MARTIN

HEIDEGGER

INTRODUCTION TO METAPHYSICS

NEW TRANSLATION BY

GREGORY FRIED AND RICHARD POLT

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

Introduction to Metaphysics

New translation by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt

YALE NOTA BENE

Yale University Press New Haven & London

Originally published as *Einführung in die Metaphysik* by
Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen.
Published as a Yale Nota Bene book in 2000.

For information about this and other Yale University Press publications, please contact: U.S office sales.press@yale.edu
Europe office sales@yaleup.co.uk

Designed by Rebecca Gibb. Set in Galliard type by Keystone Typesetting, Inc.
Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Heidegger, Martin, 1889–1976.
[Einführung in die Metaphysik. English]
Introduction to metaphysics / Martin Heidegger ; translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-300-08327-0 (Hardcover : alk. paper) — ISBN 0-300-08328-9 (pbk.)
1. Metaphysics. I. Title.
BD111 .H42 2000
110—dc21 99-088479

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

10 9 8 7 6 5

Contents

Translators' Introduction

IN 1953, in the preface to the seventh edition of his masterwork, *Being and Time,* Martin Heidegger suggested that for an elucidation of the question of Being raised by this text, "the reader may refer to my *Einführung in die Metaphysik,* which is appearing simultaneously with this reprinting."[1] Heidegger had originally presented this *Introduction to Metaphysics* as a lecture course at the University of Freiburg in the summer semester of 1935. It attests to the

1. *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 17. The 1953 edition of *Einführung in die Metaphysik* was published by Max Niemeyer Verlag (Tübingen). Niemeyer has continued to publish the book, and it has also been published in the series of Heidegger's collected works as *Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 40, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983). The *Gesamtausgabe* edition notes the Niemeyer edition's pagination, and in our translation, we have also noted this pagination for the reader's convenience. In citing the *Introduction to Metaphysics,* we will use the abbreviation IM, followed by a page reference according to the Niemeyer edition, which will allow the reader to find the passage in both our translation and the two German editions.

importance he attached to this work that Heidegger chose this course, from among the dozens of manuscripts of lecture courses held over the decades of his teaching career, as the first to present for general publication, and that he saw fit to present this *Introduction* as a companion—indeed, as a rightful heir—to *Being and Time,* the book that established him as one of the preeminent philosophers of the twentieth century. Although this text consists of a series of classroom lectures, it is composed with great care. Heidegger writes in an intricate, nuanced style. Nearly every paragraph contains a series of plays on words that exploit the sounds and senses of German, and often of Greek, in order to bring us closer to a genuine experience of primordial phenomena—Being, truth, and *Dasein* (human beings insofar as they relate to Being).

In the English-speaking world, the importance of *Introduction to Metaphysics* was in part established by the fact that in 1959 it became the first book-length work by Heidegger to be translated into English, three years before a translation of *Being and Time* itself appeared.[2] In effect, the *Introduction to Metaphysics* introduced Heidegger to the English-speaking world. Ralph Manheim undertook the daunting task of translating Heidegger's highly idiosyncratic prose, and if we judge the results in view of the fact that he had few models to work with, Manheim's effort stands as a landmark. He succeeded in presenting Heidegger's often turgid style in a readable and idiomatic English.

Nevertheless, all important philosophical works are standing invitations to new translation, for translation is one of the means by which such works are continually reappropriated by their interpreters. Furthermore, after forty years, Manheim's translation is showing its age. To begin with, in these intervening years, a broad

2. *An Introduction to Metaphysics,* trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).

consensus has developed for rendering key concepts in Heidegger's philosophical lexicon. Although no serious translation should allow such consensus to dictate its labors, a contemporary rendering should take this consensus into account so that, as far as possible, the reader may endeavor to place the arguments of this book in the context of Heidegger's wider body of work now available in English. Secondly, Manheim's felicitous translation of Heidegger at times obscures, by its very fluidity, important philosophical issues; this is because an idiomatic translation may sacrifice terminological consistency or precision in a turn of phrase for the sake of a more natural-sounding English expression. We have tried to maintain a high degree of consistency in conveying key concepts, retreating from this standard only when sense absolutely dictates otherwise. The point of this procedure is to let readers form their own interpretations of Heidegger's words, based on their knowledge of all the contexts in which they appear. To some readers this fidelity will result in what sounds at times like an unnatural English, but it is important to recognize that Heidegger's language can be just as alien to a native German speaker.

