

## Thinking After Heidegger?

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The question “after Heidegger?” includes in fact three philosophical problems: the question regarding the **after**, the question about **we** and the question of **Heidegger**.

First of all, what does it mean **to be after**? In the fifth book of *Metaphysics*, Aristotle indicates a plurality of meanings of the concept of *prior* (*πρότερος*) and its opposite – **after** (*ὑστερος*), emphasizing their relational aspect. Something can only be *prior* or *after* in relation with something else that is a specific *starting-point* and, in a sense, is pre-given or already chosen. At the same time, the idea of *prior* or *after* presupposes, on the one hand, a series or continuity and, on the other hand, the idea of difference which in its turn needs a criterion. Even though Aristotle develops in detail only *the prior*, we can deduce his characterization of *the after* by simply reversing the given description and keeping the criteria. Following Aristotle’s observations, something could be after: in an *absolute* way, by *nature*, by either of the *categories* (quality, quantity, time, location, etc.), by *movement*, by *potency* or *actuality*, by *power*, and so on (*Met* V. 11, 1018b9 - 1019a15).

Secondly, what are **we** supposed to do after Heidegger? Does after mean to simply succeed him? To follow? To mimic?

To pursue? To surpass? To move on and leave him behind? When we straightforwardly ask “*after Heidegger?*”, we lack the criteria of difference, and, it could be argued, even a clear grasp of what Heidegger means (the specific that in a sense is pre-given). In other words, this question implies an enormous undertaking of evaluating our position in history and opens a stupendous space to debate our comprehension of Heidegger. Fortunately, the two praiseworthy editors of the “*After Heidegger?*” volume designated the *after* as the place *where Heidegger’s thought leaves philosophy today* and specified the criteria as *the relevant, provocative and the most and least promising elements of his legacy*. The volume covers 33 original answers by internationally renowned scholars to this multilayered challenge. The fact that the editors managed to bring together many remarkable names from the USA, UK, Germany, Italy, Australia, China and India, makes this tome a major event in Heidegger scholarship which should now be appropriated by the readers.

Due to the intrinsic boundaries of a review, I aim to provide only a short description of what I find to be the most appealing basic intention of each text. Undeniably this procedure, as any reduction, is bound to sometimes leave behind too much and occasionally to bring forward too little.

The volume’s 33 articles are grouped in seven thematic parts and although they are independent, they communicate with the others. The first part, called *Overviews*, gathers the contributions that have a holistic image of Heidegger’s thinking. The primary concern here is how to process Heidegger’s entire philosophical inheritance.

Drew A. Hyland argues that Heidegger’s sagacious appreciation of the fundamental role of *the question* as a way of thinking and his reflections on *the distinction between calculative and meditative thinking* are worth keeping. Furthermore, he identifies Heidegger’s project of a *philosophy beyond good and evil* as a mistake that made him vulnerable to political prejudices. The question of the good is the missing ingredient that remains to be our task.

Gregory Fried points out the paradoxical situation of thinking that depends both on *dare* and *piety*. Heidegger’s dare

to question the entire Western tradition is simultaneously fascinating and dangerous in its limitations. We can go beyond Heidegger only if we rethink *the krisis* of modernity from our point in history, *in dialogue with his readings* and never forget to carefully evaluate risks.

Daniel O. Dahlstrom makes a philosophical inventory consisting of five major contributions (the considerations on the thematic of *being and existence*; of *truth, alētheia, and the eventful hiddenness of being*; of *the timeliness and historicity of human existence and the history of being*; of *the experience of truth in art and poetry*; and of *the essential challenge of modern technology*) and six deficiencies (*an irresponsible aloofness; a parochial, uncritical metaphysics; a metaphorical language; an ontological animism; a world without values and causes; history of philosophy myopia and philosophical grandstanding*) of Heidegger's thought.

Peter E. Gordon proposes a different approach by discussing five important heideggerian ideas and carefully distinguishing the pertinent parts from the *ideological distortions*. For example, he shows how *the existential analytic of the lifeworld* is cross-bread with an *anti-modernist resentment against the cognitive and practical achievements of the modern natural sciences*.

Thomas Sheehan claims that *the scandalous state of Heidegger scholarship today* is partly due to the uncertainty about what the core of Heidegger's thinking was. *It may be too early to speak of «an after Heidegger» as long as there is such confusion regarding what Heidegger's own work was about*. Sheehan proposes an innovative phenomenological reading as an attempt to *make sense of what comes before the after*. Accordingly, he asserts that Heidegger's main concern always evolved around *the question of meaning and why there is meaningfulness at all: Ex-sistance, Dasein, Ereignis, Lichtung*.

The second part, *After the Black Notebooks*, focuses on the thematic of Heidegger's anti-Semitism and his involvement with National Socialism. Donatella Di Cesare depicts Heidegger as a particular and nevertheless guilty subject in a tradition of *metaphysical anti-Semitism*, which stems from *the anti-Judaism of the Church Fathers* and extends to the philosophies

of Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Nietzsche. Peter Trawny shows how the *transformative* intentions of Heidegger's philosophy *inscribe themselves in the National-Socialist-anti-Semitic dogma by, at the same time, destroying it*. Julia A. Ireland questions *how the trenchancy of Heidegger's metaphysical critique of racial biologism can live together with his anti-Judaic statements*. Babette Babich reflects on our postmodern conditions in striving to go further in our understanding of Heidegger.

