Articles

The Heideggerian Triad of Ontical, Ontological and Hermeneutical Approaches to *Sein*

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Abstract

This paper reviews Martin Heidegger's two major writings on hermeneutic phenomenology and time, and defines his perspectives on the hermeneutic turn of metaphysics. Heidegger first draws a sharp distinction between what he conceives of hermeneutics and phenomenology, and then amalgamates them to expound the notion of hermeneutic phenomenology. In his magnum opus, *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time), Heidegger appears hostile to every attempt made to define the notion of Being throughout the history of Western metaphysics. Heidegger rather asserts, , that this notion needs to be defined with a new methodology called phenomenology. He believes that in defining Being through the phenomenological method it is inevitable to conceive of Being *qua* time. And the overall project of defining Being *qua* time takes a triadic paradigm, the ontical-ontological-hermeneutical approach to the issue of *Sein*.

Keywords: Heidegger, hermeneutic, phenomenology, time, metaphysics, *Sein* .

Introduction

This paper focuses the complexity of Heidegger's notion of hermeneutic phenomenology in the context of the ontical-

ontological-hermeneutical triad concerning the conception of *sein* (Being). Heidegger takes Being as phenomenon, as something that shows itself, as it is, in itself. Yet Being is always the Being of some entity; it is therefore necessary to choose the most appropriate entity to attain the task of defining Being. The most appropriate entity in this regard is *Dasein*, the human self, for whom Being is a question. It is the way of *Dasein*, the *ontologico-ontically* preferred entity, for Being to show itself as it is in itself. This indirect showing of Being as it is appeals to the *hermeneutic* process of making Being aptly known to the human understanding. In order to establish the triadic complex of the ontical-ontological-hermeneutical approach to the question of Being and its meaning, I develop my argument in two parts.

The first section addresses the way that Heidegger, rejecting all of the traditional presuppositions regarding the concept of Being, restates the question of Being with new metaphysical foundations in the paradigm of hermeneutic phenomenology. In all of the traditional presuppositions, Being is taken to be an object like other entities, which is to say, it shows the *what* of every object. According to Heidegger, Being shows the *how* rather the *what* of all entities. In this phenomenological inquiry into the question of Being, Being is not an entity, rather, it "determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which [*woraufhin*] entities are already understood." In this process, that which is interrogated (*ein Befragtes*) is not Being, but rather entities. Since there are infinite numbers of entities in the world, in order to make the inquiry viable, one has to give priority to one specific entity. And this entity is *Dasein*, the inquirer himself, as for him the question of Being is an issue. *Dasein* is prior an entity both ontologically and ontically; ontologically, as it is ontologically interrogated in the process of discerning the meaning of Being; and ontically, as it is an entity itself which has the determinate character of existence. *Dasein* is also ontico-ontologically prior in the sense that, on the ground of understanding its own, the Being of all other entities will be discerned. The most important aspect of this method of inquiry into

the question of Being it is that Heidegger takes both Being and Dasein as time or temporality. He does not take time as an entity or its character, that is, as something to be concerned with "*the what*" of the world rather he takes time as something to be concerned with the *how* of the world. He conceives of Being in the same way.

The second part focuses on the complexity of the ontical-ontological-hermeneutical triad of the Heideggerian approach to Being through the method of phenomenology. It describes how the etymological nature of the words *phenomenon* and *logos* determine their composite – namely, phenomenology – to be open to the process of interpretation. He takes Being as phenomenon, and since Being as phenomenon is to be discerned through the way of *Dasein*, logos becomes such a discourse that can make Being show itself to human understanding through the interpretation of *Dasein*.

I.   The Rise of Heidegger's Hermeneutic Phenomenology
I.1. *The Question of Being and the Conception of Phenomenology*

Deviating from traditional approaches to the concept of Being, Heidegger lays new metaphysical foundation in order to develop his unique version of phenomenology. Owing to the problematic of considering the "inquiry into Being" as "unnecessary," Heidegger, in the first step of the development of phenomenology, focuses on the necessity for explicitly restating the question of Being and in the process   he rejects three traditional presuppositions attached to the concept of Being; namely, (i) Being is the most universal concept, (ii) Being is indefinable, and (iii) Being is the most self-evident concept.[1]

