.

Now if thinking which tries to think the truth of Being - and this as a result of the long habit of representing beings as such - itself gets caught up in this representation, then, presumably, for a preliminary reflection as well as for being able to go over from representational thinking to recollective thinking, nothing will be more necessary than the question "What is metaphysics?"

The unfolding of this question in the following lecture itself ends in a question. This is the basic question of metaphysics and reads: why are there beings and not rather Nothing? Much rambling talk has taken place about the terms dread (Angst) and Nothing which appear in the lecture. But it has not occurred to anyone to consider why this lecture, which tries to think of Nothing in terms of the thinking of the truth of Being and thence to think into the essence of metaphysics,

takes the question under consideration as the basic question of metaphysics. Does it not produce in an attentive listener some suspicion which will have greater weight than all the passion expressed against dread and Nothing? We see that as a result of the final question we, in thinking of Being by way of Nothing, ultimately come back to a question about beings. Insofar as this question, in the customary metaphysical sense, still asks causally (about why?), thinking of Being is completely rejected in favour of the representational knowledge of beings on the basis of beings. Needless to say that our final question is obviously the question, which the metaphysician Leibniz has asked in his Principes de la nature et de la grace: pourquoi il y a plutot quelque chose que rien? (Opp. ed. Gerh. tom. VI, 602. n. 7)

Does then the lecture fall away from its proper aim? - what really could be expected due to the difficulty of going over from metaphysics to a different kind of thinking. Does it ultimately ask, with Leibniz, the metaphysical question about the highest ground of all beings? Why has not, then, as would have been proper, Leibniz not been mentioned?

Or has the question been asked in a totally different sense? If it does not enquire about beings and for this purpose try to explore the first being as their cause, then, the question will have to be concerned with what is not a being. With this is the question concerned and writes it with a capital letter: Nothing. That alone is the theme of the lecture. It is necessary to consider the aim of this lecture in terms of its proper and leading perspective. Then, what has been called the basic question of metaphysics would have to be answered, fundamental - ontologically, in terms of the ground of metaphysics and the question about this ground.

How should we then, if we admit that in the end we think about the proper aim of the lecture, understand the question?

The question reads: why are there beings and not rather Nothing? If we do not think within metaphysics in the customary metaphysical way but of the truth of Being in terms of the essence and truth of metaphysics, we can put the question in this way: how does it happen that a being always has precedence and claims to answer for every case of "is-ness", while what is not a being and is as such Nothing or Being itself remains forgotten? How does it happen that Being and Nothing are really not? Does the dogmatic belief that "Being" is self-evident and as a consequence Nothing is easier to understand than a being enter metaphysics for this reason? That, in fact, is what has happened with Being and Nothing. If it were different, then, in the aforementioned place Leibniz could not elucidatively say: Car le rien est plus simple et plus facile que quelque chose.

What then presents the greater riddle - that a being is, or that Being is? Or does this enquiry still not bring us close to that riddle which has come to pass with the question of the Being of beings?

Whatever the answer, the time should have become ripe in the meantime to consider the much disputed lecture "What is metaphysics?" in terms of its aim and not in an imaginary way.

LECTURE

"What is Metaphysics?" - The question makes one expect that we shall talk about metaphysics. We abstain from doing so. Instead, we shall discuss one definite metaphysical question, through which, so it seems, we are immediately placed into metaphysics. Thus alone do we really enable metaphysics to introduce itself.

We propose to begin with the unfolding of a metaphysical question, then try to develop this question and conclude by answering it.

Unfolding of a Metaphysical Question

Seen from the standpoint of common sense, philosophy, according to Hegel, is the "inverted world". Thus the peculiar nature of our undertaking calls for a preparatory definition. This arises from the dual nature of metaphysical inquiry.

Firstly, every metaphysical question always encompasses the entire range of metaphysical problems. It is always the whole of it. Secondly, every metaphysical question can be asked only in such a way that the questioner as a questioner is involved in the question. From this we learn how to proceed: metaphysical inquiry must take place as a whole and in terms of the essential situation of the questioning overt being. We ask here and now for ourselves. Our overt being - in the community of scientists, teachers and students - is governed by science. What essential things are happening in the foundation of our overt being, insofar as science has become a passion with us?

The realms of sciences lie far apart. Their methodologies are basically different. Today this disrupted manifoldness of disciplines is held together only by the technical organization of the universities and faculties, and possesses significance by the practical utility of the subjects. On the other hand, the root of the sciences is essentially dead.

And yet, in line with the real aim of all sciences, we are related to beings. As seen from the standpoint of sciences alone no one realm takes precedence over another, neither Nature over History nor vice-versa. No one methodology excels another. Mathematical knowledge is not more rigorous than philological or historical knowledge. It has only the characteristic of "exactness" which is not identical with that of rigorousness. To demand exactness of history would amount to violating the ideal of rigorousness peculiar to the humanistic sciences. The world-relationship which governs all the sciences as such leads them to seek for beings themselves in order to investigate and define these beings with regard to their nature and mode of existence. Ideally speaking, the sciences aim at comprehending the essential nature of all things.

This distinguished world-relationship to beings themselves is sustained and guided by a freely chosen attitude of human existence. Undoubtedly, the pre-scientific and non-scientific activities of man are also related to beings. But a science is distinguished by the fact that it, in a quite specific manner, explicitly and solely allows an object alone the first and last word. In this objectivity of questioning, defining and validating there takes place a peculiar sort of subjection to beings themselves, so that they may manifest themselves.