In the third part dedicated to *Politics and ethics*, John McCumber separates the *Seinsgeschichte* contaminated by anti-Semitism from the fresh ideas of *finitude, temporality of death and meaning*, which in a sense contradict it. Lawrence J. Hatab advocates for a prudent reading of the connections between Heidegger's early philosophy and politics. Arun Iyer emphasizes the revolutionary aspect of Heidegger's philosophy in his *attempt to reveal the praxiological essence of thinking*. Dennis J. Schmidt examines Heidegger's way of philosophizing by searching for clues that might help our understanding of *ethical life*.

In the fourth part named *Life and Existence*, Robert C. Scharff explores the depths of Heidegger's hermeneutics of life in relation to Dilthey's and Husserl's positions. Eric S. Nelson highlights the strange character of Heidegger's account of life that, on the one hand, starts from the basic level of immediate givenness and, on the other hand, *explicitly rejects* some of its aspects (*the psychological, biographical, autobiographical, and anthropological dimensions of a unique individual life*). Charles Guignon and Kevin Aho promote Heidegger's critical attitude powered by the belief in the *questionability of all traditional assumptions* and the *question-worthiness of the philosophical tradition as a whole*. In consequence, the task of critical philosophy after him must also include him as a subject. Starting from Heidegger's sense of responsibility concerning our *Dasein*, Richard Polt sketches the plan for a *traumatic ontology*. Skeptic to the idea of a *fix body of assertions* that could endure after Heidegger, Polt considers the latter's philosophy a provocation and inspiration to think. Lee Braver calls attention to Heidegger's ingenious schematizations, arguing that the endeavour of *re-grounding abstract concepts and theories in the*

*concrete details of our lives* remains important for philosophy nowadays. Theodore Kisiel investigates Heidegger's different articulations of Dasein from *the situational I*, *historical I*, *existential situation*, *existence to appropriation in the event*.

In the fifth part *Phenomenology and Ontology*, Steven Crowell maintains that Heidegger's later work is still ripe for a phenomenological picking. In dialogue with the other authors, Katherine Withy reengages the *question of being*, while Simon Critchley asks about *the meaning of the meaning of being*. François Raffoul meditates on the future of thought by deepening Heidegger's late suggestion of a *phenomenology of the inapparent*.

In the sixth part – *Thinking with late Heidegger* –, William McNeill exposes the genesis of *Ereignis* in Heidegger's reading of the Greek *technē* and *poiēsis*. David Kleinberg-Levin focuses on the late Heidegger's account on vision and his critique of *vision-generated metaphysics*. Miguel de Beistegui takes up the massive challenge of determining Heidegger's meanings of thought and points out that a *strong account of the aesthetic* is missing. Günter Figal outlines a *phenomenology of the space* starting from the affirmation of *the Clearing (Lichtung)* as Heidegger's main *matter of thinking*. Daniela Vallega-Neu finds in Heidegger's assessment of dispositions and attunements open possibilities for thinking beyond him into a *dynamic ontology*. Andrew J. Mitchell argues that Heidegger's work could inspire *contemporary attempts at thinking subjective identity in terms of sex, gender, race, and so on*. Richard Capobianco analyses a Heideggerian address on *Alētheia*, searching for clues of a non-phenomenological philosophy.

The final part is named *Openings to others*. In Iain Thomson's view, Heidegger's penetrating critique of modernity, his effort to transcend nihilism and his solution, which involves art and poetry, count as a ground to name him *the original post-modern thinker*. Bret Davis describes Heidegger's affinities with *eastern thinking* and advocates for a *cross-cultural philosophy*. Using Heidegger as a starting point, Trish Glazebrook reflects on the present-day issues of environment, globalization, gender, dehumanization and feminism.

After a careful reading, the most striking traits of this volume are the diversity and the originality of the ways of thinking opened by dealing with Heidegger's legacy, ways that frequently go beyond, in the sense of the Hegelian *Aufhebung* (Polt's *traumatic ontology*, Figal's *phenomenology of the space*, etc.). The articles prove that Heidegger's writings can still fuel philosophy today and spark new beginnings if we are up to the task. Furthermore, the book renders a refined image of Heidegger's limits in a triple sense: aporetical (to state some examples: the ambiguity of the metaphorical use of language, the indeterminacy of *the Turn*, *the uncritical view of metaphysics*), negative (ideological involvement with *the National-Socialism and the anti-Semitism*) and positive (for example the idea of a *meditative thinking* that draws insight from art and poetry as a solution against the objectification of humanity through technology). Nowadays, part of thinking beyond Heidegger presupposes applying his lesson of daring to question the limits against him. The question regarding which limits are worth challenging rests open.

The substantial mix of the topics, which range from Heidegger's fundamental questions (*being, truth, meaning, existence, time*), concepts and ideas (*the Open, Ereignis, finitude, fundamental dispositions and attunements, authenticity*), critiques (of metaphysics, of modernism, of technology, etc.), his accounts on life, phenomenology, hermeneutics, ontology, art, poetry, history, to matters concerning his *historical situation* (the *theological roots*, political involvement, racism, *antimodernism* and *post-modernism, Europocentrism*, etc.), makes this volume relevant for a wide range of researchers. It can also be highly engaging to thinkers interested in pre-Socratics, Aristotle, Augustine, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Husserl, or those ones dealing with topics such as the purpose of philosophy nowadays, the analytic-continental divide, the possibility of a *cross-cultural philosophy*, and so on.

Overall, with its rich and original content, renowned international authors and thematic diversity, "After Heidegger?" has all the ingredients to be a sought-after

milestone when one genuinely embarks on the adventure of thinking after Heidegger.

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