The old way of conceiving of being was informed by the genus-species relationship; that is, an entity was supposed to be defined or conceived   as a species related to a class or genus, and to be generalized as such through the process of abstraction. But according to Heidegger Being itself was not taken by ancient and

the medieval ontologists to be a generalized or universalized genus to which every entity is related and defined. Instead, ontologists viewed Being as something that transcends the genus-species relationship in the sense that no entity is conceived as a species of it, which is to say,   it is something transcendental-universal in the sense that "[t]he universality of Being '*transcends*' any universality of genus."[2] The transcendental-universality of Being is the characteristic that, according to Heidegger, makes it "the darkest" rather than "the clearest" of all concepts, and so it needs to be further discussed and clarified. Owing to its "supreme universality," one can deduce that Being is indefinable; that is, one cannot define Being as an entity "derived from higher concepts by definition, nor can it be presented through lower ones."[3] Heidegger does not accept the indefinability of Being; he rejects the method of definition given in traditional logic. He intends instead to explore a new method, which may be termed the phenomenological method, in order to conceive Being appropriately. This is the main purpose of his project of *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time). In the process of restructuring the question of Being, Heidegger rejects the third presupposition, which is Being as self-evident. If one "comports" oneself toward something, or even toward oneself -- if, in other words, one makes an assertion of something, or of oneself, of average intelligibility like "The sky is blue," or "I am handsome," one takes the "isness" for granted. Taking the "isness" of entities for granted is, in Heidegger's view, "an enigma *a priori*." It is necessary to restructure the question of Being ("isness") in order to free man from this enigmatic situation, wherein he thinks that he is living in an understanding of Being, but in fact "the meaning of Being is still veiled in darkness."[4]

Due to the perplexing nature of the concept of Being as per the three presuppositions discussed above, Heidegger formulates the question of the meaning of Being as the most fundamental question as transparently as possible. Heidegger formulates the question of Being as an "inquiry," which, according to him, "is a seeking (*Suchen*)."

In expressing the transparency of the structure of the question of Being, Heidegger finds three constitutive factors of this inquiry or seeking: namely, "*that which is asked about* (*sein Gefragtes*)," "*that which is interrogated* (*ein Befragtes*)," and "*that which is to be found out by the asking* (*das Erfragte*)."[5] When one inquires into Being, what one seeks, according to Heidegger, "is not something entirely unfamiliar," but rather an "*average understanding of Being*." This average understanding is *vague* in nature, and through it one cannot grasp Being at all in the first instance. However, out of this understanding "aris[es] both the explicit question of the meaning of Being and the tendency that leads one towards its conception." In this regard, the average understanding guides, "beforehand," the inquiry into Being as a kind of seeking. In this seeking, *what is asked about* is Being – "that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which [*woraufhin*] entities are already understood."[6] So, in the question of the meaning of Being, *what is asked about* is Being, but *what is interrogated* is not Being but rather entities, provided "[t]he Being of entities is not itself an entity." As the number of entities in the world is infinite, one may find it impossible to *interrogate* all of the entities, and so one should limit one's *interrogation*, in order to make it viable.

Working out the question of Being as a transparent inquiry, one should, in Heidegger's view, give priority to one particular entity in order to discern the meaning of Being. This prior entity is the inquirer himself, who asks the question as his own mode of Being. Heidegger denotes that entity by the term "Dasein," "which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being."[7] The third constitutive factor of the structure of the question of Being is its meaning, which is the goal of the inquiry that the Dasein intends to attain. That is to say, *what is to be found out in the asking* lies in *what is asked* – what is discerned by the Dasein (that which is interrogated) as a goal of the inquiry.

Adhering to the question of Being, Heidegger expounds the priority of Dasein as a particular entity that is interrogated in order to attain

the meaning of Being, over all other entities, in three different ways. These are "ontical," "ontological" and "the ontico-ontological."[8] The understanding of the threefold nomenclature of the priority of Dasein over other entities depends on how Heidegger distinguishes ontical from ontological. The nature of the inquiry will be ontological if one inquires into the question of "to be," or Being, or isness, and it will be ontical if one inquires into an entity itself rather than its Being.[9] Dasein is an entity, and it is ontically (i.e., on the grounds of its being an entity) distinct from other entities "by the fact, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it." But as we have seen above, the nature of the inquiry is ontological if one inquires into the issue of Being, which implies that "Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontological." Here Dasein's "Being-ontological" means that Dasein takes its Being as an issue for itself; it does not mean that Dasein is to develop a theoretical inquiry which works towards a study "explicitly devoted to the meaning of entities." In this regard, what Heidegger has in mind in speaking of Dasein's "Being-ontological" should be designated as something "pre-ontological," which simply signifies that Dasein is being in such a way that it has an understanding of Being.[10]