As a result of this subjection scientific research and doctrine is enabled to assume - even though in a limited manner - a leading role within the whole realm of human existence. The specific world-relationship of science and the human attitude which guides it can only then be fully understood when we see and grasp what happens in the world-relationship so maintained. Man - one being among others - "pursues science". In this "pursuit" nothing less happens than the invasion of a being called Man into the midst of the totality of beings, in such a way that in and through this invasion beings are revealed in their nature and mode of existence. It is above all this revelatory invasion, which in its own way helps beings to be what they are.

These three factors of world-relationship, attitude and invasion, which constitute a radical unity, bring a fiery simplicity and keenness of an overt being into scientific existence. If we explicitly take possession of the scientific overt being thus elaborated, then, we must say:

That to which the world-relationship refers are beings themselves - and nothing else.

That which conducts all attitude are beings themselves - and nothing more.

That due to which invasion takes place in scientific investigation are beings themselves - and nothing beyond.

But how strange that just as the scientific person makes sure of his possession he has to speak of something different! What is to be investigated is only beings - and nothing else; beings alone - and nothing more; merely beings - and nothing beyond.

What is this Nothing? Is it an accident that we speak like that wholly automatically? Is it merely a way of talking - and nothing else?

But why should we bother ourselves about this Nothing? Science certainly rejects and abandons Nothing as something which is not. Yet when we abandon Nothing in this manner, do we not then, really admit it? But how can we speak of admitting anything when we admit nothing? But may be this manner of talking is only empty wrangling about words. As against this, science must renewedly assert its earnestness and sobriety that it is concerned only with beings. Nothing - what

else can it mean to a science except an outrage and a phantom. If science is correct, then it is clear that it wants to know nothing about Nothing. This is ultimately the strictly scientific conception of Nothing. We know it in wanting to know nothing about Nothing.

Science wants to know nothing about Nothing. But it is also just as much certain that in trying to declare its essence it calls Nothing for help. What it abandons it also demands. What sort of discordance is this!

As a result of reflecting on our present existence - as governed by science - we have got into the midst of a conflict. This conflict has unfolded a question, which, properly speaking, is: what is Nothing?

Development of the Question

The development of the question about Nothing must lead us to the position where it is seen whether it is possible to answer it or whether an answer is impossible. Nothing is admitted. Science abandons it by a sort of superior indifference towards it as something which is "not" there.

Notwithstanding we shall try to inquire about Nothing. What is Nothing? But at the very outset of our inquiry we see something unusual: we posit Nothing as something which "is" such and such, as a being. But it has just been found to be fundamentally different from this. The inquiry about Nothing - the question "what is Nothing?" - turns Nothing into its opposite. It robs itself of its own object.

Accordingly every answer to our question is impossible from the very beginning. For it is necessarily of the form that Nothing "is" this or that. Questions and answers are equally nonsensical with regard to Nothing.

Thus one does not need to go to science to reject our question. The common basic rule of all thinking, the rule that contradiction is to be avoided, general "logic" disposes of it. For thinking which is essentially always about something would here, as thinking of Nothing, have to deal against its own essence.

Thus, because any attempt to make Nothing an object is doomed to fail, we are already at the end of our enquiry about it. But this is so under the presupposition that here "logic" has the final say, that understanding is the instrument and thinking the way to fundamentally grasp Nothing and to decide about its possible revelation.

But is it possible to question the sovereignty of "logic"? Is not understanding really the ultimate master in this question about Nothing? With its help alone can we determine Nothing even though only as a problem which destroys itself. For Nothing is the negation of the totality of beings, the non-being as such. Here we subsume Nothing under the higher category of the Negative and thus what is negated. But according to the sovereign and unassailable doctrine of "logic", negation is a specific act of understanding. How can we, with regard to our question and also the possibility of such a questioning, want to depart from understanding? However, is what we here presuppose really so certain? Does Not, Negativity and thus Negation represent a higher category under which Nothing is subsumed as a special kind of negated thing? Is Nothing there only because there is Not, i.e., Negation? Or is it the other way around? Are Negation and Not there only because there is Nothing? This has not been decided; not even has a question once been explicitly raised about it. We maintain that Nothing is more fundamental than Not and Negation.

If this contention is correct, then, the possibility of negation as an act of understanding, and consequently understanding itself, would in some way depend upon Nothing. How, then, can understanding want to decide about Nothing? Does not ultimately the apparent nonsensicality of the question and answer about Nothing depend merely upon a blind caprice of rambling intellect?

If we do not now permit ourselves to be led astray by the formal impossibility of the question about Nothing, but raise it in spite of it, then we must at least satisfy the basic demand of any possible execution of an inquiry. If we persist in inquiring into Nothing, then it must itself be given us in advance. We must be able to encounter it.

Where shall we seek Nothing? How shall we find Nothing? In order to find something must we not already know that it is there? Indeed. First and foremost, one can seek only when one has anticipated the existence of what is sought. But now it is Nothing that is sought. Is there after all a seeking without anticipation, a seeking which is pure finding?

Be that as it may, we know Nothing even though as something about which we talk loosely in our day to day life. This Nothing, so common, so hackneyed, so much taken for granted in our talk - this Nothing we can even provide with an off-hand "definition":

Nothing is the complete negation of the totality of beings. Does not this characterization of Nothing give us a hint in the direction where alone we can encounter it?

