

Bret W. Davis, ed.

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In *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts*, Bret W. Davis has put together an impressive collection of essays designed for students, or indeed anyone, who wishes to become familiar with Heidegger's philosophy. Each of the seventeen chapters aims to introduce key Heideggerian ideas in a way that clarifies, without simplifying, the complexity of his thought. Most of the chapters observe the development of these ideas by regarding the concepts being discussed as a prism through which to view either the whole, or most, of Heidegger's thought.

Timothy Stapleton makes good use of examples to explain Dasein as being-in-the-world. He begins by examining the prejudices that colour our thinking of being, setting out the contrast between the categorial and existential senses of being. The rest of the chapter breaks down the phenomenon of being-in-the-world into its different dimensions: the worldhood of the world; the different ways of 'being-in'; and finally the 'who' of Dasein. This latter section introduces the contrast between authentic and inauthentic modes of being-in-the-world. This contrast is developed in Charles E. Scott's chapter, 'Care and Authenticity'. Scott examines the relation between Care, which defines the meaning of human being, and time. The final section of Scott's chapter is perhaps the most interesting and examines what it means to live an authentic existence; he emphasizes that Dasein is 'first, last and always intrinsically social, cultural and historical' (64).

Richard Polt's chapter, 'Being and Time', considers three phases of Heidegger's thinking on authentic temporality. In the first phase, he contrasts inauthentic with authentic temporality in *Being and Time*. For Heidegger, the present is not the primordial dimension of time and it is not at its fullest when we live 'in the moment'; rather, it must be thought in terms of the interplay between the past and future dimensions of time. Polt also discusses the notion of the temporal horizon in *Being and Time*, and how it is that the temporality of Dasein makes it possible for being to mean something. In the second and third phases, Heidegger's dissatisfaction with the notion of a temporal horizon leads him to reflect on the origins of Dasein's time. In the second phase, Heidegger finds authentic temporality in the moment of inceptive founding. (*Ereignis* is the event when time begins, or the source of meaningful time.) However, in the third phase, *Ereignis* is understood as a timeless ground.

This extremely challenging concept, *Ereignis*, is discussed separately by Daniela Vallega-Neu, who argues that it is found throughout Heidegger's philosophy and is the key to understanding his thought in the 1930s. She begins by noting its appearance in a lecture course given before *Being and Time*, in which it means the appropriation of an

object in pre-theoretical, lived experience. However, most of her analysis draws on *Contributions in Philosophy*, in which Heidegger attempts to think from within authentic being. In clear terms she states the new problems Heidegger encounters after abandoning the attempt to speak and think towards the temporal horizon of being and instead to think from out of it. However, the essay also examines various dimensions of *Ereignis*, and it is questionable how helpful this will be for a new reader of Heidegger.

Charles Bambach tackles the controversial question of Heidegger and National Socialism. Bambach focuses on two areas: first, Heidegger's early embrace of National Socialism; second, his disillusionment with it and the sense of his own National Socialism. In keeping with the approach taken in this collection, Bambach provides scant biographical details, which allows him to centre his analysis on the philosophical importance of the question. In this case, it means the more troubling aspects of Heidegger's membership of the Nazi party are restricted to a very short, interim section, and the reader is left with the impression that both Heidegger's membership with, and his later disillusionment with, the Nazi party, are logical extensions of his philosophy.

Bret W. Davis' chapter on 'Will and *Gelassenheit*' begins by explaining what transcendental, ontological will means for Heidegger. However, in his engagement with Nietzsche's will to power, Heidegger turned from his notion of willing to *Gelassenheit*, the fundamental attunement to, and correspondence with, being. Davis articulates, with impressive clarity, the difficult and paradoxical meaning of *Gelassenheit*, which is a non-willing in the sense that one will-fully renounces willing. However, this is only the first step of *Gelassenheit*, and Davis' penultimate section considers what is an authentic *Gelassenheit*. Unlike the other chapters, Davis ends with ideas for further thought, extending *Gelassenheit* into ethics and politics, and questioning what kind of democracy might result from this.

Hans Ruin carries out a genealogy of the technical in Heidegger's thought. His aim is to show that Heidegger's increasing concern with the dominance of technology in society is not restricted to his later thought. In his early engagement with Aristotle, Heidegger draws attention to the technical bias in Greek metaphysics (the productive way of making being appear). Important for Ruin's discussion is Heidegger's essay 'On the Origin of the Work of Art', in which *technē*, in the sense of art, is a way of thinking the event of truth without objectifying being. Ruin argues that the two different senses of *technē*—as art and production—come to define Heidegger's thinking about being, both in terms of the positive importance of art and in terms of his increasing concern with the dominance of technology.