A common objection against so-called literal translations is that a single word can have many meanings, depending on the context. This is true, and it is especially true of Heidegger. But the best way to suggest the shifting pattern of the meanings of a German word is to use one word in English that is amenable to undergoing a similar series of uses. For example, when we consistently use "fittingness" to translate *Fug,* we do not mean to imply that the word should always be understood according to some single formula, such as a dictionary definition. The various meanings of "fittingness" in this text must be gathered from its successive contexts, just as one would understand the senses of *Fug* if one were reading the German text. If we used several different renderings, it would become impossible to see the connections among the various uses of *Fug* —

for there are many such connections, even if no single, formulaic definition of the word is possible. Having said this, we must also acknowledge that it has not always been possible to employ a single English word to render some of Heidegger's terms.

Because Heidegger places such a great emphasis on the importance of language and the use of language for the question of Being and its history, the attentive reader should learn enough about Heidegger's philosophical terminology to form a judgment concerning the best way to render Heidegger's key words in English. Because we have endeavored to maintain a high degree of terminological consistency in our translation, we hope this version of the *Introduction to Metaphysics* will aid this process of reflection. To assist the reader further, especially the reader who comes to Heidegger for the first time with this book, we offer here a brief discussion of important words in Heidegger's philosophical vocabulary, restricting ourselves to the most difficult and characteristic terms used by Heidegger in this work. We also recommend a study of the more comprehensive glossary accompanying this translation. The reader must understand that what follow here are sketches, not definitions, and that only closer study through an engaged process of familiarization can develop the fuller meaning of these words. There are no solutions to genuine problems of translation, only temporarily satisfactory placeholders for what thoughtful readers should themselves take up as a question about language.

Das Seiende: beings; what is; that which is. Heidegger's expression *das Seiende* is broad enough to refer to any entity, physical or otherwise, with which we may have dealings, whether real, illusory, or imagined. One helpful passage in this text (IM 58) suggests the range of things that may count as beings, including vehicles, mountains, insects, the Japanese, and Bach's fugues. *Das Seiende* (or the equivalent *Seiendes*) also often refers to beings in general and as a whole, as in the opening question of the book, "Why are there

beings [*Seiendes*] at all instead of nothing?" It should be noted that the German expression, unlike the English "beings," is not plural, and is translated most literally as "what is" or "that which is." Occasionally, Heidegger refers to something as *seiend,* and we have translated this word as "in being." This is meant to function as a verbal adjective and does not mean located *inside* a being or thing. Finally, *Seiendheit* means "beingness," that which characterizes beings as beings, in general. For Heidegger, much of the history of philosophy has focused on this beingness rather than inquiring into the happening of Being itself.

Das Sein: Being. For Heidegger, Being is not any *thing.* It is not *a* being at all. *Introduction to Metaphysics* often gives the impression that Being is the same as beingness. However, Heidegger's ultimate question is how it is that beings in their beingness become available to us in the first place, or how we come to understand what it means *to be.* The question of Being, in this sense, inquires into the happening, the event, in which all beings become accessible and understandable to us as beings. Being is thus essentially verbal and temporal. Literally translated, *das Sein* would be "the *to be,*" but this would be far too clumsy a rendering. Among Heidegger scholars there is considerable controversy on how best to translate *das Sein* into English. Many prefer the lowercase "being" in order to fend off the impression that Heidegger means some Supreme Being standing above or holding up all other beings; *das Sein* must not be mistaken for a subject deserving the substantiation that capitalization can imply in English. (In German, all nouns are capitalized, so there is no such implication.) Still, in our judgment, to render *das Sein* as "being" risks confusion, especially with "beings" as the translation for *das Seiende,* and so we resort to the capitalized term.