The totality of beings must first be given in order that we may negate it as such - so that Nothing can then reveal itself.

But even if we ignore the doubtful nature of the relationship between Negation and Nothing, how can we, with our finite essence, make the totality of beings in themselves accessible to ourselves?

We can in any case imagine the totality of beings in the "idea" and then negate this image and so think in a negated manner. In this way we do obtain the formal notion of an imagined Nothing, but never Nothing itself. But Nothing is nothing, and between the imagined and the "authentic" Nothing there cannot be any difference if Nothing represents a complete lack of differentiation. But the "authentic" Nothing - is that not again the old latent but nonsensical notion of Nothing as being? Now for the last time the rational objections want to impede our seeking, which can be justified only by a basic experience of Nothing.

As surely as we never grasp absolutely the totality of beings, so certainly do we find ourselves placed in the midst of beings somehow revealed in their totality. there is indeed an essential difference between grasping the totality of beings in themselves and finding oneself placed in the midst of the totality of beings. The former is fundamentally impossible. The latter is constantly occurring in our overt being. It really looks as if in our daily drift we cling only to this or that being and are lost in this or that realm of beings. But however piecemeal our daily experience may appear, it always holds beings, even though in a shadowy manner, in a unity of the "totality". At just those moments when we are not specifically occupied with things and ourselves this "totality" overcomes us, e.g. in a state of genuine boredom. This boredom is not yet there when we are bored with this book or that film, this activity or that state of idleness. It is revealed when "one is bored". The profound boredom, drifting here and there in the abyss of an overt being like a hazy mist, draws all things, people and oneself along in a peculiar sort of indifference. This boredom manifests the totality of beings.

Another possibility of such a manifestation is concealed in the joy one feels in the presence of the overt being - not merely of a person - of a beloved.

Through such moods, when such and such "is" the case with someone, we find ourselves placed in the midst of the totality of beings. The mood which we are in reveals in its own peculiar way not only the totality of beings, but this revelation is at the same time - far from being a mere accident - the basic event of our overt being.

What we call "feelings" are neither fleeting concomitant phenomena of our thinking and willing attitudes, nor mere drives towards them nor mere states of affairs with which we have to do in one way or another.

Just when the moods conduct us in this manner before the totality of beings, they conceal what we are seeking - Nothing. We would now be still less of the opinion that the negation of the

totality of beings as manifested through moods gives us Nothing. Such a thing can accordingly fundamentally occur only in that mood which is specifically revelatory of Nothing.

Does there occur in the overt being of man a mood which brings him before Nothing itself?

Such an occurrence is possible, even actual - although very seldom - only for moments in the basic mood of dread. We do not mean by dread here that nervousness which is so frequent and which really belongs to fear - a mood which appears all too easily.

Dread is basically different from fear. We fear always this or that determinate being, which threatens us in this or that respect. Fear in the presence of is always fear about something determinate. Because fear is essentially characterized by the fact that it is in the presence of and about something, the frightened person is held fast by what he finds himself in. In trying to rescue himself from this, he is uncertain in relation to the other; that is, he is "baffled" as a whole.

In dread there does not occur any such confusion. Rather it interweaves its own peculiar peace. Undoubtedly dread is always dread in the presence of but not in the presence of this or that determinate being. Dread in the presence of is always dread about but not about this or that determinate being. However, the indeterminateness of that in the presence of and about which we feel dread is not simply a lack of determinateness, but an essential impossibility of any kind of determinateness. This fact becomes clear by means of a familiar explanation.

We say that in dread "one feels uneasy". What causes one to feel uneasy and who is it who does so? We cannot say what it is in the presence of which one feels uneasy. One does so as a whole. Everything, including ourselves, sinks into a state of indifference. However, not in the sense that everything just disappears, but in the sense that while withdrawing it turns as such back to us. This withdrawal of the totality of beings which closes about us in dread oppresses us. There remains no hold. In the slipping away of beings there remains only this "no", which seizes us.

Dread manifests Nothing.

In dread we are in a state of "suspense". To put it more clearly, insofar as it causes the totality of beings to slip away, dread leaves us suspended. Thus it is that we human 'beings' also slip away along with other beings. Therefore, it is not "you" or "I" who feel uneasy, but "one" does so. In the thorough shaking up of this state of suspense, where he can hold on to nothing, only the pure overt being is still there.

Dread leaves us speechless. Because the totality of beings slips away and as such Nothing presses forth, every "is" statement in respect of it is silent. That we, in the uneasiness of dread, often

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seek to break the empty silence through indiscriminate talk is only the proof of the presence of Nothing. One is able to find immediately that dread reveals Nothing only when dread has given way. In the light of that vision which is still fresh in our memory, we must say: that in the presence of and about which we felt dread was "really" - nothing. Indeed, Nothing itself - Nothing as such - was there.

With the basic mood of dread we have obtained that event of an overt being in which Nothing becomes manifest and in terms of which it must be enquired about.

What is Nothing?

THE ANSWERING OF THE QUESTION

The reply essential to our purpose has already been won if we really care to keep alive the question about Nothing. For this it is necessary that we follow up the change of man as an overt being because of which dread occurs in us and grasp Nothing as it manifests itself in it. Here also it is necessary to explicitly keep away those characteristics which do not proceed from Nothing.