John T. Lysaker's chapter is an engaging discussion of language. For Heidegger, language has a critical role between being and the essence of human beings: language is the 'house' of being, where human beings 'dwell'. The problem is that we do not have a genuine experience of being. As well as introducing these key issues, Lysaker explores Heidegger's methods of making a genuine experience possible. For Heidegger, our relation to language is more basic than any act of speech, reading, writing or reflecting; we are 'claimed' by language every time we speak or think, and all our decisions

presume this most basic relation. What Heidegger seeks is the essence of language, and as a phenomenologist it is important that he does not objectify it. Lysaker ends with a section about the language of poetry which, Lysaker notes, is ‘the original essence of language’ (204).

Andrew J. Mitchell introduces the concept of ‘the fourfold’ in his paper of the same title. With this concept, Heidegger completes the transformation of the subject as Dasein by thinking the world differently from its presentation in *Being and Time*. Worldly existence is utter relationality, understood in terms of ‘things’ which are no longer distinguished as being either ready-to-hand or present-at-hand, but as intersections of four elements—mortals, earth, sky and divinities—each of which are ‘bridges’ onto the world. Mitchell explains why Heidegger rethinks the ‘thing’ and discusses each element of the fourfold. He begins by noting that the fourfold is often dismissed as obscure, mystic and overly poetic, and Hölderlin’s influence is particularly important here. It might have been helpful to say more on Heidegger’s poetic sensibility, if only to dispel the obscurity and mysticism of the concept.

Jonathan Dronsfield’s discussion in ‘The Work of Art’ draws principally on Heidegger’s ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’. Heidegger criticized popular conceptions of art and claimed that art has a key role in the opening up of being, in which the world is revealed or made visible, although Dronsfield claims this happens ‘only in so far as the work remains a work’ (132). He ends by examining the relation between art and the historical ‘people to come’ that Heidegger explores in *Contributions to Philosophy*. Daniel O. Dahlstrom’s chapter, ‘Truth as *Alētheia* and the Clearing of Being’, considers the three steps in Heidegger’s understanding of truth: as correspondence, unhiddenness, and clearing. Peter Warnek examines what it means, for Heidegger, to think the ‘history of being’, which means addressing the ways in which being has been covered up. The book ends with a compendium of selected passages in which Heidegger engages with Christianity and divinity. Compiled by Bret W. Davis, who offers a brief outline of the four phases of Heidegger’s thinking on these matters, this final chapter also gives readers the opportunity to familiarize themselves with Heidegger’s own writing.

Unfortunately, not all chapters are suitable for first-time readers of Heidegger. Günter Figal discusses Heidegger’s contribution to phenomenology, opening his discussion with reference to ‘Heidegger’s anonymization and universalization of phenomenology’ (33), and beginning his treatment of ‘unconcealing’ in terms of the ‘ontologization of phenomenology—and phenomenization of ontology’ (36). Such compressed language is particularly daunting because it appears in the second chapter. Thomas Sheehan’s contribution, ‘The Turn’, is aimed at even more advanced readers: whereas Figal assumes some understanding of phenomenology, Sheehan assumes a familiarity with Heidegger’s philosophy. Analyzing three meanings of the turn, Sheehan’s prose is highly technical, and it does not help at all when he invites the reader who is uncomfortable with his translation to substitute ‘the traditional Heideggerian code words’ (84). The other essay to address phenomenology is Theodore Kisiel’s ‘Hermeneutics of Facticity’; sadly, because this essay is also directed at more advanced readers, this crucial aspect of Heidegger’s philosophy will most likely remain confusing

for first-time readers of Heidegger.

Helpfully, there is much repetition throughout the book as key concepts reappear within different contexts, and references to complimentary chapters are frequently inserted into the text to guide the reader through the maze of concepts. The chapters are short, averaging twelve pages each, and they are subdivided into sections to make each idea more accessible. If there is a general weakness, it is that the scope of each chapter is often too broad given the length, and this stretches the authors' analyses of Heidegger's ideas and their development, so that sometimes not enough attention is given to either. However, this is usually compensated for by the clarity of the writing, and it also proves the book's worth for those who already have some understanding of Heidegger's philosophy. Overall, this is an invaluable collection of essays.

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