

Chapter Six

Ereignis and Technology: Heidegger's Thinking of Identity and Difference

Last chapter we discussed the first two phases in Heidegger's relationship with Hegel, the earlier critical rejection of Hegel in *Being and Time* and dialogical confrontation with Hegel on the problem of finitude, infinitude, and the ontological difference in the PhG. In this chapter, I turn to the third and final phase in Heidegger's confrontation with Hegel: the "enveloping" appropriation which proceeds through a complicated "step back" behind Hegelian metaphysics to its unthought origin, the "difference as difference". This experience of the ontological difference, according to Heidegger, is what inaugurates the "first beginning" of metaphysics in Plato and Aristotle, with its subsequent history developing as the increasing forgetting of the question of Being. The forgetting of the latter manifests itself historically in the representational thinking of identity and metaphysics of subjectivity, which culminates in modern technology as the utter oblivion of the ontological difference. Hence Heidegger's task is to find ways of articulating the non-metaphysical difference as the hidden origin of Western metaphysics, to prepare an onto-poetic thinking of this difference no longer bound to the modern metaphysics of representation or the metaphysical search for "grounds" or ultimate foundations.

Heidegger's philosophical journey may be regarded as an extended meditation on the problem of the meaning or sense of Being [*Sein*] and its difference from beings [*Seiende*]. Beginning with the introductory analysis of the Being of Da-sein as that being which understands Being, the later Heidegger moves towards an "*ontopoetical*" (rather than ontological) approach which attempts to think, in a no longer metaphysical or "grounding" manner, the appropriative event or *Er-eignis*. By "ontopoetic" I mean here the no longer metaphysical mode of thinking, a *non-grounding*, '*poetising*' *thinking* that Heidegger presents as an alternative to traditional ontology or metaphysics as an inquiry into the Being of beings. As I shall discuss, Heidegger abandons the "logos" tradition of metaphysics which seeks to provide a "grounding account" of the Being of beings, in favour of an increasingly *poetic evocation* of Being as appropriative event (hence *ontopoetical* rather than *ontological* thinking). In the course of Heidegger's famous 'turning' [*Kehre*], which Heidegger comes to understand as a turning within the history of Being itself, the earlier "ontic-ontological" framework defining the ontological difference is transformed into a recollective thinking [*Andenken*] of Being. In doing so, as I shall suggest, Heidegger attempts to think a 'non-metaphysical,' onto-poetical version of Hegel's speculative "identity of identity and difference," transfiguring the latter in what Heidegger calls the "perdurance"

or “resolution” [*Austrag*] of Being understood as an process of “overwhelming” [*Überkommenis*] and the arrival [*Ankunft*] of beings.

The question of what language might be used to articulate such a non-metaphysical thinking increasingly preoccupied Heidegger in his later work. The issue to consider is whether it is possible to think Being as appropriative event without reference to beings, or whether any attempt to think Being must have recourse to the manifestation of beings and hence to the representational thinking of identity and difference. In the simplest terms, Hegel’s speculative logic demonstrates, but also attempts to suspend, the latter position, while Heidegger attempts to show the former through the performance of an onto-poetic evocation of the obscured experience of the appropriative event. Hegel develops a speculative *Science of Logic*, which attempts to provide a critical presentation of the whole conceptual development of Being, Essence, and the Concept, culminating in the unity of theoretical and practical in the absolute Idea. Heidegger, on the other hand, abandons metaphysics, the project of attempting to ground beings as such and as a whole, in favour of a poetic and meditative thought which attempts to recover a non-metaphysical, onto-poetic sense of Being as evoked in the thought of the appropriative event. Heidegger’s onto-poetic thinking of the (ontological) difference attempts to step back behind, and thus envelope and appropriate, Hegel’s speculative logic as marking the completion of the metaphysics of subjectivity and the metaphysical basis of the epoch of modern technology. One question I shall consider in what follows is whether Heidegger does in fact succeed in enveloping Hegel’s metaphysics and whether the dispute over difference reveals a certain proximity between Hegel and Heidegger concerning the (now onto-poetically) understood identity of identity and difference. At the same time, the profound differences between Hegel and Heidegger in relation to the understanding and critique of modernity must be given their due. I shall therefore conclude this thesis with a critical discussion of these two fundamentally different attitudes to modernity: Hegel’s critical affirmation of the project of modernity as the (in principle) achievement of rational freedom versus Heidegger’s despairing negation of modernity as the culmination of metaphysics in the nihilism of planetary technology.

The Ontological Difference

I commence with an overview of Heidegger’s investigation of the problem of the *ontological difference*, a problem that underwent numerous shifts in significance in the course of his career. It appears explicitly for the first time in Heidegger’s *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1927), in the specific context of a discussion of Da-sein’s pre-ontological understanding of Being. This fundamental difference between Being and beings has never been *explicitly* formulated or investigated, Heidegger argues, because traditional metaphysics obliterates the question of *Being as such* (by investigating instead the “beingness”

of beings). At the same time, Da-sein ‘enacts’ this differentiation; it ‘performs’ this ontological differentiation in its comportments with beings in the light of its (preontological) understanding of Being. This issue is explored further in Heidegger’s 1928 essay “On the Essence of Ground,” which analyses Da-sein’s character as *transcendence*—a transcending of beings in relation to Being. In this context, the ontological difference names the “not” between Being and beings, the execution of which is performed by Da-sein in its being-in-the-world. Continuing the account of truth offered in *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that the *ontological* truth of the *unveiledness* of Being (as the beingness of beings) first makes possible the *ontic* truth of the manifestness of beings. This unconcealment of Being is ontological truth, the truth of the Being *of* beings, the truth concerning beings in their *what*-being and *how*-being. This unconcealment of Being guides both the unthematized pre-ontological understanding of Being involved in Da-sein’s comportment towards beings, and the thematic ontological inquiry into the ontological constitution of those beings as such. Ontic and ontological truth, Heidegger claims, thus “each concern, in different ways, *beings in their Being and the Being of beings*” (WM 134/105). The essence of truth is “forked” into ontic and ontological dimensions, and the emergence of these dimensions is made possible only with the “irruption” of the ontological difference itself (WM 134/105-6).

Since Da-sein, in understanding Being, comports itself towards beings, the capacity for distinguishing between Being and beings, and concretely manifesting the ontological difference, “must have sunk the roots of its own possibility in the ground of the essence of Da-sein” (WM 134-135/106). Heidegger draws here on the analysis of Da-sein offered in *Being and Time*, suggesting that our everyday comportments towards beings presuppose a preontological understanding of Being, but also the *transcendence* of Da-sein as a capacity to distinguish between Being and beings (WM 135/106). This transcending or surpassing of beings against the background of a pre-ontological understanding of Being is the basis for Da-sein’s projection of a practically articulated and meaningful *world*. This capacity for transcendence is what Heidegger also calls here the *freedom* of Da-sein, the capacity to project and ground a meaningful world—to establish, supply a basis, and account for beings against the background of an understanding of Being (WM 165/127). This freedom as transcendence, according to Heidegger, is the ground of the ‘enacting’ of the ontological difference between Being and beings, an activity which first establishes the possibility of a meaningful being-in-the-world for us.

It is precisely this “foundational” conception of Da-sein as transcendence that Heidegger will soon come to reject. We find here a clear indication of the difficulty that motivates Heidegger’s “turn” or *Kehre* and the manner in which it was to be carried out. On Heidegger’s earlier, pre-*Kehre* view, the ontological difference is carried out by Da-sein itself in its projecting of a world; the ontological difference is rooted in Da-sein’s transcending-grounding freedom to project its own meaningful Being-

in-the-world. Heidegger's early conception of the ontological difference is therefore still situated within the project of fundamental ontology, the preparatory inquiry into Da-sein's existence that provides the entry point into the question of Being, since Da-sein is not only ontically but also ontologically distinguished from other beings by its practical and theoretical comportment towards, and understanding of, Being. The ontological difference, we should note, is conceptualised in this context from the standpoint of the *transcendence of Da-sein* rather than from *the truth of Being*. Indeed, a number of later marginal notes indicate that Heidegger saw that the relationship between the ontological difference and the transcendence of Da-sein had been erroneously conceived in this text.^[1] The possibility of beings manifesting themselves is made dependent on the transcendence of Da-sein as being-in-the-world; but the possibility of Da-sein's transcendence, according to Heidegger's later view, points back to the event of the unconcealing of Being, the *truth of Being*, itself. This essay thus remains within the problematic of the ontological difference viewed from the viewpoint of Da-sein's freedom as transcendence rather than from the viewpoint of the emergence-process of the truth of Being as such, which Heidegger will later describe as the event of appropriation.