We find Nothing revealed in dread, but not as a being. Equally little is it given as an object. Dread is not an act of apprehending Nothing. Nevertheless Nothing becomes manifest in and through it, although again not as if it stood detached "side by side" with the totality of beings in respect of which one feels uneasy. We should rather say that Nothing is encountered in dread in one with the totality of beings. What is meant here by "in one with"?

In dread the totality of beings founders. In what sense does it happen? Beings are not annulled through dread so as to leave Nothing as a residue. How can it even happen since dread finds itself completely powerless in the face of the totality of beings. Rather Nothing becomes manifest in a peculiar manner with and in beings as they are slipping away in their totality.

In dread there does not occur any annulment of the totality of beings in themselves; but equally little do we negate the totality of beings in order above all to obtain Nothing. Even if we ignore the fact that dread as such is incapable of executing explicitly any statement, we always arrive too late with this negation which should give us Nothing. We encounter Nothing in advance of this. We said that we encounter it "in one with" the totality of beings as they are slipping away.

In dread there lies a receding before which is certainly not a running away but a spell-bound peace. This receding before has its origin in Nothing. Nothing does not attract but essentially repels. But as letting it slip away, the repelling as such refers to the foundering totality

of beings. This total repelling reference to the totality of beings in the state of slipping away - as that which Nothing throngs round an overt being in dread - is the essence of Nothing: Nihilation. Nihilation is neither the annulment of beings nor does it spring from negation. It also cannot be reckoned in terms of annulment and negation. Nothing itself nihilates.

Nihilating is not an arbitrary occurrence. But as a repelling reference to the totality of beings in the state of slipping away, it manifests beings in their fully and as yet concealed strange character as something basically different from Nothing.

It is in the bright night of Nothing of dread that the original overtness of beings as beings first becomes possible, the fact that they are beings - and not Nothing. But this "and not Nothing" which we have added here, is not a supplementary explanation, but the preliminary condition of the possibility of the manifestation of beings as such. The essence of the originally nihilating Nothing lies in it. It is this of all things which brings an overt being before beings as beings.

Only on the ground of the original manifestation of Nothing can the overt being of man meet and come to terms with beings. But insofar as, in accordance with his essence an overt being relates himself to himself and other beings, he always comes as such an overt being out of the manifested Nothing.

O v e r t being means to be held in Nothing.

As holding himself in Nothing, an overt being is always beyond the totality of beings. This being beyond beings we call transcendence. If an overt being were not of a transcending essence, i.e., as we may now say, if he did not hold himself in Nothing from the very beginning, then he could not relate himself to beings, including himself.

Without the original manifestation of Nothing there is no self-hood and no freedom.

With this we have obtained the answer to our question about Nothing. Nothing is neither an object nor any kind of being. It does not appear by itself nor side by side with beings as an adjunct. It is the condition of the possibility of the manifestation of beings as beings for an overt being. It is not a conceptual opposite of a being, but is its own fundamental essence. In the Being of beings there takes place the nihilating Nothing.

But now we must give expression to a doubt which we have all too long withheld. If an overt being can relate himself to beings, or exist, only by holding himself in Nothing, and if Nothing becomes manifest fundamentally only in dread, must we not then be constantly suspended in dread in order to exist at all? But have we not ourselves admitted that the original dread is rare? But, if

anything, we do all exist and relate ourselves to ourselves and other beings - without this dread. Is this dread not an arbitrary creation and Nothing attributed to it an exaggeration?

Yet what does it mean to say that this fundamental dread takes place only at rare moments? It means nothing else than this that, firstly and foremostly, Nothing is disguised in its fundamental character. By what then? By the fact that we completely lose ourselves in beings in a certain way. The more we drive ourselves to beings, the less do we let them slip away as such and thus the more do we depart from Nothing, and hence, more certainly do we push ourselves into the common superficiality of an overt being.

However, within certain limits, this constant even though ambiguous departure from Nothing is in accordance with the essence of Nothing itself. Nothing, in its nihilating character, refers us directly to beings. Nothing nihilates constantly, without our really being aware of this event in our daily knowledge.

What can be a more striking evidence for the constant and widespread, although disguised, manifestation of Nothing in our overt being than negation? But this negation in no way brings Not out of itself as a means of distinction and contrast to what is given, shoving it between them at the sametime. How can it do so also, when it can only negate if something, which can be negated, is pre-given? But how can that which is or can be negated be looked at as negative, unless all thinking as such has a pre-view of Not? But Not can become manifest, if its origin - the nihilating Nothing, i.e., Nothing itself - has been taken out of concealment. Not does not originate from negating, but negation is grounded in Not, which springs from the nihilating Nothing. But negation is only one way of the nihilating attitude, i.e., the attitude primarily based on the nihilating Nothing.

Thus, the above thesis is in its basic characteristic proved: Nothing is the origin of negation and not vice versa. If in the field of inquiry about Nothing and Being the dominance of understanding is removed in this manner, then with this the fate of the sovereignty of "logic" within philosophy is also decided. The idea of "logic" itself is dissolved into the whirlpool of a more fundamental inquiry.