The difference between "ontical" and "ontological" leads Heidegger to the distinction between "*existentiell*" and "*existential.*" Heidegger defines existence (*Existenz*) as "[t]hat kind of Being towards which Dasein can comport itself in one way or another, and always does comport itself somehow." This comporting of Dasein becomes the ground of its understanding of itself – which is to say, "Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence - in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself." Dasein's understanding of itself, or its self-awareness, which it attains that way, is its "ontical affair," what Heidegger calls "*existentiell*."[11] Unlike the ontical self-awareness of Dasein, its understanding of the ontological structure of its existence "aims at the analysis (*Auseinanderlegung*) of what constitutes existence." This analysis "has the character of an understanding which is not existentiell, but rather *existential*." By "existentiality" Heidegger means:

"the state of Being that is constitutive for those entities that exist. But in the idea of such a constitutive state of Being, the idea of Being is already included. And thus even the possibility of carrying through the analytic of Dasein depends on working out beforehand the question about the meaning of Being in general."[12]

In Heidegger's view, the essential character of Being that belongs to Dasein is "Being in a world." Owing to the essential character of "Being in a world" possessed by every entity to be investigated, Dasein is to understand Being as pertaining "with equal primordiality" both to the understanding of the world, and to the understanding of Being of the entities to be investigated within the confinement of the world. So whenever an inquiry or study is to take place relating to a particular type of entity, whether Dasein itself or some other entity, it is grounded upon "Dasein's own ontical structure, in which a pre-ontological understanding of Being is comprised as a definite characteristic," provided the essentiality of Being is Being in a world. "Therefore *fundamental ontology*, from which alone all other ontologies can take their rise, must be sought in the *existential analytic of Dasein*." To sum up the issue concerning the threefold priority of Dasein and the question of Being, Heidegger says:

"The first priority is an ontical one: Dasein is an entity whose Being has the determinate character of existence. The second priority is an ontological one: Dasein is in itself 'ontological', because existence is thus determinative for it. But with equal primordiality Dasein also possesses-as constitutive for its understanding of existence-an understanding of the Being of all entities of a character other than its own. Dasein has therefore a third priority as providing the ontico-ontological condition for the possibility of any ontologies. Thus Dasein has turned out to be, more than any other entity, the one which must first be interrogated ontologically."[13]

I.2.   *Ontical Nearness and the Ontological Distance of Dasein*

After having established the structure of the question of Being, as well as the priority of the question and Dasein, Heidegger now turns to the method of his inquiry   in order toattain the meaning of Being. In the first step, Heidegger explains how Dasein is closest to us ontically but farthest ontologically. Dasein is ontically closest to us in the sense that we *are* ourselves, each of us, what we *are*. Due to the essentiality of Dasein's Being in relation to its world, "the entity towards which it comports itself proximally and in a way which is essentially constant," Dasein understands its own Being. When Dasein tends to interpret itself ontologically, it reflects back to its understanding of the world which has already been attained by itself, in its own understanding of Being. That is to say, the ontological interpretation of Dasein is attained in terms of its understanding of the world, which makes it get "ontologically farthest." But since it understands the very world in terms of its own understanding of Being, therefore, pre-ontologically, Dasein "is surely not a stranger." So Dasein is closest to itself ontically, not a stranger pre-ontologically, and farthest ontologically.[14]

According to Heidegger, there are many ways for Dasein to be ontologically interpreted, which is to say,

> "Dasein's ways of behaviour, its capacities, powers, possibilities, and vicissitudes, have been studied with varying extent in philosophical psychology, in anthropology, ethics, and 'political science', in poetry, biography, and the writing of history, each in a different fashion."[15]