The explicit beginnings of Heidegger's turning—from an analysis of the Being of Da-sein to a thinking of the truth of Being—can be discerned in his 1930 lecture (revised in 1943) “On the Essence of Truth”.^[2] Like most of his inquiries, Heidegger draws here on the history and language of metaphysics in order to unfold an inquiry into the meaning and inner essence of truth within the metaphysical tradition. This metaphysical determination of truth is then grounded in a more originary sense of truth as the lighting or clearing of Being which both reveals and conceals beings as a whole. Heidegger contrasts this originary or ontological sense of truth with the merely ontic conception of truth as correspondence or as *correctness*, the model of propositional truth that sets aside untruth as not belonging to the essence of truth. There is a striking parallel here with Hegel's discussion of the traditional sense of truth as “correctness,” as distinct from the speculative-ontological truth of the Concept. Hegel too critically discusses “formal truth” as “mere correctness,” distinguishing this from the deeper, philosophical sense of truth in which “objectivity is identical with the Concept” (E §213A/287). In this sense, for Hegel, one can speak of a “true” friend, a “true” State, or a “true” work of art, where each of these are what they *ought* to be, or their reality corresponds to their Concept (E §213A/287). Heidegger differs in the sense that it is not the speculatively comprehended Concept but rather the opening or clearing of Being that constitutes the originary-ontological sense of truth. The conception of truth as correctness, Heidegger maintains, does not elucidate what makes possible the accordance between the matter [*Sache*] and a statement. Heidegger points out that this relation occurs through the representation of something *as* a definite object, namely, that which stands *op-posed*, as an independent something, within “an open field of opposedness” (WM 184/141). This open region is

not created by representation but is already given and taken over as a domain of relatedness. Whatever is represented as an object, or whatever the statement is about, is always already opened up within this open region of presencing.

So far the analysis accords with that provided in “On the Essence of Ground”; in “On the Essence of Truth”, however, Heidegger goes further by situating Da-sein’s freedom or transcendence within the mysterious revealing-concealing process of Being itself. The essence of truth is found in Da-sein’s freedom, but the latter now means the “letting be” of beings so that they can reveal themselves in their Being (WM 188/144). This letting-be of beings always manifests beings as opened up with a definite comportment, but at the same time conceals beings as a whole; Da-sein only ever discloses beings as unconcealed in a definite manner against the background of their indeterminate and overall concealment. The “turning” from the analysis of Da-sein to the truth of Being occurs precisely in this movement of thought. In Heidegger’s words,

Letting-be is intrinsically at the same time a concealing. In the ek-sistent freedom of Da-sein a concealing of beings as a whole comes to pass [*ereignet sich*]. Here there *is* concealment (WM 193/148).

The possibility of Da-sein’s freedom is grounded in what Heidegger now calls the “mystery of Being” itself, the clearing-process which both opens up beings in their presence but also *conceals* beings and itself in this process. Heidegger emphasises that the *concealment* of beings as a whole is an essential aspect of Da-sein’s disclosure of beings as unconcealed. Indeed, this “mystery (the concealing of what is concealed) as such holds sway throughout the Da-sein of human beings” (WM 194/148). As a consequence of this simultaneous revealing-concealing process, there is a co-originary occurrence of *untruth as concealing* and *un-truth as errancy* [*die Irre*]*—*the latter signifying the *forgetting* or obliteration of the concealing dimension of Being in favour of the unconcealment of beings as present to us. Since the concealing of beings is as originary as their unconcealing, untruth similarly belongs to the essence of truth. Moreover, in turning exclusively towards unconcealed beings, and in turning away from this concealing dimension of Being, human beings are subject to errancy as the “essential counteressence” to the originary essence of truth (WM 197/150). Errancy is that which grounds the possibility of error in the ordinary sense of going astray as well as in the technical sense of incorrectness of statements. It describes Da-sein’s basic flight from “the mystery” of Being towards that which is readily available and accessible, thus our propensity to forget Being in its difference from beings, the freedom that first allows beings to be revealed to Da-sein (WM 196-7/150). Yet errancy is grounded in the freedom of Da-sein, which is itself founded in the clearing-concealing process of Being.

This movement of thought introduces what Heidegger, during the 1930s, calls *Seyn*^[3] or Be-ing, namely “the difference that holds sway between Being and beings” (WM 201/153). This notion represents one of Heidegger’s ongoing attempts to think the truth of Be-ing beyond the traditional conception of Being as the “beingness” of beings on the one hand, and the modern conception of Being as objectivity grounded in self-conscious subjectivity, on the other. The thought of Be-ing [*Seyn*] as naming the difference between Being and beings is still defined within the framework of metaphysics, but at the same time also begins to enact the “turning” away from the earlier project of fundamental ontology to the later task of thinking the truth of Being. This process is what Heidegger calls “the saying of a turning [*die Sage einer Kehre*] within the history of Be-ing [*Seyn*]” (WM 201/154). The path from the existential analytic, in which truth was conceived not as correctness but as ex-sistent freedom, to the transformation of this notion of freedom into Heidegger’s thinking of truth as equally untruth, that is as concealing and as errancy, accomplishes a “change in the questioning” that belongs to the overcoming of subject-metaphysics (WM 202/154). The project of fundamental ontology—which begins with a preparatory analytic of Da-sein’s existence in order to lay the ground for the inquiry into the meaning of Being—gives way to a non-foundational thinking that abandons the priority of Da-sein in the search for experiencing the truth of Being itself.

In the “Letter on Humanism”, Heidegger explicitly describes this “turning” from the earlier project of an analytic of Da-sein to the later project of inquiring into the truth of Being. Heidegger discusses in this text the apparent failure in execution of the projected third division of the first part of *Being and Time*, entitled “Time and Being”. The latter was held back from publication “because thinking failed in the adequate saying of this turning [*Kehre*] and did not succeed with the help of the language of metaphysics.” (WM 328/250). This turning, Heidegger insists, is not a straightforward change in standpoint so much as an exploration of that dimension out of which the project of fundamental ontology in *Being and Time* was first experienced—namely the experience of the *oblivion* of Being. Heidegger increasingly points to the *experience* of the forgetting of Being, now in its most extreme stage in the epoch of modernity, which first motivated the posing of the question of Being.

The difference of Being and beings is now increasingly thought in light of the question of the truth of Be-ing itself rather than that of the disclosure of beings for Da-sein. On this path towards the truth of Be-ing, Heidegger encounters the problem of the Nothing and, with reference to Hegel, the problem of the origin of negativity. These aspects of the questioning of Being explicitly raise again the question of the ontological difference and its relationship with negativity, now thought in a non-metaphysical manner. As Heidegger states in 1949 preface to “On the Essence of Ground,” the Nothing is “the ‘not’ of beings, and thus Being, experienced from the perspective of beings,” while the ontological difference is the “not” between Being and beings, experienced in a more “originary”

manner than hitherto in the metaphysical tradition (WM 123/97). The former describes the experience of the Nothing from the perspective of the beingness of beings, while the latter describes the experience of the ontological difference from the onto-poetic perspective of the thinking of Being as such. The question of the Nothing that Heidegger explores moves us beyond the existential analytic of Da-sein and towards the opening of Being in its difference from beings, the opening of Being as the “Nothing” into which Da-sein is held out or projected. In turn, the question of the Nothing raises the question of the origin of *negativity*, which again brings Heidegger squarely into confrontation with Hegel.

Da-sein as the “Placeholder” of the Nothing

I begin my analysis of Heidegger’s ‘turning’ from the project of fundamental ontology to the thinking of the truth of Being by considering his 1929 essay “What is Metaphysics?” Heidegger commences here a line of inquiry that will lead to a deepening of his inquiry into the history and truth of Being as such. According to Heidegger, traditional metaphysical inquiry—represented by the questioning of beings as to their beingness—grasps the Nothing as the complete negation of the totality of beings, a Nothing that is rejected or “given up as a nullity” by theoretical inquiry [*Wissenschaft*] (WM 106/84). Much like Hegel’s reflections in the Logic of Being, Heidegger points out that the Nothing thus dismissed returns in the very attempt to dismiss it. From the standpoint of metaphysical inquiry and of the “scientific” viewpoint of the understanding [*Verstand*], the Nothing is conceived as a species of negation, as determined by negativity. From Heidegger’s point of view, already transcending that of the metaphysical understanding, the dismissal, rejection, or questioning of the Nothing implies that we must have already had some kind of experience of it. We should note in passing again the striking parallel with Hegel, who also states that negativity, from the standpoint of *Verstand*, is taken to be a subjective-mental operation. Heidegger responds to this failure to think the Nothing by proposing two theses: “that the Nothing is more originary than the “not” and negation” (WM 108/86); and that the “fundamental experience of anxiety” is the phenomenon to investigate in order to demonstrate the Nothing (WM 112/88).