Dasein: A word left untranslated in almost all renderings of Heidegger's work, *Dasein* denotes that being for whom Being itself is at issue, for whom Being is in question. For the most part, in Heideg-

ger, this being is us, the human being, although Dasein is not *equivalent* to human beings; Heidegger insists that Dasein is not an anthropological, psychological, or biological concept. We can think of Dasein as a condition into which human beings enter, either individually or collectively, at a historical juncture when Being becomes an issue for them; in this sense, Heidegger often speaks in this text of "historical Dasein," "our Dasein," "human Dasein," or "the Dasein of a people." In everyday German, the word *Dasein* is used just as we use the word "existence"; readers may always substitute "existence" for "Dasein" in order to get a sense of how Heidegger's statements would have sounded to his original audience. But Heidegger consistently sees the Latin term *existentia* as misleading and superficial (see IM 49, 138), so it is preferable to interpret *Dasein* in terms of its root meaning. This root meaning is usually rendered in English as "Being there," but when Heidegger hyphenates *Da-sein,* we have employed the equally valid translation "Being-here." Dasein is the being who inhabits a Here, a sphere of meaning within which beings can reveal themselves as meaningful, as significant.

Das Nichts: Nothing. As the first sentence of *Introduction to Metaphysics* indicates, the question of "nothing" will be a recurrent theme of this work. For Heidegger, there is a deep connection between *das Nichts* and *das Sein,* and once again, the reader must beware of taking the capitalized *Nothing* as a substantive thing. Neither Being nor Nothing is *a being* for Heidegger. We have resorted to capitalization again to avoid confusion between Heidegger's use of *das Nichts,* which as Nothing is the counterpart to *das Sein,* Being, and his use of *Nichts* or *nichts,* without the article, which generally means "nothing" as employed in more ordinary language.

Gewalt: violence. *Gewalt* belongs to a family of words used in this work that present considerable difficulties for translation. In ordi-

nary German, *Gewalt* can mean violence in the sense of arbitrary and willful force, but it can also mean the legitimate force employed by the institutions of the state. We have decided to translate this word uniformly as "violence," in part for the sake of consistency, but also because Heidegger seems to want to underline the radically transformative work of the *Gewalt-tat* and the *Gewalt-tätiger*—the act of violence and the doer of violence—without minimizing the danger and even the terror of such work. Still, the reader should keep in mind the ambiguous meaning of *Gewalt* in German.

Walten; das Walten: hold sway; the sway. Related to *Gewalt* are the words *walten* (a verb) and *das Walten* (a verbal noun). In ordinary German, *walten* means to prevail, to reign, to govern, to dominate. Heidegger interprets the Greek word *phusis,* which is usually translated as "nature," as a Greek name for Being itself—that is, the "emergent-abiding *Walten*" of beings as such. We believe the expression "the sway" suggests this powerful upsurge of the presence of beings. That Heidegger seeks to interpret *phusis* as this "sway" is an undertaking to which the reader must lend special attention.

Grund: ground; reason; foundation. Like its English cognate, "ground," the German *Grund* can mean both the earth beneath our feet and the reason upon which we establish a position. As such, *ein Grund* can be a foundation, and it is opposed to *ein Abgrund,* an abyss. For Heidegger, every serious "Why?"—such as the question, "Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?"—strives to reach such a *Grund,* although a genuine question may well run up against an *Abgrund.* We translate *Grund* and related words in a variety of ways, as indicated here, because no single English word can adequately capture its range of meaning.