However much and variously negation penetrates all thinking, whether in an explicit manner or otherwise, it is not the only and complete evidence for the manifestation of Nothing which essentially belongs to an overt being. For it cannot be spoken of as either the unique or even the leading nihilating attitude in which an overt being is shaken by the nihilating Nothing. More abysmal than the mere appropriateness of rational negation is the severity of an opposing action and the acidity of detestation. More responsible is the pain of refusal and the pitilessness of prohibition. More oppressive is the bitterness of renunciation.

These possible modes of the nihilating attitude, by means of which an overt being endures his thrownness even though he does not master it, are not just types of mere negating. However, this does not prevent them from expressing themselves in 'no' and negation. It is, in fact, in this way that the emptiness and breadth of negation is first properly betrayed. The penetration of an overt being by the nihilating attitude testifies to the constant even though obscure, manifestation of Nothing, which is originally revealed in dread alone. But this is the reason why this fundamental dread is mostly repressed in an overt being. Dread is there. It only sleeps. Its breadth quivers constantly through an overt being; the least of all through one who is "nervous" and deaf to the "Yes, Yes" and "No, No" of the busy people, the most of all through the reserved one and the surest of all through the one who is basically bold. But this quivering occurs only out of that for which it consumes itself in order thus to protect the ultimate greatness of an overt being.

This dread of the bold cannot be contrasted with joy or even the comfortable enjoyment of a peaceable drift. It stands - on the other side of such an opposition - in a secret bond with the serenity and mellowness of a creative longing.

The fundamental dread can at any moment awaken in an overt being. It does not need some extraordinary event to arouse it. To the depth of its sway corresponds the trifling character of its possible cause. It is constantly springing and yet only rarely does it spring shaking us into a state of suspense.

An overt being's being held in Nothing on the basis of concealed dread makes man the place-keeper of Nothing. So finite are we that we are not capable of bringing ourselves fundamentally before Nothing by our own resolution and will. So abysmally is finitude dug into an overt being that our freedom deprives itself of the most proper and the profoundest finiteness.

An overt being's being held in Nothing on the ground of concealed dread is his going beyond the totality of beings: it is his transcendence.

Our inquiry into Nothing should give us metaphysics itself. The nomenclature "metaphysics" comes from the Greek ta meta phusika. This strange title was later interpreted as a signification of the inquiry, which goes meta, trans, "beyond" beings as such.

Metaphysics is an inquiry beyond beings in order to understand them as beings and as a whole.

In our question about Nothing there occurs such a going beyond beings as beings and as a whole. Thus it is shown to be a "metaphysical" question. In the beginning we characterized a question of this sort in a two-fold manner: firstly, every metaphysical question was said to encompass

the whole of metaphysics; secondly, the questioning overt being was said to be always involved in every metaphysical question.

How far does the question about Nothing pervade and encompass the whole of metaphysics?

Ever since the ancient times metaphysics has expressed itself about Nothing in the undoubtedly ambiguous proposition: ex nihilo nihil fit, nothing comes out of nothing. Even though Nothing itself has never really been made a problem in any discussion of this proposition on the basis of the views which have prevailed concerning Nothing, the proposition does express that basic notion of beings which is of leading importance for these views. The metaphysics of the ancients understood Nothing as signifying non-being, i.e., as an unformed stuff, which could not form itself as a being and thus present an appearance (eidoz). A being was that self-forming product which as such presented itself as an image to be viewed. The origin, justification and limits of this notion of Being were as little discussed as Nothing. As opposed to this, Christian dogma denied the truth of the proposition ex nihilo nihil fit, and gave Nothing the changed meaning of the complete absence of an extra-divine being: ex nihilo fit - ens creatum. Nothing now became the conceptual opposite of the real being, summum ens, God as ens increatum. Here also the interpretation of Nothing points to the basic notion of beings. The metaphysical discussion of beings is held on the same level as the question about Nothing. In both cases the questions about Being and Nothing as such remain undiscussed. Thus, one does not even need to bother about the difficulty that if God creates out of Nothing, then he must be able to relate himself to Nothing. But if God is God, he cannot know Nothing - if it should be the case that the "Absolute" excludes all "nihilatedness" from itself.

This rough historical reminder shows Nothing as a conceptual opposite of the real being, i.e., as its negation. But if Nothing is somehow made a problem, then it does not just receive a clearer determination as a term of contrast, but awakens for the first time the proper metaphysical question about the Being of beings. Nothing does not remain the indeterminate opposite of beings, but reveals itself as belonging to the Being of beings.

"Pure Being and pure Nothing are the same". This proposition of Hegel (Science of Logic I Book WW III, p.74) is correct. Being and Nothing are the same, but not because they - as looked at from the standpoint of Hegel's notion of thinking - are identical in their indeterminateness and immediacy, but because Being is itself finite in nature and makes itself manifest only in the transcendence of an overt being as holding himself in Nothing.

If the question about Nothing as such is the all comprehensive question of metaphysics, then the question about Nothing shows itself of the kind which encompasses the whole of metaphysics. But the question about Nothing at the same time pervades the whole of metaphysics, insofar as it drives us to the problem of the origin of negation, i.e., to the decision about the rightness of the sovereignty

of logic within metaphysics.

The old proposition ex nihilo nihil fit, then receives another meaning appropriate to the problem of Being and reads : ex nihilo onme ens qua ens fit. In the Nothing of an overt being the totality of beings come to themselves - and this in accordance with his most essential possibility, i.e., in a finite way. If the question about Nothing is a metaphysical one, how far is our questioning overt being included in the question? We have characterized our present overt being as essentially governed by science. If this overt being is included in the question about Nothing, then, he must have become questionable, through this question.