To take the latter thesis first, for Heidegger, the Nothing is unveiled in the experience of anxiety, the unsettledness or uncanniness [*Unheimlichkeit*] that emerges once beings as a whole recede or withdraw from our everyday contexts of significance. Whereas in *Being and Time*, the experience of anxiety provided the phenomenological clue for investigating Da-sein as care and ecstatic temporality, Heidegger now analyses anxiety as the experience in which “the nothing becomes manifest” (WM 113/89), an experience in which “the nothing is encountered at one with beings as a whole” (WM

113/90). Heidegger notes that this “unity” between the Nothing and beings as a whole points to the “distinction” or differentiation process between Being (as Nothing) and beings as a whole. That Heidegger recognised his proximity to Hegel on this issue is evinced by his remark concerning the correctness of Hegel’s speculative proposition—that “Pure Being and Nothing are therefore the same” (WM 120/94-5). However, for Heidegger, this is not because Being and Nothing are indistinguishable, collapsing into each other, in their indeterminate immediacy. Rather, it is because of the radical finitude of Being that manifests itself in the finitude of Da-sein: “Being itself is essentially finite and manifests itself only in the transcendence of a Da-sein that is held out into the Nothing” (WM 120/94-5). Heidegger thus opposes his conception of the radical finitude of Being, which requires finite Da-sein for its manifestation, to Hegel’s infinite Concept, which sublates the immediacy of Being, and mediacy of Essence, within self-developing Conceptuality.

The peculiar experience of anxiety is one of a loss or dissolution of the familiar parameters of significance in our everyday being-in-the-world. Anxiety involves a simultaneous shrinking back before beings and slipping away of beings as a whole, a “repulsion-process” in which the Nothing—as the differentiation between Being and beings—itsself is revealed. This process Heidegger calls “nihilation”: a process that repels beings as a whole in their slipping away, a process which at the same time shows up or makes manifest beings in their “concealed strangeness as what is radically other—with respect to the Nothing” (WM 114/90). Heidegger thus recasts the meaning of Da-sein as transcendence: Da-sein, as existing in and amongst beings, is now characterised as “being held out into the Nothing” (WM 115/91). The original manifestness of the Nothing, or process of nihilation, is the “ground” of Da-sein’s selfhood and freedom. We might contrast this with Hegel’s conception of subjectivity as a self-related negativity (the negation of negation), which thereby becomes a self-grounding positivity (subjectivity in the general sense). Now, for Hegel, the self-grounding character of the subject refers to subjectivity ‘in general,’ that is, to the Concept as ‘substance’. The finite subject is certainly not self-grounding in any obvious sense, completely self-determining, and so on, since it is made possible or finds its ‘ground’ in the self-grounding rationality of the Concept as Spirit.

The difference between Hegel and Heidegger on this point lies in the comprehension of that which makes finite subjectivity possible: the Nothing (as Being) in the case of Heidegger, and Being as Conceptuality in the case of Hegel. The former is manifest in the experience of anxiety (which manifests the Nothing as the concealed ground or ‘nullity’ of Da-sein), while the latter (as the self-referential totality of categories) is the implicit ground or condition of intelligibility of the experience of finite subjectivity that is made thematic in speculative Logic. Heidegger’s conception of the “freedom” of Da-sein is also quite different in that Da-sein is conceived as a radical transcendence ‘grounded’ in the nihilation-process of the Nothing: in being held out into the Nothing as “the ground

of concealed anxiety,” the human being as Da-sein becomes “the place-holder of the Nothing” (WM 118/93). As the “stand-in” of the Nothing, Da-sein is a transcendence that makes possible the manifestness of beings. At the same time, Da-sein covers over or obliterates the Nothing in comporting itself towards beings and (mis)understanding itself as a self-grounding subject.

However, Heidegger’s related thesis—that the Nothing is more originary than the Not and negation—receives less attention in “What is Metaphysics?”. The origin of negation and the “not” in the Nothing is discussed only briefly: Heidegger argues that negation presupposes the manifestness of beings that are to be negated; such beings are made manifest to Da-sein by virtue of the nihilation-process of the Nothing; hence negation finds its origin in the Nothing, rather than the reverse. Heidegger reiterates his thesis: “The “not” does not originate through negation; rather, negation is grounded in the “not” that springs from the nihilation of the Nothing” (WM 117/92). We should remark that this thesis is not adequately demonstrated in this context. Heidegger argues that the nihilation of the Nothing is the hidden “ground” of Da-sein as transcendence, that which enables beings to be made manifest for us, but not that this nihilation-process is at the same time the origin of negativity itself. This would require some discussion of how negativity is to be understood in this context, whether in the sense of a formal logical operation or in the speculative logical sense of that which structures the freedom of subjectivity. Although Heidegger indicates in a later marginal note that the idea of “logic” as the *traditional* conception of thinking “itself disintegrates in the turbulence of a more originary thinking” (WM 117/92), we can still ask whether this disintegration of the dominance of logic in metaphysics similarly applies to the Hegelian conception of negativity. Is Heidegger’s nihilation-process of the Nothing to be understood as akin to Hegel’s conception of negativity?

Heidegger’s Confrontation with Hegel over Negativity

Heidegger addresses just this question in the unpublished notes on Hegel and negativity written shortly after the completion of Heidegger’s monumental posthumous work, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, written between 1936 and 1938. These notes share much of the basic orientation of that work, especially the need to attempt a “leap” beyond subject-metaphysics into the realm of thinking the truth of Being as *Er-eynis*.^[4] Once again, Heidegger explicitly affirms the need for a confrontation with Hegel’s philosophy, which stands unique in the history of philosophy for the unprecedented demand for confrontation that it makes upon the subsequent history of thought (GA 68: 3). According to Heidegger, Hegelian philosophy presents the challenge that there can be no higher standpoint beyond that of the self-consciousness of Spirit, no other opposing standpoint that might subordinate the Hegelian system beneath it. Hegel’s system is distinguished, moreover, by the fact that the principle

of Hegelian philosophy is presented in all regions of beings (nature, art, right, state, religion) or of actuality (GA 68: 4-5). A confrontation with Hegelian philosophy as a whole can succeed only if it both grasps Hegel's originary standpoint—that of absolute Idealism—as well the grounding principles of Hegel's thought, in particular the thesis that substance is also subject (GA 68: 6). Such is the task that Heidegger sets himself, selecting the principle of negativity as the focal point of the confrontation.

Heidegger's critical thesis may be summarised as follows: Hegel does not think the origin of negativity as such but only negativity as belonging to consciousness and self-consciousness—negativity remains circumscribed within the *subject-object relation*. From this viewpoint, Heidegger continues, the complete dissolution of negativity in the positivity of the Absolute becomes discernible (GA 68: 14). "Negativity" is the "energy" of unconditioned thinking, which for Heidegger means that it has from the outset already sacrificed everything negative and null. The question of the origin of negativity remains without sense or ground since it has always already been integrated into the self-certain subjectivity of unconditioned thinking. Negativity, as the negation of the negation, is grounded in the Yes to unconditioned *self-consciousness* (GA 68: 14). This thesis concurs with Heidegger's basic interpretation of Hegel as completing the Cartesian metaphysics of subjectivity. In short, Hegel, for Heidegger, is a metaphysician of subjectness [*Subjektivität*] rather than a thinker of the difference between Being and beings.

Can Heidegger's thesis that Hegelian negativity remains within the subject-object paradigm be sustained in this fashion? For Heidegger, Hegelian negativity is distinctive in that it signifies the *difference* of consciousness (GA 68: 13). But this difference, according to Hegel, is a relation of opposition to an otherness that is suspended in the course of the phenomenological experience, which thereby prepares the transition to speculative logic. The departure point of the whole Logic, according to Hegel, is pure knowing (the absolute knowledge of the *Phenomenology*), which is characterised as having overcome the "difference of consciousness".^[5] *Prima facie*, this might still seem to support Heidegger's point of view, according to which negativity (of the subject-object) is abandoned in absolute thinking. Negativity, however, cannot *originate from* or be based on this difference of consciousness, for the simple reason that this difference is sublated in the course of the phenomenological exposition. For Heidegger, by contrast, the difference of consciousness is the essential characteristic of Hegelian negativity: the *subject-object relation* of consciousness is taken to be the defining characteristic of negativity, rather than the reverse, which means that Heidegger takes Hegelian logic to remain within "relative" knowledge of consciousness rather than the pure or absolute knowing of thought-determinations in their immanent logical development.