Der Mensch: humanity; human beings; humans; the human being; the human. In German, *Mensch* means human being, irrespective of gender, and so, with a very few exceptions, we have

sought to preserve this gender neutrality, especially because Heidegger discusses all human beings as Dasein.

Volk: a people; the people. The German word *Volk* has a troubled history. In official Nazi ideology, the *Volk* is the race, the bearer of a specific historical destiny, both biological and spiritual. But in ordinary German, *Volk* has no necessary connection with race. It can mean a people or a nation, or "the people" as the basis for sovereignty (as in the American "We the people"), although *Volk* usually does not mean "people" in the informal sense of "folks around here." Heidegger uses the word *Volk* in *Being and Time,* and there it is best translated as "community." But in the 1930s, especially during his involvement with the Nazi regime, Heidegger discusses the *Volk* in a manner that clearly endeavors to come to grips, for better or worse, with the politics of his time.

Beyond the question of terminology, as our discussion of *das Volk* suggests, it is crucial to take into account the historical context of *Introduction to Metaphysics.* Manheim's translation at times blunts the edge of the political references and implications of Heidegger's work. When Heidegger delivered the original lecture course in 1935, Adolf Hitler had been in power for two years. Heidegger had himself joined the National Socialist party in May 1933 and served the regime as the rector of the University of Freiburg from April 1933 until his resignation in April 1934, when he determined that he had lost an internal power struggle concerning the direction of educational policy.[3] Readers must judge for themselves how Heidegger

3. The question of Heidegger's political involvement has generated great controversy in several cycles of discussion since the end of the Second World War. For reliable biographies, readers may consult Hugo Ott, *Heidegger: A Political Life,* trans. Allen Blunden (New York: Basic, 1993), and Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil,* trans. Ewald Osers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). For further discussion, see Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993); Tom Rockmore and Joseph Margolis, eds., *The Heidegger Case: On*

had come to view the historical meaning of the regime by 1935, but to render *Führer* as "chancellor," as Manheim does (IM 27), to take one example, makes this reckoning more difficult, because the reader is not fully confronted with the political connections of this book. The implications of Heidegger's references, as when he makes approving use of Knut Hamsun for an example of talk about Nothing (IM 20) or when he criticizes Theodor Haecker's *What Is Humanity?* (IM 109), may well escape the contemporary reader: Hamsun, a Nobel Prize–winning writer, was a Nazi sympathizer; Haecker's book advanced a clearly anti-Nazi argument.

Some in Heidegger's German audience of 1953 recognized the significance of this *Introduction to Metaphysics,* although perhaps not in the way Heidegger had expected or hoped. The young Jürgen Habermas, himself recently a student of Heidegger's, wrote a letter to the editors of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* declaring his outrage that Heidegger could publish in 1953, without comment or retraction, his words of 1935 hailing the "inner truth and greatness" (IM 152) of the National Socialist movement.[4] This passage, appearing toward the end of the book, has remained one of the most controversial and oft-quoted sayings in Heidegger's corpus since it was first published. The sentence reads in full as follows: "In particular, what is peddled about nowadays as the philosophy of National Socialism, but which has not the least to do with the inner truth and greatness of this movement [namely, the encounter between global technology and modern humanity], is fishing in these

Philosophy and Politics (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); and Gregory Fried, *Heidegger's* Polemos: *From Being to Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

4. Jürgen Habermas, letter to *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* July 25, 1953, trans. in Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy,* 190–197. See also Wolin's introduction to the Habermas letter for an overview of the history of the passage in question.

