

Martin Heidegger

Logic: The Question of Truth.

Translated by Thomas Sheenan.

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This work is the first English translation of the last course Heidegger gave before writing *Being and Time* and preparing it for publication. But although *Logic* is revealing of the conceptual influences on and historical background to *Being and Time*, the course is a far-reaching investigation of basic philosophical questions in its own right. The conception of philosophy that guides the investigation is one in which the tradition is constantly interrogated in the light of elemental questions:

In philosophizing, you first have to ‘acquire’ great and creative adversaries by waking them up. Then you can grow and mature by arguing with them and establishing the simple outlines of elemental issues, where elemental means ‘simple’ and ‘explosive’ at the same time (103).

The elemental issues investigated in this lecture course are the questions of what logic is and what truth is. It opens with a discussion of the meaning of the word ‘logic’ in ancient Greek thought. Λόγος is the science of speaking as opposed to ἐπιστήμη φυσική, the science of the cosmos and ἐπιστήμη ἠθική, the science of comportment towards others (1-2). However, speaking is to be conceived neither as vocal utterance nor as an incidental property of human beings. Rather it encompasses ‘(l)anguage, speaking, thinking’ as ‘the way in which we reveal and illumine (both for ourselves and for others) the world and our own human existence (*Dasein*)’ so that ‘we gain insight into ourselves and an outlook on, and a practical insight into, the world’ (6). Logic is thus the science of the originary truth of our worldly existence. Consideration of this ‘naïve beginning of logic’ raises the simple and far reaching question of whether, as the discipline of logic typically assumes, ‘theoretical cognitive truth, or even the truth of statements, is the basic form of truth in general’ (9).

With these introductory discussions in view, the course turns to an examination of the contemporary situation of logic, focusing on Husserl’s critique of psychologism. Psychologism transfers the method of the natural sciences to logic. It claims that ‘exact investigations into thinking and its laws...(is) sure to create the exact and strict foundations of logic’ (33). In other words, it attempts to found logical necessity on probabilistic inferences based on the empirical observation of the mental realm. The consequence is that, as ‘we cannot deduce the unchangeability of our mind and of its basic constitution,’ it remains possible that ‘in a hundred years people will have to think $2 \times 2 = 5$ ’ or that this proposition is already true for ‘living beings with a different mental organization than ourselves’ (37). Contrary to this relativist thesis, Husserl contends that ‘for all its claims to have the laws of thought for its subject matter, psychologism never operates in the arena where alone those judgments are made,’ namely, the arena of ideal

meaning as opposed to contingent empirical facts (41). The content or meaning of a judgment such as '2 x 2 = 4' is not an empirical fact, but neither can it be reduced to the mental act of performing the judgment. Instead it intends a non-empirical or ideal validity (40).

Underlying Husserl's critique of psychologism, Heidegger argues, is the presupposition that intuition is the only authentic form of knowledge. Intuition supposedly "delivers the thing itself...it alone has the capability of proving and verifying opinions, cognitions, things said, propositions." For example, in a judgment such as '2 x 2 = 4' the statement renders present the ideal content intended or a claim about the colour of the chalkboard is fulfilled or unfulfilled by bodily presence of the chalkboard (84-5). Intuition 'fulfills not simply by giving fullness but also by redeeming the expectation that in a certain way can be found in the empty idea' (87). To understand truth as intuition is to understand it as 'identity or sameness...specifically the identity of the intended and the intuited' (89).

The lecture course then develops a detailed critique of the temporal and existential presuppositions of this conception of truth, presuppositions that are typical not only of contemporary logic but also, Heidegger contends, of the Western philosophical tradition. This conception assumes the primordially of theoretical cognition of things. But is this how we tend to encounter things in the world around us? Heidegger claims, on the contrary, that we encounter them in terms of our concern with and our care for our existence. A chair is pre-thematically and pre-theoretically given in its being used for sitting, the chalk in its being used for writing. The existential-hermeneutic 'as', that is, seeing things as handy in the light of our worldly concerns, is existentially prior to the apophantic 'as' which shows them in their bodily presence. The change-over to theoretical cognition modifies this original disclosure of the world by concentrating on the thing's 'what' removed from its function, removed from its relation to ourselves and removed from its relation to other entities in the environment (131). It thus removes the chief characteristic of our original disclosure, namely that it occurs in the light of our care for our existence.

Heidegger then examines of Aristotle's discussion of truth, focusing chiefly on Book IX of the *Metaphysics*. He argues that propositional truth itself presupposes seeing as, the pre-thematic understanding of things that occurs before the determination of truth in terms of the proposition. Truth, falsehood, synthesis and statement all refer back to our being unto and our being already familiar with the world. It refers to 'compartments of the being that we are and that we call existence' (176). The task for philosophy then becomes what Heidegger calls a *phenomenological chronology* which investigates the temporality specific to our existence in which phenomena show themselves.

The final part of the lecture course gives a detailed reading of Kant, 'the only philosopher who even suspected that the understanding of being and its characteristics is connected with time,' as the precursor to this type of investigation (163). Through a detailed interpretation of the schematism in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Heidegger argues that time is the pre-view we take of phenomena on the basis of which the self 'lets

itself be encountered by, concerned by, or in Kant's terms affectively modified by another' (280). As such time is self-affected, our 'most original, universal form of how-something-can-be-given' (280). Kant's investigations show how 'time functions in the being of human existence...*structurally* and not *marginally*' (337). Yet Kant didn't see the fundamental ontological importance of time as such because his notion of time was mediated by a tradition in which time is understood as 'the schema for ordering nature' (172). The lecture course concludes by arguing that these limitations to Kant's investigation point towards a fundamental problem for a phenomenological chronology. Can we speak about time as such? What language can we use? For '(s)tatements about time are never statements about the world; but first and foremost we do operate within the orientation and mind-set of statements about the world' (339).

This work is of central importance for understanding Heidegger's investigations into the question of being, both early and late. *Logic* indicates what will become the central difficulty for *Being and Time*: the tension between finding a language appropriate to our temporal openness upon the world and the transcendental architectonic Heidegger inherited from Kant. Accordingly, rather than being a mere step in the genesis of *Being and Time*, *Logic* points beyond it by naming the basic problem of Heidegger's work: the connection between language, truth and being. Further, this problem is treated in close connection with readings of key figures in the metaphysical tradition and sheds considerable light on Heidegger's difficulties with Husserlian phenomenology. Of particular contemporary significance is Heidegger's discussion of the changeover from pre-theoretical to theoretical understanding. This discussion, both more detailed and more thorough than its counterpart in *Being and Time*, forms a useful counterpoint to the readings of Heidegger recently offered in speculative realist philosophy.

Thomas Sheenan has produced a clear and comprehensive critical edition of Heidegger's *Logic* that contains a great deal more material than its German counterpart. Like the editors of the latter Sheehan draws upon three different texts: Heidegger's handwritten lecture notes, Fritz Heidegger's typescript of these lecture notes, and a shorthand typescript taken during the lectures and later corrected by Heidegger. But Sheenan's edition incorporates significant previously unpublished material. Perhaps most helpful in such a dense and difficult text is the inclusion of summaries Heidegger gave at the start of most lecture hours summarizing the findings of the previous session. Further, Sheenan's footnotes inform the reader of the editions of other author's works that Heidegger cites as well as correcting his occasional misquotes.

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