Heidegger, however, rejects this possibility, asserting that Hegel's claim that the distinction

between Being and Nothing cannot be articulated by their own conceptual means implies a refusal of the ontological difference. Hegel's conception of Being as objectivity, Heidegger claims, arises from the de-construction [*Ab-bau*] of absolute actuality [*Wirklichkeit*], which is derived from the refusal [*Ab-sage*] of the systematic grounding of the difference between Being and beings, a refusal arising from the forgetting or oblivion of the (ontological) difference as such (GA 68: 14). For Heidegger, this difference between Being and Nothing that Hegel claims cannot be articulated by their own categorical means in fact conceals the ontological difference between Being and beings. Unconditioned thinking, moreover, unwittingly depends upon the ontological difference, but leaves it behind without ever explicitly comprehending it (GA 68: 20). Indeed, Hegel's speculative thought—which Heidegger interprets as unconditioned thinking grounded in self-certain subjectivity—cannot but overlook its dependency on the ontological difference, for otherwise its unconditioned character would prove to be thoroughly conditioned [*be-dingt*] by *beings as a whole* (GA 68: 20).

I take this to mean that Heidegger regards Hegel as presupposing and employing the distinction between Being and beings without explicitly thematising it, hence that unconditioned thinking remains dependent on an unexamined presupposition: difference as negativity is presupposed without being clarified as to its origin. But this assumption that Hegel simply forgets or forecloses the ontological difference is open to question. As argued last chapter, this distinction seems to be operative, if not thematic, in Hegel's exposition of the movement from Being to determinate beings, and from Existence to Actuality, where the relationship between "Being and beings" takes on different categorical configurations within the logics of Being, Essence and Conceptuality. Heidegger's reading of Hegel remains one-sided in its insistence that the ontological difference is 'forgotten' in favour of Hegel's completion of the metaphysics of subjectivity "as the unconditioned subject-object relation" which grounds the intelligibility of beings (GA 28: 21).

For all the obscurities in this text, we may venture to formulate Heidegger's basic thesis as follows: Hegel conceives difference within the subject-object relationship, and hence remains a *representational* difference that fails to adequately think the *ontological* difference. Such negativity therefore closes off the "unthought element" of *Ereignis* to which Hegelian negativity should point the way. We must add that Heidegger nonetheless maintains that the "ontological difference" is itself a metaphysical concept, transitional between metaphysics and what Heidegger calls "thought". Within the framework of the ontological difference, Be-ing is not yet fully thought in its truth apart from beings, for it still retains the ontic-ontological structure belonging to the analytic of Da-sein, and still conceives Being in terms of its relationship with beings as a whole. Heidegger's fragmentary "confrontation" with Hegel on the origin of negativity—for Heidegger, the essential-presencing of Be-ing as abyssal ground—marks an important transitional stage on the way to the thinking of *Ereignis*. To explore these obscure

remarks on Hegelian negativity, however, requires some brief discussion of Heidegger's major posthumous work, the *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, to which I now turn.

Ontological Difference in the Beiträge zur Philosophie

Heidegger's questioning of the origin of negativity in Hegel must be understood in the context of his attempt to think the essential-presencing of Be-ing [*Wesung des Seyns*] as appropriative event or en-owning [*Er-eignis*], Heidegger's "non-metaphysical" term for the event of Being in its presencing, the temporal opening up of a world of beings in which we find ourselves "appropriated" by Being. Otherwise little can be understood of Heidegger's cryptic reinterpretation of metaphysical terms into a poetico-speculative or *ontopoetic* thinking. The proximity and distance between Hegel's negativity and Heidegger's thinking of the essential-presencing of Be-ing is made more explicit in the *Beiträge* than elsewhere. Heidegger writes in the latter of "the intimacy of the not in Be-ing" which belongs to its essential-presencing [*Wesung*] (GA 65: 264/186). While this perhaps resembles Hegelian negativity, according to Heidegger, it cannot be equated with it. For the Hegelian negativity of Being and Nothing is sublated in absolute knowing: negativity is admitted only in order "to let it disappear and to keep the movement of sublating going" (GA 65: 264/186). For Heidegger, Hegel's account of negativity is not "the essential swaying" or presencing [*Wesung*] of Be-ing, since for Hegel Being as beingness (actuality) is determined in terms of thinking (absolute knowledge) (GA 65: 264/186).

Here we encounter once again Heidegger's decisive thesis concerning the subordination of Being to thought—from Plato's Idea to Hegel's absolute Idea—which remains a constant and organising theme throughout Heidegger's confrontations with the history of metaphysics. Indeed, the latter, Heidegger continues, always comprehends Being as the Being of beings (or as beingness) and thus comprehends Being in terms of a being (the highest being as that which accounts for the ground of beings as a whole). Consequently, metaphysical thinking always grasps the Nothing "as a non-being and thus as something negative," (GA 65: 266/187), in other words as the negation of beings as a whole. Thus Hegel's statement "Being and Nothing are the Same" indicates, according to Heidegger, only that "Being" in Hegel is thought "as the *un*-determined, *un*-mediated stage," an abstraction that is precisely "already pure negativity of objectness and of thinking (beingness and thinking)" (GA 65: 266/188). One might object here that Hegel's interpretation of Being as the "indeterminate immediate" is precisely the most abstract conception of Being presupposed by any form of categorical thinking, to which Heidegger would perhaps reply that for this very reason Hegelian Being and Nothing remain tethered to a metaphysical conception of negativity that fails to think "the annihilating [*das Nichtende*] in Be-ing itself"—that which Heidegger is calling the appropriative event or en-owning [*Ereignis*].

To elaborate this line of thought a little further, I return to Heidegger's discussion of the relationship between the ontological difference and the essential-presencing of Be-ing. Among other things what is striking in the *Beiträge* is Heidegger's rejection of the earlier framework of ontic-ontological difference such that the latter is now transformed into a necessary but transitional mode of thinking between *metaphysics* and *thought*. In section 266 of the *Beiträge*, Heidegger discusses the role of the differentiation between Being and beings in the history of metaphysics, a differentiation which "bears the guiding-question of metaphysics: What is a being? [*Seiendes*]" (GA 65: 465/327). The guiding-question [*Leitfrage*] is to be distinguished from the *grounding-question* [*Grundfrage*] of the truth of Be-ing [*Sein*], which Heidegger claims to be the first to explicitly raise in this manner. This differentiation between Being and beings implicitly appears in the horizon of the guiding-question, thus opening up the history of metaphysical inquiry which unfortunately remains stuck within the inquiry into the beingness of beings. According to Heidegger, the ontological difference that underlies the guiding-question of metaphysics should only be in the foreground; this transitional question eventually enables the grounding-question of Be-ing itself to be elaborated, thus enabling a transition from metaphysics to what Heidegger calls "thought".

The grounding-question of Be-ing must then press forward and inquire into the origin of the "ontological difference" (GA 65: 465/327). Heidegger's thesis is succinctly formulated: the differentiation of "Being" [*Sein*] and "beings" [*Seiendem*] can have its origin only in the *essential-presencing* of Be-ing [*Wesung des Seyns*] (GA 65: 465/327). What Heidegger calls the *Wesung* or essential-presencing of Be-ing is that event-process which first opens up the differentiation of Being and beings, a difference which is then rigidified in the traditional metaphysical distinction between *essentia* and *existentia*, *What-being* and *That-being*. Representational thinking conceives Be-ing as the beingness of beings, thus reducing it to a differentiation relationship to a highest being. As we shall see, Heidegger's account of why the differentiation between Being and beings is misconceived or confused anticipates his later discussion of the *onto-theological* constitution of metaphysics. As Heidegger remarks:

Here is at the same time the reason why the ontological difference as such does not enter into knowing awareness, because basically a differentiation is always necessary only between one being and another being (*the highest being*). One sees the *consequence* in the widely disseminated confusion in using the name *Be-ing* and a *being*, which mutually and arbitrarily stand for each other, so that, although intending Be-ing, one re-presents only a being and presents it as what is the most general of all re-presenting (GA 65: 466/328)

For Heidegger, the metaphysical tradition thereby succumbs to the objectification of Being as the beingness of beings. Even if Being is understood as the "ground" of beings, the "difference" between

Being and being implies two distinct relata or beings that are mutually related to one other, thus reducing Being to another being, albeit the *highest* being. The resulting confusion between Being and beings has long since marked the metaphysical determination of the Being as the most general ground as well as the highest principle grounding beings as whole. For both Hegel and Heidegger, in sum, the characteristic danger of metaphysics as onto-theology—that of objectifying or reifying Be-ing according to the model of beings—is firmly set in place at the beginning of the metaphysical tradition.

