

Martin Heidegger

Introduction to Philosophy – Thinking and Poetizing, trans. Phillip Jacques Braunstein.

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In this review I discuss the historical situation and the specific project of Martin Heidegger's (1889–1976) *Introduction to Philosophy – Thinking and Poetizing* (*Einleitung in die Philosophie – Denken und Dichten*) in light of its recent translation into English.

Regarding the placement of this work: Heidegger's *Collected Works*, the *Gesamtausgabe* (GA), divides into four parts: (1) Published Works from 1910–1976, GA1–16; (2) Lecture Courses from 1923–1944, GA17–63; (3) Unpublished Works, GA64–81; (4) Notes, Indications, and Recordings, GA82–102 (cf. Sheehan, 'Caveat Lector: The New Heidegger' *New York Review of Books* 1980). As the second part of GA50, *Introduction to Philosophy – Thinking and Poetizing* was to be a lecture course of the 1944/1945 winter semester. Yet, according to Heidegger in his interview for *Der Spiegel* entitled 'Only a God Can Save Us' (*Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, Precedent Publishing 1966, 54), after the Nazis deemed him 'completely expendable' in the summer of 1944 he was 'ordered up the Rhine to build fortifications' and, returning to Freiburg, he began teaching his 'Poetizing and Thinking' course. However, after the second session the course was cancelled, and Heidegger was 'conscripted into the Civil Defense Forces', i.e., the *Volkssturm*. Consisting, then, of two lectures delivered at the University of Freiburg, lecture notes, and an appendix extracted from the first part of GA50, *Introduction to Philosophy – Thinking and Poetizing* comprises 96 pages.

Toward noting the value of Heidegger's work contained here, consider that in the decade prior to the 1944/1945 winter semester Heidegger taught five courses on Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) and three on Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843). Hence, *Introduction to Philosophy* constitutes the culmination of the decade's courses in which Nietzsche and Hölderlin, the thinker and the poet respectively, are to be examined together, for the first time, in one course. On the one hand, according to Heidegger, this course may be thought of as 'a continuation of my Nietzsche courses, i.e., of my confrontation with National Socialism' (*ibid.*, 54). On the other hand, for Heidegger, 'Hölderlin is the poet who points into the future, who waits for a god', and since '[o]nly a god can save us. The only possibility available to us is that by *thinking and poetizing* [emphasis added] we prepare a readiness for the appearance of a god' (*ibid.*, 57).

To be sure, other scholars in close historical proximity to Heidegger have concerned themselves with Hölderlin and Nietzsche. Yet, whereas the work, for example, of scholars such as Karl Jaspers (*Strindberg and Van Gogh: An attempt of a pathographic analysis with reference to parallel cases of Swedenborg and Hölderlin*, 1977; cf. *Nietzsche*, 1997) and Stefan Zweig (*Holderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche: The struggle with the daemon*, 2011) may resonate with one contemporary commentator's conclusion that 'Hölderlin and Nietzsche, of course, are not only famous for their poetry and their philosophy: they are also two of the most distinguished madmen in history' (Weineck, *The Abyss Above*, SUNY 2002, 4), Heidegger's *Introduction to*

Philosophy seems to follow a different path. For example, in 1941 he claimed, ‘The putting together of Hölderlin and Nietzsche recently in fashion is completely misleading...’ (GA52, 78), and shortly after beginning the 1944/1945 course Heidegger warned against dismissing Nietzsche’s ‘thought of the eternal return of the same’ as a ‘delusional mystery’ (GA50, 99).

Yet, since Heidegger’s *Introduction to Philosophy* comes to us unfinished and his writing over the subsequent two decades includes discussion of thinking and poetizing, should we dismiss this book, e.g., as a ‘relatively shallow’ reading of poetry (Withy, <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/26609-introduction-to-philosophy-thinking-and-poetizing/>)? The reader may decide. However, it seems misleading to think of Heidegger as engaged in literary criticism or a superficial reading of poetry (Heidegger, GA6.1, 142; cf. Hoeller, ‘Translator’s Introduction’, in *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry*, Humanity Books 2000, 8–10). What is more, with the proverb ‘Well begun is half done’ as a point of departure, perhaps the beginning of Heidegger’s 1944/45 course may be combed so as to bring forth its fullness, i.e., to let it be neither ‘hair-splitting’ (Adorno, ‘Parataxis: On Hölderlin’s Late Poetry’, *Notes to Literature Vol. II*, Columbia UP 1992, 117) nor simply (as in Withy) ‘a tease’. In this way, Heidegger’s discussion of the fundamental elements of the course, his style of introducing the course, and his explicit preparatory comments in regard to its trajectory may be listened to with an ear for arriving at the course’s ultimate destination.