troubled waters of 'values' and 'totalities.'" Particularly problematic has been the status of the phrase within the brackets. In the 1953 edition, this phrase stood in parentheses, indicating by Heidegger's own convention that he had added the phrase in 1935. During the controversy that arose around Habermas's 1953 demand for an explanation, Christian Lewalter published a letter in *Die Zeit* arguing that the passage in question means that "the Nazi movement is a symptom for the tragic collision of man and technology, and as such a symptom it has its 'greatness,' because it affects the entirety of the West and threatens to pull it into destruction." Heidegger himself then wrote to *Die Zeit* to confirm that Lewalter's "interpretation of the sentence taken from my lecture is accurate in every respect." In brief, a concerted attempt was made to characterize this passage as a condemnation of the hubristic aspirations of movements such as National Socialism that sought a monstrous "greatness" on the basis of a total control of humanity and nature through conquest and technology; the "inner truth" of the movement could then be taken as the historical truth of a phenomenon whose profound, if unsettling, significance defines the nihilism of the times.[5]

The trouble with this explanation is that Heidegger did not add the parenthetical remark in 1935 or soon thereafter, whether as a silent criticism or anything else. In his prefatory note to *Introduction to Metaphysics,* Heidegger claims that material in parentheses was added at the time of the lectures and that material in brackets was added during later reworking of the text; in his 1966 interview with

5. On the letters by Lewalter and Heidegger, see Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy,* 187–188. For further discussion of the textual history, see Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking,* trans. Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press International, 1987), 276–278; Petra Jaeger's afterword to *Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 40, 232–234; and Dominique Janicaud, "The Purloined Letter," in Rockmore and Margolis, *The Heidegger Case,* 348–363.

Der Spiegel, Heidegger explicitly asserted that the parenthetical remark "was present in my manuscript from the beginning" but that he did not read it aloud for fear of party informers.[6] Nevertheless, subsequent scholarship has shown that many of the passages in parentheses should have been in brackets, and the insertion about "the encounter between global technology and modern humanity" is one of these.[7] The reader must judge the meaning of this passage in consideration of the fact that Heidegger did not, at least in 1935 when the lectures were originally delivered, explain the significance of National Socialism in terms of the parenthetical remark.

In our translation, we have indicated wherever parentheses in the 1953 edition have now been revised to brackets to show that the material was added not in 1935 but thereafter.[8] We have not taken lightly this decision to impose on Heidegger's text, but we believe that for the sake of a full understanding of the context of the book, such interventions are necessary. We have also provided bibliographical references for literary and philosophical works that Hei-

6. Martin Heidegger, "'Only a God Can Save Us': *Der Spiegel*'s Interview with Martin Heidegger," in Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy,* 104.

7. Otto Pöggeler attests that the parenthetical remark was very deliberately added in 1953 as the lectures were being prepared for publication: Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking,* 278; see also Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy,* 188. The three student assistants who worked on the page proofs of *Introduction to Metaphysics* upon its publication have all asserted that this insertion was not part of the original text, and furthermore that Heidegger changed the phrase "greatness of N.S." [National Socialism] to "greatness of this movement": see Hartmut Buchner, "Fragmentarisches," in Günther Neske, ed., *Erinnerung an Martin Heidegger* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1977), 47–51, esp. 49. For further discussion of this textual question and its larger context, see Theodore Kisiel, "Heidegger's Philosophical Geopolitics in the Third Reich," in *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics,* ed. Richard Polt and Gregory Fried (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

8. More recent German editions of Heidegger's text, including the *Gesamtausgabe* edition, have revised such passages, changing parentheses to brackets, and we have relied on such corrections in preparing our translation.

degger mentions, and we have occasionally commented on the contents of these works when we believe that such commentary would enhance the understanding of his lectures. Furthermore, in addition to scholarly and contextual references, where Heidegger's language becomes especially difficult or where the sense depends in part on the German itself, we have provided either interpolations of the German words or, where the language is ambiguous or especially complex, a footnote for entire phrases or sentences. We have also provided the pagination from the Niemeyer edition in the margins of this translation so that readers may easily find the German whenever they have questions about the translation.