Each of these interpretations of Dasein has to be carried through with a primordial existentiality, comparable to whatever *existentiell* primordiality it may have possessed. So, in dealing with the question of Being, the first requirement is the existential analytic of Dasein. In this regard, Heidegger turns to Dasein's "average everydayness" as one plane of its existential analytic, as on that plane "it can show itself in itself and from itself [*an ihm selbst von*

ihm selbst her].” Heidegger also mentions the limits of everydayness as a perspective in which the Being of Dasein is brought out; he explains that the bringing out of its Being occurs “in a preparatory fashion” which cannot provide “a complete ontology of Dasein.”[16] That is to say, the existential analytic of Dasein on the plane of its everydayness is a *provisional* analytic in that “[i]t merely brings out the Being” of Dasein without interpreting its meaning. This is also “a preparatory procedure” in the sense that it gets Dasein the horizon for the most primordial way of interpreting its Being. After having arrived at that horizon, “this preparatory analytic of Dasein will have to be repeated on a higher and authentically ontological basis.” It shows that the meaning of the Being of Dasein is attained at a relatively higher level, which is ontological rather than pre-ontological. The structures of Dasein, which have already been exhibited provisionally on the plane of everydayness, “must be interpreted over again” on an ontological basis “as modes of temporality.”[17]

I.3.   *To Be is to Be Temporal*

Heidegger equates temporality with the meaning of the Being of Dasein. In this regard, Heidegger attempts to bring time “to light – and genuinely conceived – as the horizon for all understanding of Being and for any way of interpreting it.” In order to make us understand time “*as the horizon for the understanding of Being*,” Heidegger explains how this notion of time or temporality is the source from which both the traditional conception of time and the ordinary way of understanding time have sprung. The ordinary way of understanding time is characterized by taking something as temporal that “always means simply being [*seiend*] ‘in time.’”[18] Within the horizon of the ordinary way of understanding time, it has acquired its self-evident function “as an ontological – or rather an ontical – criterion for naively discriminating various realms of entities.” The entities may be taken as “temporal” entities like natural processes and historical happenings as well as “non-temporal” entities like spatial and numerical relationships.

Philosophically speaking, the temporal entities are also distinguished from "the supra-temporal" eternal, and an attempt is made to bridge the gulf between the two. In these philosophical accounts of the realms of entities in which time always remains unquestionable, Heidegger raises the fundamental question: how [has] time "come to have this distinctive ontological function, or with what right [does] anything like time functio[n] as such a criterion."[19]

Heidegger attempts to conceive of Being in terms of time, and his treatment of the question of the meaning of Being enables one "to show that *the central problematic of all ontology is rooted in the phenomenon of time*." In order to make Being visible in its "temporal" character, Heidegger suggests making "the various modes and derivatives" of Being "intelligible in their respective modifications and derivations by taking time into consideration." In the process of conceiving Being in terms of time, "'temporal' can no longer mean simply 'being in time', '[e]ven the 'non-temporal' and the 'supra-temporal' are 'temporal' with regard to their Being."[20] Heidegger calls this process "'Temporal' determinateness" through "which Being and its modes and characteristics have their meaning determined primordially in terms of time." The Being-time relationship, as Heidegger expounds it, becomes more transparent if one focuses on it in terms of the Dasein-time relationship.

In his treatise *Der Begriff der Zeit* (The Concept of Time), Heidegger shows how Dasein should be taken as time or temporality. Drawing on contemporary research in the field of physics, and particularly on Einstein's relativity theory, Heidegger focuses on "the destructive side" of the notion that "[t]here is no absolute time, and no absolute simultaneity either." That is, time is nothing; it "persists merely as a consequence of the events taking place in it."[21] The fundamental problem with this physicists' conception of time is that it takes time as something measurable, and considers it to be necessarily "uniform" and "homogenous."