The scientific overt being has his simplicity and keenness in the fact that he is related to beings and only to beings in a distinct way. Sciences abandon Nothing with an air of superiority. But in our question about Nothing it has now become clear that this scientific overt being is possible only if he holds himself in Nothing from the very beginning. He understands himself for what he is only by not abandoning Nothing. The supposed sobriety and superiority of science becomes ridiculous if it does not take Nothing seriously. Only because Nothing is manifested, can science make beings themselves as an object of investigation. Only because science exists on the basis of metaphysics can it win its essential task ever anew - a task which does not consist in the collection and organization of knowledge, but in ever renewedly discovering the entire field of the truth of Nature and History.

Only because Nothing is manifested as the ground of an overt being can the full strangeness of beings seize us. Only because the strangeness of beings oppresses us does it awaken and draw our wonder to them. Only on the basis of this wonder - i.e., the manifestation of Nothing - does there arise the "why"?. Only because the "why" as such is possible can we in a certain way inquire about the ground and also find some ground. Only because we can inquire about and find a ground are we fated to be seekers of truth.

The question about Nothing places us - the questioners - in question. It is a metaphysical question.

A human overt being can relate himself to beings only if he is held in Nothing. It belongs to the essence of an overt being that there is in him a going beyond beings. But this going beyond is metaphysics itself. Therein lies the reason for saying that metaphysics belongs to the "nature of man". It is neither a part of academic philosophy, nor a field of an arbitrary fancy. Metaphysics is the fundamental event of an overt being. It is an overt being himself. Because the truth of metaphysics resides in such an abysmal ground, there always lurks the possibility of the most profound error. Thus no rigour of science reaches the seriousness of metaphysics. Philosophy can never be measured with the yard-stick of the idea of science.

If the question about Nothing as here unrolled is really asked by us then we shall not be introducing metaphysics from outside. Nor shall we place ourselves into it. We cannot at all place ourselves into it, because we - insofar as we exist - are already in it.

phusei gar, o phile enesti tis

philosophia tei tou andros dianoiai

(Plato, Phaedrus, 279a)

So long as man exists philosophizing occurs in some way. Philosophy, as we call it, is the bringing-on-the-track of metaphysics, in which it comes to itself and its explicit tasks. Philosophy comes on the track only through a peculiar leap of one's existence into the basic possibilities of an overt being as a whole. What is decisive for the leap is: firstly, to make room for the totality of beings; secondly, to give oneself up to Nothing, i.e., become free of the idols which everyone has and to which he is accustomed to creep to; and lastly, to let the state of suspense swing on so that it would constantly swing back to the basic question of metaphysics, which Nothing itself compels; why are there beings and not rather Nothing?

POSTSCRIPT

The question "What is metaphysics?" remains a question. The following postscript is only an initial foreword for him who perseveres with the question.

The question "What is Metaphysics?" asks beyond metaphysics. It springs from a thinking which has already entered into the overcoming of metaphysics. It belongs to the essence of such an overcoming that, within certain limits, it still speaks the language of that which it assists in overcoming. The special circumstance in which the question about the essence of metaphysics has been discussed should not lead to the mistaken opinion that this question must take its start from the sciences. Recent scientific scholarship, with its different methods of representing and establishing beings, has entered into the basic feature of that truth according to which a being is characterized by the Will to Will and as a prototype of which characteristic the "Will to Power" has begun to make its appearance. Will, understood as the basic feature of the beingness of beings, is the identification of beings with the real, in such a way that the reality of the real is given the limitless power of a thoroughgoing objectification. Modern science neither serves its own proposed aim nor seeks "truth" in itself. As a way of calculative objectification of beings, it is a condition set by the Will to Will itself, through which it ensures its own dominance. But because all objectification of beings consists in the procuring and ensuring of beings, and from this fact produces the possibility of its continuance, it perseveres with beings and takes them for Being. Every act directed towards beings testifies to a knowledge of Being but at the same time to its incapacity to stand on its own within the framework of the truth of this knowledge. This truth is the truth about beings. Metaphysics is the history of this truth. It asserts what is a being on the strength of the notion of the beingness of beings. Metaphysics thinks Being through the beingness of beings, without, however, being able to reflect upon the truth of Being by its manner of thinking. Metaphysics always moves in the realm of the truth of Being, which remains for it the unknown and ungrounded ground. But granting that not only do beings arise from Being but also, and even in a more primary manner, Being rests itself in its own truth and the truth of Being is the Being of truth, then the question "What is metaphysics in its ground?" is necessary. This inquiry must think metaphysically, but at the same time think out of the ground of metaphysics, i.e., it must no longer think metaphysically. Such an inquiry remains ambiguous in an essential sense.

Hence every attempt to understand the thought of the lecture is faced with obstacles. This is good. In that way inquiry becomes more genuine. Any properly directed question is already a bridge to an answer. An essential answer is always only the last step of a question. But this last step cannot be accomplished without the first and the successive steps. An essential answer derives its competence from the instanding character (Instandigkeit) of an inquiry. It is only the beginning of

responsibility. In this an inquiry becomes more fundamental. As a result a genuine question is not eliminated through an answer found.