For this reason, Heidegger characterises the ontological difference as a preliminary point of inquiry, one which can avoid the danger of remaining within onto-theology only if from the very beginning it arises out of the grounding-question concerning the truth of Be-ing (GA 65: 466/328). To this end, Heidegger emphasises the *transitional* character of the ontological difference as marking a necessary stage in the movement from the guiding-question to the grounding-question:

“Ontological difference” is a passageway that becomes unavoidable if the necessity of asking the grounding-question out of the guiding-question is to be made manifest (GA 65: 467/328).

The metaphysical question of beings must be traversed in order to find a path towards the “necessarily unasked question of the truth of Be-ing” (GA 65: 467/328). The risk, according to Heidegger, is that the “ontological difference” will itself become reified as a key for ontological inquiry, with the result that the *transitional* character of this differentiation will soon be forgotten (GA 65: 467/328). Indeed, the ontological difference risks being distorted by a representational conception of difference (and identity) which equates the process of differentiation with that which is differentiated, a conflation resulting in a reified conception of the Being-process as a relation between distinct beings.

Behind this project one of Heidegger’s basic theses becomes evident: that the history of metaphysics is characterised by the domination of thought—as *logos*, *ratio*, or reason—over Being, which is thereby reduced to mere beingness and finally obliterated altogether. Indeed, in the *Beiträge*, Heidegger offers a compressed and very schematic history of the problem of identity, arguing that the history of metaphysics develops by taking *thinking* as its guiding-thread for the guiding-question concerning beings (GA 65: 198/138). With Plato, the originary sense of thinking as the apprehending and gathering of what is uncovered as present is converted into the correctness of representation in its relation to the represented. Descartes transposes the Greek sense of the relation between *psuche* and *aletheia* (*on*), grounded in the unity of the logos, to the subject-object relationship of cognition (GA 65: 198/139). In the modern period, thinking becomes the act of a thinking subject, an *ego cogito* which in turn is transformed into the transcendental ego: “Thinking becomes *I*-think; the *I*-think becomes: *I* unite originarily, *I* think unity (in advance)” (GA 65: 198/139). The development of modern

metaphysics as a metaphysics of subjectness means that thinking, as a fore-grasping and fore-unifying, posits the unity of what it encounters as objectness. Representational thinking grasps beings as unified objects, as identities that are rendered intelligible by the unifying-synthesising operations of transcendental subjectivity.

Within the modern metaphysics of subjectness, the representational model of thinking, as the thinking of I-think-something, becomes the ground of the intelligibility or beingness of beings. The originary Greek sense of beings as *one* (*hen*), according to Heidegger, becomes transformed into the primacy of *identity* as the essential determination of beings as such. The “Copernican” revolution in metaphysics—the Kantian grounding of the representability of beings in the “synthetic-unity” of transcendental subjectivity—brings together *identity* and *subjectivity* as the ground of intelligibility for beings in general. Heidegger concludes that, in modernity, identity

... obtains its distinction in the *I*, which soon thereafter is grasped in the outstanding identity, namely that identity which *specifically* belongs to *itself*, that identity which knowing *itself* precisely is in this knowing (GA 65: 199/139).

The identity of beings, taken now as objects, becomes grounded in the self-identity of the ‘I’ in self-knowing subjectivity. It is within this context that the subject-object identity becomes, with Kant and German Idealism, the highest principle of all knowledge; the modern metaphysics of subjectness transforms thinking, as *knowing*, into the ground of beingness. This move is accomplished, for Heidegger, with Hegel’s conception of absolute knowing as absolute actuality (GA 65: 199/139), the pinnacle of the dominion of thinking over Being, the guiding thread for determining beingness. Absolute knowing as unconditioned thinking now grounds all knowing of beings.

The role of German Idealism in Heidegger’s schematic narration of the relationship between identity and subjectness is also important for understanding Heidegger’s confrontation with Hegel. As we saw last chapter, for Heidegger, post-Kantian Idealism marks the completion of the Cartesian project of achieving a foundation of all knowledge in self-certainty through transforming Kantian transcendental self-consciousness into absolute knowing. On the basis of the Kantian “transcendental step” beyond Descartes, German Idealism “attempts to think the *ego cogito* of transcendental apperception in an absolute sense” (GA 65: 202/142). Within Hegelian metaphysics, truth becomes *certainty* and is developed into absolute Spirit; beings are thereby “completely misplaced into objectness” which is not properly “sublated” in Hegelian dialectic (GA 65: 203/142). Indeed, Heidegger’s claim is that Hegel’s metaphysics broadens objectness “to include the representing I and the relation of representing the object and representing the representation” (GA 65: 203/142). Heidegger’s later essays

develop this claim by explicitly linking Hegelian speculative logic with the modern metaphysics of technology, which Heidegger at this stage calls “machination” [*Machenschaft*]. The latter, as the basic character of beingness, “now takes the shape of the subject-object dialectic, which, as absolute, plays out and arranges together all possibilities of all familiar domains of beings” (GA 65: 203/142).

Hegelian idealism is supposed to complete the attempt to continuously secure *self-certainty* in knowledge against all uncertainty, to develop the *correctness* of absolute certainty through a metaphysics of self-knowing spirit, a process that thereby unwittingly excludes “the truth of Be-ing” (GA 65: 203/142). Heidegger’s thesis, in short, is that Hegelian speculative philosophy raises the Cartesian subject-object relation to the level of the Absolute. Even more, the idea of the subject-object identity in Hegel, Heidegger contends, results in the reification of the subject as well. In the *Beiträge*, Heidegger merely sketches this claim; Heidegger’s “more essential appropriation of the history of metaphysics” needs to be elaborated further if the confrontation or thinking dialogue with Hegel is to be successful. Heidegger thus turns to rethinking the metaphysical principle thinking of identity and difference, attempting a “step back” behind the metaphysical tradition in order to uncover its unthought origin, and on this basis attempts to explore the metaphysical foundations of modernity as the epoch of technology.

The “Resolution” [Austrag] of Identity and Difference

Heidegger’s essays and works from the late 1950s all evince a concern with the problem of thinking the *difference* of Being and beings in conjunction with the relation of human beings to Being. At the same time, Heidegger also meditates upon the need to think the non-metaphysical or onto-poetical *identity* of human beings and Being as a non-hierarchical “belonging together” or mutual appropriation. The question is how the relationship between these aspects of identity and difference is to be understood. Heidegger explores these issues in the volume *Identität und Differenz*, published in 1957. The first essay considers the principle of identity as pointing to a (non-metaphysical) belonging together of human beings and Being; the second examines the “onto-theo-logical constitution” of metaphysics, which results from the ambiguous, twofold character of Being interpreted as general ground and as highest being. Hegel’s speculative logic plays a crucial role in this discussion as the highest articulation of metaphysics as onto-theology. Very broadly speaking, Heidegger’s thesis may be stated as follows: the modern metaphysics of representational identity and subjectivity culminates in Hegel’s speculative Logic as the self-grounding account of thought thinking itself as absolute Idea. The self-identity of thought thinking itself, which Heidegger takes to be the logical articulation of the principle of self-consciousness, comprehends Being as absolute Idea and thereby subsumes the difference between

Being and beings. To recover this obliterated sense of (ontological) difference, that is, to open up a thinking of Being as *Er-eignis*, therefore requires a “step back” into the unthought element of metaphysics. Heidegger’s project thus attempts to memorialise or recollect Being through an onto-poetic re-thinking of the principles of identity and difference, and thereby to think the relation of mutual “appropriation” between human beings and Being beyond the strictures of onto-theology.

Heidegger’s reflections on this topic are guided by the relationship of *belonging-together* [*Zusammengehörigkeit*] between identity and difference, and the relationship of mutual appropriation or ‘en-owning’ between human beings and Being. Heidegger distils his complex meditation into a succinct thought: in this inquiry we are to discover that difference stems from the “essence of identity” as evinced by the harmony presiding over the *event of appropriation* [*Ereignis*] and *perdurance* [*Austrag*] (ID 8/21-22). We must therefore consider what Heidegger means here by the *perdurance* or *resolution* [*Austrag*] between identity and difference: does the ontological difference belong to identity or does identity belong to difference? I shall suggest that Heidegger presents here an *onto-poetic* interpretation of the *difference* between Being and beings, but one in which *identity*, now understood as the mutual belonging-together of human beings and Being, ultimately predominates over the (ontological) difference. We can therefore ask to what extent Heidegger actually succeeds in the “step back” to the unthought origin of Hegelian metaphysics.