Out of this uniformity, Heidegger draws the arbitrariness of time in terms of "now." That is to say, time is to be measured in terms of two different "now-points"; "one is earlier and the other later."[22] The arbitrariness of the now-point shows that if one is to come across an event with a clock, it does not indicate the duration of the event. Rather, it "makes the event explicit […] with respect to its unfolding in the now."[23] Heidegger then questions taking the *experience of now* as the *experience of I am*. So the question of *now-I am* equality points the Heideggerian inquiry into time "in the direction of Dasein […] the entity that we each ourselves are, which each of us finds in the fundamental assertion: I am."[24] Dasein's determining itself as "I am" is as fundamental as its being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*), or its being-with-others, having the same world there with others. This character of Dasein "has a distinctive ontological determination" to be concerned with language. "The fundamental way of the Dasein" being in the world, having world shared with others, is "*speaking*" a language. "It is predominantly in speaking that man's being-in-the-world takes place."[25] Dasein's engagement in the dialogic process with others is not only an involvement in discourse "about its way of dealing with its world"; it is also a process of "*self-interpretation of Dasein* […] which maintains itself in this dialogue."[26] That is to say, "in all speaking about the world there lies Dasein's speaking out itself about itself," and "so *all concernful dealing is a concern for the Being of Dasein*." The important aspect of Dasein's being with others in the world is that "the Dasein of Others [is] not able to substitute"; rather, "the sole appropriate way of having Dasein" is to say: "I never *am* the Other."[27] Thereby Dasein, owing to the possibility of its own rather than the Other's death, cognizes "the most extreme possibility of itself, which it can seize and appropriate as standing before it." Its interpretation with respect to its death is the most certain and authentic self-interpretation of Dasein, as its death is "*the indeterminate certainty of its ownmost possibility of being at an end*." Drawing from the concept of death as the most extreme possibility of Dasein, Heidegger extends the delineation of the Dasein-time relationship. Heidegger suggests that one's own death

is '*Dasein's running ahead to its past, to an extreme possibility of itself that stands before it in certainty and utter indeterminacy.*'[28]

The most significant aspect of Heidegger's concept of the past it is that he conceives of it in terms of a "how-what" distinction. The past is not a "what," for Heidegger, but a "how," in the sense that "the past is not some occurrence, not some incident in my Dasein"; rather, "it uncovers my Dasein as suddenly no longer there; suddenly I am no longer there alongside such and such things, alongside such and such people, alongside these vanities, these tricks, this chattering.… This past is…indeed the authentic 'how' of my Dasein…to which I can run ahead as mine.''[29] Dasein's running ahead to "the past as authentic 'how' also uncovers everydayness in its 'how'," as this "running ahead to the past is Dasein's running up against its most extreme possibility." That is how "[t]his is Dasein's coming back to its everydayness which it still is." Dasein's maintaining "itself in this running ahead" guarantees the authenticity of its existence as temporal, as Heidegger depends on the notion of running ahead in order to express the relation between past, present and future. In running ahead, "Dasein is its future, in such a way that in this being futural it comes back to its past and present."[30] Dasein's running ahead that way is "not *in* time" but "*is time itself*." Dasein's running ahead is its coming back to everydayness in which "Dasein is that Being that *one* is. And Dasein, accordingly, is the time in which *one* is with one another: 'one's' time." So "[w]hat Dasein says about time it speaks out of everydayness," which, "as that particular temporality which flees in the face of futuricity, can only be understood when confronted with the authentic time of the futural being of the past." This is the way the past is "experienced as authentic historicity…something to which one can return again and again."[31] Drawing from this repeating character of the past as authentic historicity in its "how," Heidegger finds the first principle of hermeneutics. He says:

> "The possibility of access to history is grounded in the possibility according to which any specific present understands

how to be futural. This is the first principle of all hermeneutics. It says something about the Being of Dasein, which is historicity itself."[32]

The significance of Heidegger's conception of Being in terms of time is its concern with the how-nature rather than the what-nature of temporality. This may have compelled him to seek a method of investigation that characterizes the how rather than "the what of the objects of philosophical research." Phenomenology is such a method. Heidegger does not borrow the conception of phenomenology as defined by his predecessors; instead, he develops his own version of it which, on the one hand, "comprehensively…determines the principles on which a science is to be conducted," and on the other hand, is "primordially…rooted in the way we come to terms with the things in themselves."[33] The hermeneutic turn he gives to the concept is Heidegger's contribution to phenomenology.

III.   Being, Understanding and Interpretation: The Ontical-Ontological-Hermeneutical Triad

Drawing from the etymology of two Greek terms *φαινόμενον* (phenomenon) and *λόγος* (logos), Heidegger explores the meaning of phenomenology. The word *φαινόμενον* is, according to him, "derived from the verb *φαίνεσθαι*[34] which means 'to show itself.'" So "the expression '*phenomenon*'", according to him, "signifies that *which shows itself in itself*, the manifest." Now the question is, what is that which shows itself in itself? Is it an entity[35] or something else? Heidegger demarcates the ordinary conception of "phenomenon" from the phenomenological conception of "phenomenon." The former is the Kantian sense of "phenomenon" wherein "that which shows itself in itself" is taken to be "those entities which are accessible through the empirical intuition."[36] Grounding his discussion in the Kantian sense of the ordinary signification of "phenomenon," Heidegger develops the phenomenological conception of phenomenon. What is usually

understood by "phenomenon" is "that which already shows itself in the appearance" prior to the understanding – its showing of itself is unthematic, but it can "be brought thematically to show itself; and what thus shows itself in itself (the 'forms of intuition') will be the "phenomena" of phenomenology."