Difficulties in the way of thinking with the lecture are of two kinds. Firstly, they arise from the riddles which are concealed in the realm of what has been thought here. Secondly, they arise from the incapacity, often also the unwillingness, to think. In the realm of a reflective inquiry sometimes even the fleeting doubts can be of help, but fully only those which have been carefully considered. Even the grossly mistaken opinions bear some fruits although they are called forth in a frenzy of blind polemic. We have only to reflect upon them in a free and patient manner.

The predominant doubts and mistaken opinions regarding this lecture can be put together in three main propositions. It is said:

1. The lecture makes "Nothing" as the only subject-matter of metaphysics. But because Nothing is basically something which is not, this thinking leads to the opinion that everything is nothing so that it is not worth while either to live or to die. A "Philosophy of Nothing" is complete "Nihilism".
2. The lecture exalts an isolated and what is more, a repressed mood - the mood of dread - as the only basic mood. But because dread is a mental state of the nervous and the coward, this thinking rejects the proud attitude of the brave. A "Philosophy of Dread" paralyses the will to act.
3. The lecture declares itself against "logic". However, as reason contains the yard-stick of all calculation and organization, this thinking hands over the judgement about truth to an accidental mood. A "Philosophy of mere feeling" endangers "exact" thinking and steady action.

The correct attitude to these propositions will arise from a renewed consideration of the lecture. We may consider whether Nothing, which determines the essence of dread, is exhausted by an empty negation of all beings; or whether it is something which unveils itself as distinct from any being - something that we call Being. It always encounters only beings, because, from the very outset, it perseveres in its aim to explain beings. But Being is not a characteristic of beings. It cannot be represented or established objectively like beings. That which is basically different from beings is non-being. But this Nothing is Being. We refuse to think too prematurely if, as in the common way, we explain Nothing as something which is not, as something unreal. Instead of yielding to such an overhastiness of empty ingenuity and abandoning the riddlesome ambiguousness of Nothing, we must prepare ourselves for one thing only namely to experience Nothing, the capaciousness of that which gives all beings the warrant to be. This is Being itself. Without Being, whose abysmal and still undeveloped essence Nothing gives us in authentic dread, all beings would remain in a state of

Beinglessness. But this Beinglessness, as the abandonment of Being, is not something which is not - if it belongs to the truth of Being that Being is never without beings and beings are never without Being.

In dread we experience Being as something different from beings, - granting that as a result of "dread", i.e., as a result of the nervousness of fear, we do not turn away from that silent voice which tunes us into the state of abysmal shock. If, while a reference is made to this authentic dread, we leave the path of thinking of this lecture; if we do away with dread as the mood tuned by the silent voice in terms of its relation to Nothing; then, dread would remain for us only as an isolated "feeling", which, we can, in the familiar assortment of psychological states, distinguish from other feelings and analyse. We can, then, in the light of the common distinction of "upper" and "lower", classify "moods" as exalting or depressing. The passionate hunt for "types" and "countertypes" of feelings, kinds and subkinds of these types, will never bear fruits. Such an anthropological investigation of man will always remain outside the possibility of following the thought of this lecture. For the lecture thinks, by way of attention to the voice of Being, into that tuning which is born of this voice - tuning which engages man in his essence so that he may learn to experience Being in Nothing.

Preparedness for dread is to agree to instanding (Inständigkeit) to fulfill the highest claim which alone expresses the essence of man. Called upon by the voice of Being man alone of the totality of beings experiences the wonder of all wonders: That a being is. Thus, as essentially invoked for the truth of Being, he is constantly tuned in an essential manner. The clear courage for authentic dread conceals the mysterious possibility of the experience of Being. For close to the authentic dread as abysmal shock resides awe. The awe illumines and hedges about that region of man inside which he lives permanently as at home.

On the contrary, the "dread" of dread can lead us so far astray that we even misunderstand the simple feature of the essence of dread. What would all our courage be worth if we could not find our constant hold in the experience of authentic dread? In proportion in which we degrade authentic dread and the relation of Being to man as revealed in it, in the same proportion do we also disgrace the essence of courage. True courage is able to expose Nothing. It recognises in the abysmal shock the hardly trodden sphere of Being, in the light of which alone every being comes to be what it is and can be. This lecture does neither aim at giving a "Philosophy of Dread" nor does it seek to pass on the impression of a "Heroic Philosophy". It thinks only that which has come to light in the Western thought from the very beginning as something to be thought, but which has remained forgotten, namely, Being. But Being is not a product of thinking. On the contrary, the essential thinking is certainly an event of Being.

Now, therefore, the question which is rarely asked also becomes necessary, the question namely, whether this thinking stands within the framework of its truth when it only follows that thought which "logic" takes hold of in its forms and laws. Why does this lecture put the word logic in inverted commas? It does so in order to indicate that "logic" is only one explication of the essence of thinking, that explication which, according to its nomenclature, rests upon the experience of Being as obtained in Greek thought. The distrust against "logic", which can be said to degenerate logically into Logistic, springs from the knowledge of that thinking, which has its source in the experience of the truth of Being and not in the consideration of the objectivity of beings. Never is exact thinking the most rigorous thinking if rigour receives its content from the kind of effort with which knowledge always sustains its relation to what is essential to beings. Exact thinking is entirely bound to the calculation of being and serves only this.