Heidegger attempts to show how the traditional conception of identity—which finds its most developed form as the “synthetic unity” of German Idealism—points to a more originary sense of identity as the “belonging together” of human beings and Being. Within modern metaphysics, identity is not merely empty tautology (the ‘A is A’) but rather a synthesis, “the unification into a unity” (ID 11/25). What is distinctive in Idealism, for Heidegger, is the conception of identity as *mediation*: difference is always already included within identity as synthetic unity. Since the era of speculative Idealism, “it is no longer possible for thinking to represent the unity of identity as mere sameness, and to disregard the mediation that prevails in unity” (ID 11-12/25). Nonetheless, although identity is now conceived as synthetic unity, the mediation of a thing with itself, we still do not know what is the essence of identity. Rather, even this ‘improved’ conception of the principle of identity already presupposes “what identity means and where it belongs” (ID 12/26). Indeed, Hegel would agree to the extent that identity and difference, as determinations of reflection, find their truth in the Conceptual unity of universality, particularity, and individuality.

For Heidegger, by contrast, this speculative–dialectical critique of identity and difference covers over the more originary *Sameness* of Being and thinking. The clue to recovering this more originary sense of “identity” can be found in the “is” of the ‘A is A,’ which Heidegger takes as referring to the Being of beings. Indeed, Heidegger deploys here an approach also developed at length in the text of

Satz vom Grund: to alter the semantic emphasis or ‘tonality’ of a metaphysical principle in order to “hear” the originary ontological significance at play within it.^[6] In this case, the principle of identity is heard with an emphasis on the “is” which points to its ontological meaning as a principle of Being: “To every being as such [*Seienden*] there belongs identity, the unity with itself” (ID 12/26). Heard in its “fundamental key,” that is to say in its ontological or rather *ontopoetic* significance, the principle of identity states “the unity of identity forms a basic characteristic in the Being of beings” (ID 12/26). For Heidegger, this ubiquitous claim of identity is presupposed in all practical comportment and theoretical inquiry. Yet the very meaning of identity and its relation to Being, Heidegger observes, has been reversed in the course of the history of metaphysics. Identity is now regarded as belonging to Being in the sense that the identity of a being with itself presupposes that beings *are* in some way and that the beingness of beings, as intelligible unity, is grounded in the thinking Ego.

To explore the reversal in the relation between Being and identity, Heidegger turns to Parmenides’ saying (fragment 3): “For the same is perceiving (thinking) as well as Being”. For Heidegger, the meaning of “identity” as the same (*to auto*) in Parmenides’ fragment is wholly different from the significance of identity in modern metaphysics (as synthetic unity ultimately grounded in the I = I). For metaphysics, identity belongs to Being, in the sense that Being is understood as grounded in the absolute self-certainty of self-consciousness; for Parmenides, on the contrary, Being belongs to identity, in the sense that Being and thinking both belong to the Same (ID 14/27). This reversal marks an enigma that prompts Heidegger’s question: What is this “Same” [*das Selbe*] to which both thinking and Being belong? The rest of Heidegger’s meditation on the principle of identity is devoted to addressing this question. In schematic form, we can answer that the “Same” designates that originary or “non-metaphysically” conceived relationship of “belonging together” of Being and thinking prior to the representational conception of identity as the unity of a being with itself. Alluding to the *to auto* of Parmenides, Heidegger suggests that Being, together with thinking, belong together in the unity of the Same, a Sameness that is more originary than the received understanding of “metaphysically represented identity” (ID 15/28). The obscurity of this “belonging together” of Being and thinking harbours both a metaphysical (grounding) and non-metaphysical (non-grounding) sense of identity, which can help illuminate what Heidegger means here by “the Same”.

In summary form, the belonging together of Being and thinking in the principle of identity can emphasise either the aspect of *identity over difference*, or it can emphasise the aspect of *difference together with identity*. The former is characteristic of the *metaphysical* conception of identity, while the latter, more enigmatic relationship, is closer to Heidegger’s *onto-poetic* attempt to think the relation of identity and difference within the Same. Let us elaborate this point a little further. For Heidegger, the traditional or metaphysical sense of identity places the emphasis on the *together*, which determines the nature of the

“belonging” by underlining the sense of *unity*: “to belong” comes to mean “to be assigned and placed in the order of a “together,” established in the unity of a manifold, combined in the unity of a system, mediated [*zusammengestellt*] by the unifying centre of an authoritative synthesis” (ID 16/29). The reference here is to the metaphysics of Idealism, which emphasised the synthetic unity of self-consciousness (with Kant) and the speculative identity of thought and Being in the Concept (with Hegel). Such an ordering or synthesising according to the synthetic unity of the “together,” Heidegger continues, is represented philosophically as *nexus* and *connexio*, a “connection of the one with the other” (ID 16/29). The speculative systems of idealism, with their necessary ordering of logically interconnected categories, are the ultimate expression of the metaphysical conception of identity as privileging the unity of thought over Being. As we shall see, Heidegger goes on to draw a connection between this metaphysical conception of identity, which emphasises synthetic unity, and the epoch of modern technology as the epitome of the metaphysics of subjectivity.

On the other hand, the “belonging together” of thinking and Being, Heidegger suggests, can be heard in an onto-poetic key: as a *belonging* together in which the “together” is determined by the belonging [*Gebören*] (ID 16/29). Here we should note the resonance of Heidegger’s use of “Gehören,” which also conveys the sense of a “listening to Being” [*hören auf das Sein*]. The listening to and heeding of Being, a *hören* that is also a *gehören*, is our most distinctive characteristic as human beings. Heidegger’s evocation of this resonance between hearing and heeding Being is an example of what I have been calling his *ontopoetic* mode of discourse: hearing and heeding *Being* (hence ‘onto’) but also *bringing forth into language* the (silent) event or emergence-process of Being as such (hence ‘poetic’ in the sense of *poesis* rather than a grounding account in the sense of *logos*). The emphasis in the *zusammengehören* now falls on the sense of *gehören* as a *hearing/heeding* of Being: this signifies a be-longing to Being which determines the together, in the sense of ordering into a unity, thus forming a non-hierarchical and non-reductive relationship within the (non-metaphysical) unity of the Same. What Heidegger means by this “belonging” and “together” is far from obvious, but at least the possibility of experiencing identity in terms of be-longing [*Gebören*] or hearing/heeding Being has been made manifest.

Because thinking is a distinctive feature of human beings, we immediately must consider the relationship of belonging-together between human beings and Being that occurs in thinking. Instead of inquiring first into the meaning of the human and of Being, and then explaining their co-ordination in terms of one or the other, Heidegger suggests considering how this belonging-to-one-another [*Zueinander-Gebören*] is first of all at play in the “togetherness” of human beings and Being (ID 18/31). In this sense, Heidegger seems to suggest that there is an *originary Sameness* or belonging-together of human beings and Being which has priority over the *explicit difference* between beings (including human beings) and Being. The problem is that this approach seems to directly contradict Heidegger’s

consistently developed viewpoint that the (ontological) difference between Being and beings is precisely what underlies, as their *unthought* element and origin, traditional metaphysical conceptions of the relationship between man and Being, including the subject-object relation in modern metaphysics up to and including Hegel.

We shall consider presently how pertinent Heidegger's criticisms of Hegel are; for the moment we must ask what has become of the ontological difference in the mutual appropriation of Being and human beings? For Heidegger's point of departure was an attempt to uncover the concealed element of the (ontological) difference that both opens up the possibility of metaphysical thinking while at the same time being covered over or obliterated by it. Heidegger began by pointing to the *difference* between beings (presumably including human beings as those beings who understand Being) and Being itself: now Heidegger's discussion seeks to illuminate the unity-in-difference or mutual appropriation of human being and Being as belonging together in *the Same*. But what is the relationship between these thoughts? The focus now is firmly on the *Sameness* of man and Being in their mutual appropriation rather than on the (ontological) difference between Being and beings that opens up metaphysics. Heidegger's emphasis shifts to the "non-metaphysically" or onto-poetically conceived *identity* between man and Being rather than the ontological difference itself. Does Heidegger fall prey here to a one-sided emphasis in thinking the relationship between identity and difference? There is certainly evidence of a reversion to thinking *identity* (non-metaphysically) in regard to the ontological difference, and then returning to difference within the (non-metaphysically conceived) identity or Sameness between man and Being, without articulating how identity and difference are related to or mediated with each other.