In order to further understand the concept of "phenomenon" as Heidegger expounds it, it is helpful to review how he distinguishes phenomenon from both semblance and appearance. Depending upon the various modes of reaching at it, there are many ways in which an entity might show itself in itself. One possibility he calls "semblance," in which case something shows "itself as something which in itself it is not."[37] This is what the Greeks meant by φαινόμενον. In the case of phenomenon as semblance, an entity looks like something which it is not in itself. But one should not confuse "semblance" with "appearance," as Heidegger distinguishes these terms. The appearance of something is much like "the symptoms of a disease." The symptom of a disease, in its appearance, shows the disease rather than itself. In this showing, the disease does not show itself in itself; rather, it always needs the symptom to show itself, and this is what Heidegger refers to as "the announcing-itself by something which does not show itself." "Appearing" is therefore, "a not-showing-itself."[38] Now one can differentiate between the three concepts of "phenomenon," "semblance" and "appearance." Phenomenon is the showing of itself in itself, semblance is the showing of itself as something which it is not, and appearance is simply a not-showing-itself, but rather the announcing-itself by something else. In the next step of the development of his argument, Heidegger complements the notion of phenomenon with that of logos in order to demonstrate how his conception of phenomenology differs from that of his predecessors.

Three Greek terms λόγος, άπόφανσις and λεγόμενον are key to understanding the Heideggerian conception of logos. Overlooking the various interpretations of the word λόγος, such as "reason,"

"judgment," "concept," "definition," "ground," or "relationship," Heidegger focuses on "the basic signification of λόγος." which, according to him, is "discourse."[39] Referring to Aristotle's explication of the term λόγος, he relates it to another Greek word, ἀποφαίνεσθαι. Discourse as ἀπόφανσις "lets something be seen," which is to say, it makes manifest what is being said by someone, "and thus makes this accessible to the other party." Appealing to the various interpretations of λόγος like reason, ground and relationship, Heidegger further expounds the term in relation to another Greek word, λεγόμενον. Λόγος, as in letting something be seen, lets entities be perceived showing its signification as reason (*Vernunft*).[40] Moreover, λόγος is not only to let something be seen; it is also used with the signification of "λεγόμενον (that which is exhibited, as such)" which, "as present-at-hand, already lies at the *bottom* [*zum Grunde*] of any procedure of addressing oneself to it or discussing it." So "λόγος qua λεγόμενον means the ground." Finally, λόγος acquires the signification of "relationship" when λόγος as λεγόμενον refers to "that which, as something to which one addresses oneself, becomes visible in its relation to something in its relatedness."[41]

Composite words like sociology, biology, theology etc. show that when the term "*logos*" is attached to some word representing some specific thing, it makes that thing an object of study, and so the composite words represent certain fields of study. That is to say, sociology is a discipline in which we study society, just as biology and theology are the studies of life and God, respectively. These disciplines designate the object of their study and the subject-matter of the same. Instead of the how- they focus the what-nature of their study. Phenomenology, according to Heidegger, is not such a composite word that represents such a field of study. It is not the science of phenomenon in the sense that one attempts, under the heading of phenomenology, to study phenomenon as subject-matter. Instead, phenomenology is an investigation of the how-nature of things; namely, it works to "exhibi[t]" things as they are themselves. For Heidegger it is a science which:

> "merely informs us of the "*how*" with which *what* is to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled. To have a science 'of' phenomena means to grasp its objects *in such a way* that everything about them which is up for discussion must be treated by exhibiting it directly and demonstrating it directly....The signification of "phenomenon", as conceived both formally and in the ordinary manner, is such that any exhibiting of an entity as it shows itself in itself, may be called "phenomenology" with formal justification."[42]