What Heidegger says elsewhere regarding thinking and poetizing might help bring forth an interpretation, then, both of his comments regarding these activities in his incomplete 1944/1945 course and the manner in which it was to be an ‘Introduction’ to philosophy. Recall from GA9, Heidegger’s “Letter on ‘Humanism’” (1946): ‘In thinking Being comes to language. Language is the house [*das Haus*] of Being’ (“Letter on ‘Humanism’”, *Pathmarks*, Cambridge UP 2006, 239), and ‘The thinkers and poetizers [*Denkenden und Dichtenden*] are the custodians of this dwelling [*Behausung*]’ (GA9, 313). Elucidating Hölderlin’s use of the term ‘house’ (GA4), Heidegger suggests that house ‘means the space opened up for a people as a place in which they can be “at home” and thereby fulfill their proper destiny’ (*Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry*, Humanity Books 2000, 35). In GA6.2 *Nietzsche II*, Heidegger notes, ‘All philosophical thinking... is in itself poetic’ (*Nietzsche: Volumes One and Two*, Harper Collins 1991, 73). Lastly, from GA53, summer semester 1942, *Hölderlin’s Hymn ‘The Ister’*: ‘Holderlin himself names his poetizing a naming’ and ‘The poetic telling “of” the river is also such a naming of the river. Hölderlin’s poetizing... is this naming’ (*Holderlin’s Hymn ‘Der Ister’* Indiana UP 1996, 22).

Considering these claims from Heidegger helps clarify the content and style with which he opens his 1944/1945 *Introduction to Philosophy* course. Heidegger begins the course in Socratic style by extending an opportunity to the audience to enter into a state of perplexity. This is to say that Heidegger prepares this introduction by calling the very idea of such an introduction into question. Thus calling those awaiting an introduction into an open expecting, i.e., a more attentive waiting, Heidegger introduces philosophy. Readers familiar with GA2 *Being & Time* (1927) may be reminded of the difference between inauthenticity and authenticity, as Heidegger’s thinking in the 1944/1945 course resolves the perplexity of §1 by *naming* the dwelling-in-a-more-originary-thinking ‘philosophy,’ i.e., philosophizing. With §2, Heidegger clarifies that philosophy as authentic thinking ‘does not abandon immediate daily thinking’

(*Introduction to Philosophy – Thinking and Poetizing*, 3). Rather, authentic thinking is commemorative thinking, in that it remembers the unconcealment of Being-at-home as the unnamed to be thought through the naming poetizing process which is allowed for by dwelling in the house of language. In other words, authentic commemorative thinking is more meditative.

Heidegger's style of introducing the 1944/45 course is reminiscent of that found in GA8, *Was heisst Denken?* (1951/1952), translated as *What is Called Thinking?* and GA16 *Gelassenheit* (1955), translated as 'Memorial Address' in *Discourse on Thinking*. In other words, there is a recursive aspect to Heidegger's choice of language such that before the reader/audience resolutely hears the saying, the – what we might call – 'performative' thinking through the naming poetizing process remains hidden. For example, in §4 Heidegger begins to use the names 'Nietzsche and Hölderlin'. Now, whereas by attending to the naming itself, the authenticity of Heidegger's thought may be (always) already witnessed, without resolute expectation a listener/reader might continue to await the conclusion of his guidance here, i.e., to be introduced to philosophy.

Two hints explicitly point beyond the actually completed portion of the course, as if to what was yet to come. First, Heidegger notes that his listing of the names Nietzsche and Hölderlin is anachronistic (*Introduction to Philosophy*, 7), and he indicates that a justification for this anachronism will emerge later. So, perhaps the structure and trajectory of Heidegger's course would have traced the *Kehre*, e.g., Nietzsche & Hölderlin : Hölderlin & Nietzsche :: Being & Time : Time & Being. Second, Heidegger asks 'why not Kant and Goethe' rather than Nietzsche and Hölderlin and claims that 'The lecture itself will provide the answer' (*ibid.*, 12). Hence, there may be thought-provoking Heidegger work present in the 1944/1945 *Introduction*. Further, if 'attention to what words tell us is supposedly the decisive step and directive on that way of thinking which is known by the name philosophy' (Heidegger, *What is called Thinking?*, Harper & Row 1968, 131), then Heidegger's 1944/1945 course truly would have been an *Introduction to Philosophy*.

In regard to the translation, there are a few choices made by the translator Phillip Jacques Braunstein that might hinder English-only readers from contemplating this work in relation to some of Heidegger's other work (see also Schalow in *The Review of Metaphysics* 65.1 [2011]: 161–163). For example, Braunstein translates *eigentlich* as 'genuine,' rather than authentic or owned; *andenkende* as 'reflective' (*Introduction to Philosophy*, 2, 3, and 53) or 'thoughtful' (15), rather than as commemorative or recollective; *die Besinnung* as 'contemplation', rather than meditation or mindfulness. Further, Michael Hamburger renders Hölderlin's text '*Wo bist du, Nachdenkliches! das immer Muß! Zur Seite gehn, zu Zeiten*' as: 'Where are you, thought-infusing, which at this time / Must always move beside me' (Hölderlin, *Poems & Fragments* 1980, Cambridge UP, 189). Braunstein renders the same passage thus: 'Where are you, the Contemplative! What always must / depart, at times' (49).

If we are to have Heidegger's *Collected Works* translated into English in their entirety, then we might thankfully commemorate this arrival of the second part of GA50. Though it is not immediately clear how Heidegger scholars will appropriate this arrival, we might begin by meditating on its relation to *The Event* (Indiana UP 2013, esp. Ch. XI; cf. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, Fordham UP 2003, 482 and 588).

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