Heidegger's response to this difficulty is to turn away from metaphysical inquiry in the sense of a systematic attempt to provide grounds for beings as a whole and as such (including human beings as capable of thinking Being). Indeed, Heidegger's attempt to enter the domain of the onto-poetically apprehended Sameness of human beings and Being requires a *leap* or *spring* away from representational thinking altogether. A twofold leap is needed: away from representational thinking and its conception of the human as *animale rationale*, who in modernity becomes the self-certain and self-knowing subject that represents objects and itself to itself; and away from the metaphysical conception of Being as *logos*, *ratio*, or *Vernunft*, that is to say from that systematic attempt to ground beings as a whole (ID 20/32). From the metaphysical perspective, such a leap away from a conception of Being as ground appears to be a leap in the ungrounded, into the *abyss* or *Ab-grund*; but in fact the leap into non-foundational or ungrounded thinking—or what I am calling here *onto-poetic* rather than ontological thinking—is rather a leap back into the mutual appropriation of human being and Being. This leap into the event of appropriation that first creates the historically disclosed constellation of human being and Being is precisely what determines and defines what Heidegger understands by the "experience of thinking"

(ID 21/33).

This raises the question: what is the constellation of human being and Being within the epoch of modernity? Heidegger makes a transition at this point from non-metaphysically understood “identity,” as the mutual appropriation of human being and Being, to the contemporary constellation of this appropriation in modernity: the presencing of Being as the modern world of *technology*. Here the term “technology” is not used to denote the ensemble of technical apparatuses, equipment, knowledges or systems, projected by human beings in order to master nature. That is to understand technology, Heidegger maintains, solely as a projection of human will and action, an interpretation that fails to grasp the way human beings and all other beings in nature and history are themselves called forth or claimed by the essence of the technological world. Rather, for Heidegger, “technology” names the way Being *presences* in modernity; it names the contemporary constellation of the mutual appropriation of human being and Being, a constellation in which “our whole human existence everywhere sees itself challenged [*herausgefordert*]—now playfully and now urgently, now breathlessly and now ponderously—to devote itself to the planning and calculating of everything” (ID 34-35/22-23). Technology, for Heidegger, is to be thought as the way in which Being itself appropriates human beings by challenging us into setting-up the project of securing, ordering, calculating, and stockpiling beings in general as manipulable resources or standing-reserve [*Bestand*], a process of endless ordering and calculation which carries manipulation “on past all bounds”.

In technological modernity, human beings are also appropriated within this challenging-forth. The modern configuration of the mutual appropriation of humans and Being is what Heidegger calls the *Ge-stell*, the *frame-work* or *en-framing* as the essence of technology: “The name for the gathering of this challenge which places man and Being face to face in such a way that they challenge each other by turns is ‘the frame-work’ [*das Ge-stell*]” (ID 23/35). The modern constellation of human being and Being takes the form of technology. The neologism *Ge-stell* or en-framing denotes the mutual confrontation of the human with Being, a challenging forth of the human in its ordering of beings in general, a confrontation that determines the constellation of modernity.^[7] Heidegger means to convey here the mutuality of production and disclosure between Man and Being: the process by which all beings are posited and ordered, including human beings themselves, within the modern horizon of Being which discloses itself as technology. In this sense, Heidegger rejects any uni-directional production on the part of human beings in regard to Being, since *Being itself* calls forth the process of mutual production and disclosure of man and beings that Heidegger is calling here the frame-work or en-framing. Indeed, Heidegger outlines a transition here from metaphysical-representational thinking—which conceives technology as the man-made, that which is produced through the power of human planning and decision—to technology as en-framing, within which “there prevails a strange ownership

[*Vereignen*] and strange appropriation [*Zueignen*]” between humans and Being (ID 24/36). The modern constellation or *identity* of human being and Being within the en-framing is a *mutual challenging forth* in which humans and Being are “delivered over” to each other” [*einander ge-eignet sind*] (ID 24/36) within an intimate relationship of simultaneous production and disclosure.

From Heidegger’s viewpoint of onto-poetic thinking that has leapt out of representational metaphysics, this peculiar relationship of identity or belonging-together can be experienced as the *event of appropriation* or *Er-eignis*.^[8] The latter, which remains as untranslatable as the Greek *logos* or the Chinese *Tao*, now becomes the key term of onto-poetic thinking since it no longer names a highest being as grounding principle or attempts to ground technology in an underlying substratum or subjectivity. The appropriative event no longer means a happening or occurrence but is now used as a *singulare tantum* (ID 25/36). The term “Ereignis” (event) is taken from ordinary language, but is now used to name the more originary appropriation of man and Being than which we currently experience in modernity. Indeed, Heidegger suggests that the appropriative event is an anticipatory possibility that we glimpse in the “negative” or inverted form of the modern world of technology. Nonetheless, we still remain “on the way” towards this kind of non-metaphysical thinking, since the leap required would mean somehow no longer experiencing modernity, as the epoch of technology, in a metaphysical way. As Heidegger states:

What we experience in the frame [*Ge-stell*] as the constellation of Being and man through the modern world of technology is a *prelude* [*Vorspiel*] to what is called the event of appropriation [*Er-eignis*]. This event, however, does not necessarily persist in its prelude. For in the event of appropriation the possibility arises that it may overcome the mere dominance of the frame to turn into a more original appropriating (ID 25/36-37).

Heidegger points to the possibility that the dominance of the technological en-framing may be overcome by the recovery of a more originary sense of appropriation between human being and Being. This enigmatic possibility, Heidegger intimates, would transform the modern experience of technology from one of domination, control, and ordering to a more non-instrumental and meditative relationship appropriate to our mutual belonging-together with Being. Heidegger does no more than hint at this possibility, which cannot be produced by us or become the goal of a collective will or project. This possibility would nonetheless point to a more *authentic* experience of the mutual appropriation between man and Being than is currently the case within the modern world.^[9]

The question is whether Heidegger refers here simply to a changed attitude or experience of modernity, or whether, as would be implied by Heidegger’s ‘epochal diagnosis’ of modernity as the age

of planetary technology, a more fundamental change in the constellation of man and Being in modernity is envisaged, a post-metaphysical or even post-technological age beyond the nihilism of ‘completed metaphysics’. Such a fundamental “transformation” (presumably in the constellation of modernity itself) would open up a realm in which technology would no longer dominate beings and human beings but rather enable a more authentic belonging to the event of appropriation. Heidegger’s very enigmatic hypothesis of a conversion of en-framing into the appropriative event could be described as his (very tentative) thought of the possibility of *freedom*, a paradoxical freedom that could never be the self-determined goal of a collective action or striving (which would simply reproduce technical thinking and action) but can only arrive, provided we are “open” to this arrival, as the destinal sending or gift of Being itself. In short, “only a god” can save humanity within technological modernity, as we await the unforeseeable arrival of the appropriative event.

We shall explore further this paradoxical freedom opened up by the appropriative event in the context of Heidegger’s discussion of the “step back” behind the metaphysical tradition. For the moment, I note that Heidegger has outlined two conceptions of identity: the *representational* identity belonging to the metaphysical tradition, culminating in speculative Science, which underlies the development of the modern world of technology; and what I have called the *ontopoetic identity* experienced in the mutual appropriation of man and being beyond the technological en-framing, which points to the possibility of a “non-metaphysical” (a non-grounding, non-hierarchical, and non-instrumental) experience of the Sameness of man and Being. This latter possibility would require a definite overcoming, or recovery from, metaphysics and technological modernity, and presents Heidegger’s onto-poetic alternative to the objectification and reification of the relationship between human beings and Being in the modern world:

The event of appropriation is that realm, vibrating within itself, through which man and Being reach each other in their nature, achieve their active nature by losing those qualities with which metaphysics has endowed them (ID 26/36).

The question is how this possibility is to become actualised, if it cannot be the object of human action or willing. This enigmatic freedom would not be at all like Hegel’s conception of freedom as self-identity in otherness, as genuine intersubjective recognition as articulated through absolute Spirit. On the contrary, Heidegger would see the Hegelian model of freedom achieved through reciprocal intersubjective recognition as mired within the most extreme form of subject-metaphysics, which transposes the subject-object relation to the domain of intersubjective Spirit. Heidegger, by contrast, advocates the meditative attitude or will-less *releasement* towards the way in which Being sends itself to

us in the epoch of technological modernity. Elsewhere Heidegger claims that it is not a matter of rejecting or attempting to overcome technology so much as finding another way of experiencing the claim of Being that is manifested in modern technology as *Ge-stell*. Again, the question remains whether Heidegger is suggesting a merely 'subjective' shift in attitude or interpretative engagement with the modern world, or more plausibly a fundamental alteration in the constellation of man and Being, a destinal shift in the configuration of the relation between man, beings, and Being in modernity. Could such a fundamentally different experience of "modernity" still be meaningfully be called "technology" in the sense of enframing or *Ge-stell*? Presumably the domineering effects of the will-to-ordering in modernity would give way to a post-technological experience of the constellation of man and Being. This shift would also suggest a radical transformation in the meaning of modernity, the advent of a 'post-modernity' in the precise sense of an epoch no longer dominated by metaphysical subjectivism and technological ordering. Finally, this Heideggerian 'transformation' would imply a radical shift in the meaning of modern freedom, which could no longer be understood as subjective freedom, individual autonomy, or even speculative self-identity in otherness, but rather as an authentic hearing/heeding of Being in the event of appropriation. Such a transformation could again only result from an abrupt and unforeseeable historical transition effected not by human agency but rather by Being itself.