In every calculation what is computable disappears in the computed whole in order to use the computed whole for the next computation. In calculation nothing else can come up except what is computable. Every computed whole ensures the progress of computation. It consumes numbers as it progresses and constantly destroys itself in the this progress. The calculation of beings is taken as the explanation of their Being. Calculation uses every being as something computable, in advance, and consumes the computed whole for computation. This consuming use of beings betrays the self-destroying character of calculation. Only because number can be endlessly multiplied, both in the direction of big and small, can the self-destroying nature of calculation hide itself behind its product and lend to calculative thinking the appearance of productivity - while, in fact, preliminarily as well as in its consequences, it validates beings only as representable and self-destroying. calculative thinking imposes on itself the compulsion to master everything in terms of the logical consistency of its procedure. It cannot conceive that all that is calculable in calculation is already a whole before those sums and products which are reached by calculation; a whole whose unity belongs to the realm of the incalculable, which, with its mysterious character, escapes the grip of calculation. However, that which from the very outset is always and everywhere shut up to the demands of calculation, and yet is always nearer to man in a sort of riddlesome ignorance than any being at which he aims, can sometimes determine the essence of man in a thinking the truth of which no "logic" can grasp. Thinking, whose thoughts do not only not calculate but are absolutely determined by something different from beings, is essential thinking. Instead of counting on beings, it consumes itself in Being for the truth of Being. This thinking answers to the claim of Being in the fact of man's handing of his historical essence to the simplicity of that unique necessity which does not necessitate by means of compulsion but creates the need, which is fulfilled by the freedom of sacrifice. The need is that the truth of Being is preserved, whatever may happen to man and other beings. The sacrifice is without compulsion, because, as originating from the abyss of freedom, it is the consumption of human essence in the preservation of the truth of Being in respect of beings. In this sacrifice there takes place a hidden thanksgiving which alone does homage to the grace as what Being conveys itself to the essence of man in thinking, so that man may become the guard of Being in his relationship to

Being. The primary thinking is the echo of the favour of Being, in which only one thing is illumined and occurs, namely, that a being is. This echo is man's reply to the Word of the silent voice of Being. the reply of thinking is the origin of human word, which is the preliminary source of language as the enunciation of the Word in words. Did not there occasionally take place a concealed thinking in the essence of historical man, he would never then be capable of thanksgiving - granting that in every reflection and thanksgiving there must be a thinking which originally thinks the truth of Being. But how else could humanity attain to fundamental thanksgiving, unless the favour of Being preserved for man, through his overt relationship to this favour, the dignity of that poverty in which the freedom of sacrifice conceals its treasure? The sacrifice is the departure from beings on way to the preservation of the favour of Being. The sacrifice can certainly be made ready and helped through actions amongst beings, but it can never be fulfilled by this means. It is accomplished in instanding (Instandigkeit), in terms of which every historical man acts - even essential thinking is acting to preserve the acquired overt being for the preservation of the dignity of Being. This instanding (Instandigkeit) is the calm which does not let anything assail the hidden readiness for the valedictory essence of any sacrifice. The sacrifice belongs to the essence of that event as what Being engages man for the truth of Being. Therefore, the sacrifice brooks no calculation, which assesses it only as useful or useless in terms of higher or lower goals. Such an assessment defaces the essence of sacrifice. The passion for a goal confuses the clarity of the dread-ready awe of the spirit of sacrifice, which has claimed for himself the vicinity of indestructible.

Thinking of Being seeks no support in beings. Essential thinking takes notice of the slow signs of the incalculable and recognizes in it the unexpected arrival of the unchangeable. This thinking is attentive to the truth of Being and helps the Being of truth in such a way that it finds its abode in the historical man. This help effects no results, because it does not need to effect anything. Essential thinking helps as simple instanding (Instandigkeit) in an overt being, insofar as this instanding, without being disposed to it or even only knowing about it, kindles it itself.

Obedient to the voice of Being, thinking seeks the Word, in terms of which the truth of Being can be expressed. Only when the language of historical man springs from the Word is it in order. But if it is in order, then it is accorded the silent voice of hidden sources. The thinking of Being protects the Word, and defines itself by means of this protection. It is the care for the use of language. Out of the long protected speechlessness and the careful clarification of the realm illuminated in it comes the saying of a thinker. Of similar origin is the naming of a poet. Something which is the same is the same only as being different: poetry and thinking, though most similar to each-other in their attention to the Word, are most dissimilar in their essence. The thinker says the Being. The poet names the Holy. How, considered in terms of the essence of Being, poetry, thanksgiving and thinking, in fact refer to one another and are also separated from one other, must remain open here. Presumably thanksgiving and poetry spring in different ways from fundamental thinking, which they use but which they cannot themselves be.

One may know a lot about the relation of philosophy and poetry. But we know nothing about the dialogue of the poet and the thinker, who "live near one another on the most separated mountains."

One of the essential abodes of speechlessness is dread in the sense of shock, in which the abyss of Nothing tunes man. Nothing as something different from beings is the veil of Being. In Being the fate of beings has already been originally consummated.

The last poem of the last poet among early Greeks, Sophocles' "Oedipus in Colonus", closes with words, which unconsciously turn back to the hidden history of this people and secure their access to the unknown truth of Being:

all' apopaucte med' epi pleio

threnon egeirete

pantos gar echei tade kuros

Let there be Peace, O ye that mourne! Give o'er
Your vain lament; whate'er hath been before,
This that is done shall stand for ever more.(1)

(1) Taken from Gilbert Murray's translation. (Tr. note)