Our practice has been to transliterate individual Greek words, such as *phusis, logos, on, einai, polemos,* and *technē,* so that readers unfamiliar with the language may track the use of these terms. We have used the Greek alphabet in longer citations, on the assumption that any readers who study the details of these longer passages will know Greek and will not need a transliteration. In footnotes, we have also frequently provided conventional translations of Greek passages, because Heidegger's own interpretative translations often depart from what scholars would generally recognize as a conventional rendering, and the reader should have the opportunity to judge the extent of Heidegger's departure.

Aside from all issues of vocabulary, political context, and textual history, *Introduction to Metaphysics* remains, first and foremost, a powerful and provocative work of philosophy. Heidegger's impassioned lectures resonate with each other and with us, leaving us with a wealth of questions. What is the meaning of Being? Does it have a particular meaning for Westerners, and if so, how did it come to have that meaning? Does our ordinary disregard for such issues blind us to our history and condemn us to a superficial relation to the world? Do our ordinary science and logic separate us

from the truth? What is truth in the first place? What is language? What is thinking? What is it to be human at all?

We prefer not to try to answer such questions here, or to venture farther into the difficulties of interpreting *Introduction to Metaphysics* as a whole. Instead, we hope that our translation will make it possible for thoughtful readers to enter the book on their own and form their own judgments. Our outline, glossary, and index may provide some assistance. Readers who are interested in further explorations of the many dimensions of this text may also consult the anthology *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics,* which is being published by Yale University Press as a sequel to this volume.[9]

9. For a general introduction to Heidegger's thought, see Richard Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). Those who read German may also consult Heidegger's own notes on the lecture course, as well as an alternate draft of one section, included as an appendix to the *Gesamtausgabe* edition, 217–230. In his notes, Heidegger criticizes the lecture course for failing to develop the question of Being in its fullest breadth; the draft treats the topic of the etymology of Being, with some significant differences from the published lectures.

Outline of *Introduction to Metaphysics*

This is one possible outline of the text that the reader may find useful in following Heidegger's arguments. Page numbers refer to the German pagination.

Chapter One: The Fundamental Question of Metaphysics

A. The why-question as the first of all questions (1–6)

B. Philosophy as the asking of the why-question (6–10)
   1. The untimeliness of philosophy
   2. Two misinterpretations of philosophy
      a. Philosophy as a foundation for culture
      b. Philosophy as providing a picture of the world
   3. Philosophy as extra-ordinary questioning about the extra-ordinary

C. *Phusis:* the fundamental Greek word for beings as such (10–13)
   1. *Phusis* as the emerging, abiding sway
   2. The later narrowing of the meaning of *phusis*

D. The meaning of "introduction to metaphysics" (13–17)
   1. Meta-physics as questioning beyond beings as such
   2. The difference between the question of beings as such and the question of Being (addition, 1953)
   3. Introduction to metaphysics as leading into the asking of the fundamental question

E. Unfolding the Why-question by means of the question of Nothing (17–23)
   1. The seeming superfluity of the phrase "instead of nothing"
   2. The connection between the question of Nothing and the question of Being
   3. The superiority of philosophy and poetry over logic and science
   4. An example of poetic talk of Nothing: Knut Hamsun
   5. The wavering of beings between Being and the possibility of not-Being

F. The prior question: How does it stand with Being? (23–39)
   1. The mysteriousness of Being
   2. Nietzsche: Being as a vapor
   3. Our destroyed relation to Being and the decline of the West
      a. The geopolitical situation of the Germans as the metaphysical people
      b. The failure of traditional ontology to explain the emptiness of Being
      c. Philosophical questioning as essentially historical
      d. The darkening of the world and the misinterpretation of spirit
      e. The genuine essence of spirit: the empowering of the powers of beings
      f. Our destroyed relation to Being and our misrelation to language

F. Conclusion (152–157)
   1. Review of the seven points of orientation
   2. The inadequacy of the traditional meaning of Being
   3. The task of grounding Dasein and Being anew
   4. The problem of Being and time