The theme of phenomenology is Being, "its meaning, its modification and derivatives." So regarding its subject-matter, "phenomenology is the science of the Being of entities-ontology."[43] In that sense, phenomenology is a highly generalized discipline as it takes Being as its subject-matter – and Being, in *its showing-itself*, is neither a semblance nor an appearance. It is rather the "phenomenon" of phenomenology *qua* ontology. In order to explicitly cognize ontology, one has to "necessarily" focus, according to Heidegger, on "a fundamental ontology."[44] As Being is always "the Being of some entity," the fundamental ontology takes "as its theme that entity which is ontologico-ontically distinctive, Dasein." Here Heidegger attaches or complements the notion of ἑρμηνεύειν (*hermeneun*) with the concept of phenomenology. Dasein, as an ontologico-ontically distinctive entity, has itself "the basic structures of Being," but in order to make those structures "known to Dasein's understanding of Being," it needs to interpret them. The interpretation is extended "by uncovering the meaning of Being and the basic structures of Dasein in general," in order that one "may exhibit the horizon for any further ontological study of those entities which do not have the character of Dasein." Heidegger also incorporates the concept of transcendence in the notion of hermeneutic-phenomenology. Being, which is not a "class or genus of entities," "pertains to every entity."[45] Owing to this universality of Being, it lies along with its structures "beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess." In that sense of being beyond all, "*Being is the transcendens.*" Further, "[e]very disclosure of Being as the *transcendens* is

transcendental knowledge."[46] That is how Heidegger conceives of philosophy as a "universal phenomenological ontology," the primary step of which is "the hermeneutic of Dasein." He says,

> "Ontology and phenomenology are not two distinct philosophical disciplines among others. These terms characterize philosophy itself with regard to its object and its way of treating that object. Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, which, as an analytic of *existence*, has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it *arises* and to which it *returns*."[47]

At this point, it is helpful to briefly examine Heidegger's notion of interpretation in relation to understanding, in order to aptly grasp his concept of phenomenological hermeneutics, or hermeneutic phenomenology. For Heidegger, understanding is not one of the modes of cognition. Instead, understanding is for him a "mode of Being." Understanding is a mode through which the Being of Dasein "discloses in itself what its Being is capable of," in the entirety of Being-in-the-world, as an essential basic state of its Being.[48] That is to say, understanding is the intelligibility of the whole mode of Being-in-the-world, in which the Being of Dasein not only understands itself, but understands the world as well. Understanding is the disclosure of the possibilities of the Being of Dasein in the world, and it guarantees "the full disclosedness of Being-in-the-world throughout all the constitutive items which are essential to it."[49] Here arises the notion of interpretation, as expounded by Heidegger, as it directly relates to the development of understanding. Understanding is a projection of the Being of Dasein upon possibilities, in which understanding develops itself. Heidegger calls this development of understanding interpretation (*Austegung*). So interpretation is not, as it is traditionally conceived, an additional account of something which has already been understood; rather, it is "the working out of possibilities projected in understanding." Having the fore-structure of understanding in a background interpretation is to work out something as something-

in-itself, in a web of relations established in the totality of world.[50] This sort of interpretation is worked out at three levels: fore-having (*Vorhabe*), fore-sight (*Vorsicht*) and fore-conception (*Vorgriff*). The *Vorhabe* is the level of the appropriation of understanding in which the interpretation is grounded in "something we have in advance": the grasp of the totality of involvements in the whole situation. After this phase of appropriation, if something is still unveiled, there arises one more "act of appropriation" called *Vorsicht*. In this level, we see in advance the appropriate way in which things can appear "under the guidance of a point of view which fixes that with regard to which what is understood is to be interpreted." Whatever is held in our *Vorhabe* and *Vorsicht* "becomes conceptualizable through the interpretation" in the third level of appropriation called *Vorgriff* (fore-conception). In this level, "the way in which entity we are interpreting is conceived in advance." So interpretation "is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something [as something] presented to us"; rather, it is always "founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception."[51]

This understanding-interpretation relationship (in which the notion of being-in-the-world remains in the background) is circular in the sense that all interpretations require the fore-structure of understanding; again, all understanding is developed or projected through interpretation. This is what Heidegger calls the "circle of understanding," denying any possibility of its being a vicious circle. According to him, every being as being-in-the-world has a "circular structure" ontologically, if being is itself an issue for it. The circle of understanding, or hermeneutic circle, "is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move; it is the expression of the existential fore-structure of Dasein itself."[52] That is to say, it involves "the structure of meaning" as the circular relationship between understanding and interpretation, which is rooted in "the existential constitution of *Dasein*" as being-in-the-world. This is why Heidegger denies any possibility of reducing this hermeneutical circle to

