**Daniel O. Dahlstrom**, ed.
*Interpreting Heidegger: Critical Essays*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011.
301 pages
$94.00 (cloth ISBN 978–0–521–76494–0)

Mostly written by Anglo-American scholars, this volume of essays is to be welcomed both for its intense and critical specialist engagement with Heidegger and for the sensitive readings and interpretations it offers of fundamental Heideggerian texts. The book falls into three sections: *Interpreting Heidegger's Philosophy*, *Interpreting Heidegger's Interpretations*, and *Interpreting Heidegger's Critic*.

In the essay "Heidegger's hermeneutics: towards a new practice of understanding" Holger Zaborowski defines his aim thus: 'The task of examining Heidegger's hermeneutics is accordingly a matter not only of analyzing Heidegger's explicit references to hermeneutics and the apparent implications of his early understanding of philosophy as a hermeneutics, but also of disclosing the hermeneutic dimensions of his other writings' (16). Moving on to the different stages of Heidegger's philosophical research, Zaborowski reminds us that Heidegger, who quotes Aristotle, Hölderlin, Husserl, and others, interprets the term hermeneutic in relation to language and Being, setting human being in relation to Being itself. Heidegger, who is attentive to hermeneutics to the point of studying its historical development from Greek mythology to Schleiermacher and beyond, transforms Husserl's transcendental phenomenology of consciousness into a hermeneutic phenomenology of *facticity*. In short, the thesis of Zaborowski is that in *Being and Time* the Heideggerian research on Dasein is hermeneutic in character. In the book *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger focuses on the event of being. Here, hearing becomes much more important than vision and thinking is 'thinking-saying of that which is heard and to which thinking "belongs"' (32).

In the *Letter on Humanism* Heidegger writes that philosophy 'is threatened by the need to justify its existence with respect to the sciences' (36). The language of science and technology is different from the original language that relates to Being. Hence the special Heideggerian voyage 'on the way to language', and *eo ipso* towards the 'House of Being': pre-metaphysical language is the House of Being, the proper home in which the human being dwells, and thinking is nothing but its practice. Let us read Heidegger: 'We are bound to the language of the saying [of Anaximander] and we are bound to our own native language […]. This bond is stronger and further-reaching, although less conspicuous, than the standard provided by all the philological and historical facts – which only derive their factuality from it. As long as we fail to experience this bond, every translation of the saying must come to light as something completely arbitrary' (*Anaximander's Saying* in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge University Press 2002, 247). Agreeing with the assessment put forward by Daniel O. Dahlstrom in the Introduction of the book, Zaborowski's analysis of Heidegger arrives at the measured conclusion that Heidegger's later thinking is best considered as 'a transformation, rather than a dismissal, of his early hermeneutics' (3).

In "Facticity and Ereignis" Thomas Sheehan argues that Heidegger's aim was, first, to reinterpret human existential facticity and, second, to understand Being as *Ereignis*: 'Our ability to deal with anything we encounter, our capacity to make sense of it, entails that the thing must have already entered the realm of language – that is, the realm of meaning. And meaning, of course, occurs only in correlation with human understanding' (43). Since human beings are hermeneutical by nature, all this can be expressed in chiasmic fashion: 'Ohne Da-sein, kein Sein; ohne Sein, kein Da-sein (without human being, no being; without being, no human being)'. (47) With regard to the German term *Ereignis*, its meaning is the *appropriation of man to the meaning-giving process,* which strangely corresponds to the event of dis-propriation. In *Contributions to Philosophy* Heidegger also writes: 'das Dasein ist gewörfen, ereignet… The outcome of thrownness/appropriation is the togetherness or bond (Zusammengehörigkeit) of man and meaning, the state of affairs that is itself meaning-giving'. (53) On this he adds: 'Ereignis is the hermeneutical circle of reciprocal need: human being's need of Welt/mind as meaning-giving, and Welt/mind's inability to subsist without human being'. (56–7) By her or his nature, the human being is thrown into meaning and lives the condition of openness in a particular original intertwining of thinking and dwelling. Facticity is the early term evoked to express the human being's a priori thrownness. Man can feel such a condition of thrownness, but never understand its origins.

"The null basis – being of a nullity, or between two nothings: Heidegger's uncanniness" by Simon Critchley lays emphasis on Division II of *Being and Time*. Critchley's analysis focuses on the hybrid and uncanny character of Dasein, its inner and existential voice that calls and is called at the heart of conscience: 'the situation of Dasein being both the caller and called corresponds to the structure of Dasein as both authentic and inauthentic, as anxious potentiality-for being or freedom and thrown lostness in *das Man*' (71). The thrownness of Dasein into the nothing of the world, Critchley continues, lets the human being perceive the silent call that strikes him as alien. Thus 'the self is divided between two nothings: on the one hand, the nothing of the world and, on the other, the nothingness of pure possibility revealed in being-towards-death' (72). But what does it really mean for Heidegger to claim that Dasein is guilty? Guilt means the accretion of debt – being responsible for, or owing something to, another. Dasein thus deals with a special guilt, one ungrounded in legal or moral precepts – a pre-ethical, pre-moral understanding of guilt.

Charles Guignon "Heidegger's concept of freedom" refers to the lecture of 1928/1929, *Introduction to Philosophy,* in which Heidegger speaks of freedom as the innermost essence of *human* existence, on giving freedom and having freed. On this topic, Guignon writes: 'In discussing the traditional concept of freedom Heidegger starts out from Kant's claim in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*' (81). But the question turns out to have deeper roots: in *De Anima* Aristotle defines 'a human being as a moving being (Kinein) who can make connections through logos… Like other animals, humans act on the basis of first-order desires, mere impulses to satisfy desire and provide for the needs. Yet, at the same time, they are capable of acting on the basis of second-order motivations, discerned by reflection or reason (logos)' (82–3).

Humans possess a sense of time; human actions may be seen as either free or un-free according to the situation. What we do is simply what we do. In everyday life we are not really

free. Heidegger calls such way of living *falling fleed*. This falling is characterized by Being-with and it determines our way of life insofar as it is alienated. Alienation 'closes off from Dasein its authenticity'. Dasein's being free is only in the choice of one single, so that Dasein is for the most part inauthentic. Yet, here is the possibility of freeing up and loosening that lets things turn out a certain way. The world does the freeing up and Dasein must help things become manifest (*Gelassenheit*). The confrontation with death reveals human nature as pure possibility: the human being is free towards death, and 'This freedom of surpassing or passing beyond the manifold of particular possibilities opened by the public world is called "transcendence"' (95). In the last part of his essay, Guignon contrasts Kant with Heidegger on the topic of freedom and ethics, reminding us in the process that Heidegger criticized the first Kantian *Critique* especially as concerns its conception of being as presence, something inherited by the Greeks.

This leads us to Iain Thomson's essay "Ontotheology". According to Thomson, Heidegger's view of metaphysics as an age presupposes two theses: ontological historicity and epochality. Heidegger's destruction of the metaphysical tradition falls into five ontological epochs: pre-Socratic, Platonic, medieval, modern, and late-modern. It can be figured as a historical constellation of intelligibility. Thales's great idea was that there is a final ground somewhere beneath our feet, so to speak, and thus a kind of being that *everything* shares in common. 'This was the *ontological* intuition, and it is a postulate that our metaphysicians have never abandoned' (110). In the history of philosophy, besides Thales's ontological intuition, we have 'Anaximander's theological understanding of *apeiron* as the ultimate source of being' (111). Plato's theological conception of the forms 'makes sense of the intelligible order as a whole only by postulating a supersensory realm, the comparison with which degrades the finite world of mortal experience' (112). In Heidegger's history of being, Plato is the first ontotheologian, while Nietzsche is the last. Ontology and theology are held together in a kind of chiasmus. Nietzsche fell into the same theological trap he discerned in Plato. Heidegger suggests a treatment that would make us aware of the subtle and often unnoticed impact of the technological ontotheology that holds sway over us, a treatment that would allow us to resist it and learn to dwell with it. In this way 'we can learn to approach all things with care, humility, patience, gratitude, awe, and even reverence and love' (118). In short, the later Heidegger suggests a fundamental ontological pluralism, i.e., ontotheological foundations neither absolute nor arbitrary; he moves towards a sort of regional ontology. As for Nietzsche, Heidegger sought a Nietzsche beyond Nietzsche.

In the section *Interpreting Heidegger's Interpretations* we find Dahlstrom's essay, "Being at the beginning: Heidegger's interpretation of Heraclitus", in which Dahlstrom illustrates how Heidegger interprets Heraclitus's conception of *phusis*. As announced in *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger sees Heraclitus's experience of *phusis* as an ever-emerging self-concealment that provides the key to the meaning of be-ing at the dawn of Western thought. Josh Michael Hayes in "Being affected: Aristotle and the pathology of truth" shows how Heidegger existentializes the Aristotelian concept of the soul's passions in order to explain the way in which we find ourselves inescapably moved and dis-placed by the world. Stephan Käufer in "Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant" demonstrates that Heidegger's development of *Being and Time* took inspiration from Kant. In "The death of God and the life of being: Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche" Tracy Colony examines the early phase of Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche in which Nietzsche appears in proximity to Heidegger's own task of thinking. In specific, where Nietzsche

witnesses the death of God and the need to prepare for the possibility of the recurrence of the divine, Heidegger concentrates on the need to create the conditions for a possible advent of new gods, as in the *Beiträge*. Finally, Andrew J. Mitchell's "Heidegger's Poetics of Relationality" analyzes Heidegger's postwar studies of the poetic speech of three poets – Rainer Maria Rilke, Georg Trakl, and Stefan George – in order to come to an understanding of the relation between being and language that such speech exposes.

Among the essays of the last section (Lee Braver, "Analyzing Heidegger: a history of analytic reactions to Heidegger"; Wayne J. Froman, "Levinas and Heidegger: a strange conversation"; Françoise Dastur, "Derrida's reading of Heidegger"), all of which are deserving of praise, I would like to focus on the point of Françoise Dastur's essay. Dastur takes up Derrida's multifaceted critique of Heidegger, in particular Derrida's contention that Heidegger never fully overcame the long tradition of the metaphysics of presence he himself identified and traced in its historical conception. Derrida thinks that Heidegger's ontological difference, behind the apparent radical departure from Western onto-theology, retains and perpetuates, in its specific "openness", a traditional conception of Being. Dastur writes that for Heidegger the phenomenon is not what appears '"in the first instance" and "in most cases", but what does not immediately appear but nevertheless belongs to what appears in the sense that it constitutes its meaning and ground, i.e., the being of beings (*SZ* 35)' (284). In short, Being is never purely and fully present. By deconstructing the metaphysics of presence by means of the concept of *différance*, Derrida becomes the thinker of absence and presence, of the presence indefinitely deferred in the play of infinite substitutions. Heidegger remains the thinker of the presence of absence, of unconcealment arising from concealment. For the loss of the metaphysics of presence, Derrida does not feel any nostalgia.

Let me repeat: in rethinking, re-articulating and re-orienting the inheritance of Heidegger's thought, the authors have put together an excellent collection of masterly essays, on that is characterized throughout by an intense critical and specialist engagement with Heidegger's oeuvre. Heidegger scholars will find much that is relevant to the persistent, continuing philosophical discussions on Heidegger.

**Francesco Tampoia**
Rome