"the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of meaning. To be sure, we genuinely can hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last and constant task is never to allow any fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working and then fore-structures in terms of the things themselves."[53]

CONCLUSION

Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology is "simple" in the sense that it deals with Being as phenomenon. It is at the same time complex, as it amalgamates Being with understanding and interpretation. If, overlooking the complex nature of Heidegger's philosophy, one takes hermeneutic phenomenology to be phenomenology of Being with a concern for interpretation, one may simply find it contradictory. Phenomenology is concerned with the cognition of reality, as it shows itself to human intuition. If one cognizes reality phenomenologically, then it is irrelevant to interpret the same, as one has already cognized reality as it is. If one needs to interpret reality even after having cognized it as it is, this would suggest that cognition was lacking something that is to be compensated through interpretation. In any case, both phenomenological experience and interpretation cannot be made complementary to each other. But one can avoid this problem of complementarity between phenomenology and hermeneutics if one accepts the complex structure of hermeneutic phenomenology as expounded by Heidegger. Phenomenology is ontology that takes Being, its meaning and modification, as its theme. But Being is always the Being of some entity; it is shown not by itself, but by some entity. The most prior of entities, ontically, ontologically, and ontico-ontologically, is Dasein. Without an entity like Dasein, Being remains implicit, and so it is interpreted and explicitly understood by the help of Dasein. This is how interpretation becomes complementary to phenomenological description in the

triadic structure: Dasein is ontologico-ontically prior in phenomenological research, and hermeneutically explicit in understanding.

Bibliography

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Endnotes

[1] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*), trans. J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (New York: Blackwell, 1962), pp. 22-24.
[2] *Ibid*., p. 22.
[3] *Ibid*., p. 23.
[4] *Ibid*.
[5] *Ibid*., p. 24.
[6] *Ibid*., pp. 25-26.
[7] *Ibid*., p. 27.
[8] *Ibid*., p. 34.
[9] For an analysis of Heidegger's nomenclature regarding these two types of inquiry, see Michael Gelven's interpretation. Gelven not only shows how the ontical is different from the ontological; on the basis of this difference, he also explains the difference between other Heideggerian terms, as follows:
"Object of Inquiry   Being (*Sein*)   Entity (*Das Seiende*)

Type of inquiry	ontological	ontic
Terms of inquiry	existentials	categories
Status of occurrence in inquiry	factical	factual
Type of self-awareness in inquiry	existential	
existentiell"		

See Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time: A Section-by-Section Interpretation* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), p. 19.
[10] Martin Heidegger (1962), p. 32.

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[11] *Ibid.,* p. 33.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Ibid*., p. 34.

[14] *Ibid*., p. 37.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Ibid*., p. 38

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Ibid*., p. 39.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *Ibid*., p. 40.

[21] According to Heidegger, Aristotle perceived time in the way Einstein would later conceive of it. Heidegger cites from Aristotle's *Physics* IV, ch. 11, 219a, in which time is described as something "within which events take place." See Martin Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit* (*The Concept of Time*), trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p.3E, also see translator's note 5, p. 24.

[22] *Ibid*., p. 4E.

[23] *Ibid*., p. 5E.

[24] *Ibid*., p. 6E.

[25] *Ibid*., p. 8E.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid*., p. 11E.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 12E.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid*., p. 13E.

[31] *Ibid*., p. 19E.

[32] *Ibid*., p. 20E.

[33] Martin Heidegger (1962), p. 50.

[34] It is not only this to which Heidegger refers in determining the most appropriate meaning of φαινόμενον; in fact, there are other etymological options which also gesture toward the same meaning of the term. These options include φαίνω ("to bring to the light of day," "to put in the light"), the source word of which is φα (like φως which means "the light" or "that which is bright" – or, "that wherein something can become manifest, visible in itself"). See Martin Heidegger (1962), p. 51.

[35] The Greeks at times identified φαινόμενον with τά όντα (entities). See *Ibid.*

[36] *Ibid*., p. 54.

[37] *Ibid*., p. 51.

[38] *Ibid*., p. 52.

[39] *Ibid*., p. 55.

[40] *Ibid*., p. 58.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] *Ibid*., p. 59.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 60.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 184.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 187.
[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 188-193.
[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 191-2.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 195.
[53] *Ibid.*