Heidegger does not elaborate these issues in practical terms, turning instead to the role of thinking and *language* in "fostering" the arrival of the appropriative event. Indeed, to think of the *appropriation* [*Ereignis*] of man and Being as the *event of appropriation* [*Er-ignis*] "means to contribute to this self-vibrating realm" (ID 26/38). It means to build upon the structure of the appropriative event, the onto-poetic "identity" between man and Being, through opening up another way of speaking and thinking about our experience of Being in technological modernity. The "tools" for this onto-poetic thinking of *Er-ignis* are received from language, which Heidegger calls "the most delicate and thus most susceptible vibration" or processual medium holding everything within the "suspended structure" of the appropriation (ID 26/38). In a neo-romantic vein, Heidegger suggests that a new, onto-poetic way of thinking and speaking might open up a way out of the rigidity and domination of technological modernity.

The difficulty, as Heidegger remarks in "The Onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics," is that our Western languages are thoroughly imbued with metaphysics, which nonetheless leaves open the possibility that these languages might yet offer other possibilities of utterance beyond the completion of onto-theological metaphysics in modern technology. In this sense, the difference between Hegel and Heidegger also becomes sharply delineated. For Hegel, speculative language, with its demand of logically valid construction, is in principle comprehensible by everyone; Hegel's 'egalitarian' account of the rational-speculative freedom of Science recognises that "the individual has

the right to demand that Science should at least provide him with the ladder to this standpoint, and show him this standpoint within himself” (PhG 23/¶26). For Heidegger, by contrast, the solitary thinker of Being deploys an evocative, esoteric power of onto-poetic language that ‘speaks’ only to those few—in the *Beiträge*, Heidegger calls them “the few and the rare” (GA 65: 11/9)—who are prepared and able to ‘listen,’ that is to say to hear and heed the (silent) voice of Being.^[10] For Hegel, the mutual recognition established in intersubjective spirit, namely absolute knowing as the socio-cultural *self-consciousness* of recognition and reconciliation, articulates the most appropriate relationship between man and Being in modernity. For Heidegger, this intersubjective dimension of recognition and reconciliation vanishes in the mutual belonging together (or Sameness) of human beings and Being within the modern world of technology as the “prelude” to the appropriative event.

To be sure, for both Hegel and Heidegger, *language* plays a crucial role. For Hegel, it is the medium of universalisation which makes mutual understanding and will-formation at all possible (by ‘filtering’ out the merely particular); for Heidegger, it rather the medium of disclosure that manifests a single, otherwise ineffable sense, the esoteric sense of Being as appropriative event, an ‘inaudible’ sense that remains largely unintelligible to those not attuned to the ‘voice’ of Being. Indeed, because language is the most fragile medium of this mutual appropriation between man and Being, it is through an onto-poetic experience of language that a way from the en-framing to the appropriative event might be found. Such a possibility within technological modernity is enigmatic to say the least. It would in any case be beyond the collective will or action of human beings since it would presumably be the outcome of another destinal sending [*Geschick*] of Being beyond the current epoch of planetary technology. The most we can say is that Heidegger calls for the abandonment of the Hegelian project of dialectical-speculative Science, and its ‘modernist’ principle of freedom and mutual recognition, in order to prepare for the possible transformation of our mutual appropriation with Being as disclosed through the esoteric power of onto-poetic language.

In the course of Heidegger’s reflections, the metaphysical principle of identity has been thought or heard in a non-metaphysical key. The principle of identity [*Satz der Identität*] demands a leap or spring [*Satz*] from metaphysically conceived identity into the onto-poetic thought of the event of appropriation. This leap, Heidegger contends, is demanded by the essence of identity in the context of modern technology, since only in this way can the possibility arise of a more originary experience of our essential *belonging-together* with Being in “the essential light of the appropriation” (ID 28/39). Heidegger articulates the enigmatic relationship between the en-framing and appropriative event as something we glimpse, as a “first, oppressing flash,” in the experience of modern technology. This onto-poetically conceived Sameness of human beings and Beings marks a belonging-together in which “the letting belong first determines the manner of the “together” and its unity” (ID 27/38).

This represents a direct *reversal* of the metaphysical conception of identity in which the emphasis falls on the aspect of the “together” in its synthetic unity. The question concerning the meaning of the Sameness of man and Being thus resolves itself into the question concerning the “essential-presencing of identity [*Wesen der Identität*]” (ID 27/39). As opposed to the doctrine of metaphysics, which represents identity as a basic characteristic of Being, it is now clear, Heidegger suggests, that both Being and thinking belong “to an identity whose active essence [*Wesen*] stems from that letting belong together which we call the appropriation” (ID 27/39). This thinking of the essence of identity as belonging to *Er-eignis*, Heidegger contends, is part of the transitional thinking that attempts to spring from *metaphysics* to *thought* in the context of modern technology.^[11] This onto-poetic experience of the appropriative event requires a fundamental encounter with the metaphysical tradition, an originary experience of identity beyond the will-to-ground of modern metaphysics and subjectivity. Another encounter with Hegel is therefore necessary, a thinking dialogue in which Heidegger questions the constitution of metaphysics as onto-theo-logy. More pressingly, the question of identity *and* difference—which has utterly vanished in Heidegger’s discussion of the mutual appropriation of man and Being—now must be explicitly addressed. The challenge for Heidegger will be to show how *both* onto-poetically conceived identity and difference can be thought together, how they are mediated, without the one-sided elevation of one over the other.

Onto-theology and Technology

We can examine these issues in more detail in Heidegger’s 1957 essay “The Onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics”. Heidegger’s project is no longer to overcome Hegelian metaphysics, but rather to envelop the latter within a more encompassing and originary thinking. In this sense, Heidegger proposes a dialogue with Hegel in order to enact a “step back” or back-track into the unthought origin of metaphysics as a whole. This unthought origin will prove to be the ontological difference between Being and beings, a difference that, as we have seen, was not explicitly discussed in Heidegger’s account of the onto-poetic identity or mutual appropriation between man and Being. Indeed, Heidegger’s dialogue with Hegel, as one commentator observes, is “done out of a growing recognition of a proximity of the way each sees the issue of thought as tied to the question of identity and difference.” (Schmidt 1988, 170).

We should note in this context Heidegger’s emphasis on conversation or dialogue: this dialogue concerning the matter is essentially a dispute or conflict [*Streitfall*]; the matter itself, that which is the case for thinking and which concerns it, is itself the disputed within a dispute^[12] (ID 31/42). The matter of thinking—always and everywhere Being, according to Heidegger—torments or pressures

thinking towards the dispute in the matter itself and thereby brings thinking back to itself as thinking (ID 31/42). In this regard, the later Heidegger seems to draw closer to Hegel: Hegel is no longer an enemy to be overcome but a partner in a dialogue concerning the *Sache des Denkens*. Overcoming metaphysics must become a *disputations dialogue*, a recollection of that which remains unthought within metaphysics. To this extent, we could suggest that Heidegger does not completely abandon the metaphysics of subjectivity, but comes to acknowledge, with regard to Hegel, its legacy in language and in thought. The matter of thinking may well be the question of Being, but the mode of thinking appropriate to this question proves to be philosophical dialogue with the history of metaphysics within the historical context of technological modernity.

What is the disputatious matter between Hegel and Heidegger? Heidegger articulates it as follows: for Hegel, the matter concerns thinking as such, comprehended from the post-Kantian transcendental standpoint which Hegel thinks absolutely as self-comprehending speculative Science. The matter of thinking for Hegel is what Heidegger terms the Idea or Thought [*der Gedanke*], which is fully developed in the absolute Idea[13] (ID 32/43). Indeed, the latter becomes Hegel's interpretation of Being in its unfolding from abstract immediacy to the concretely mediated and self-developing absolute Concept. Moreover, Hegel thinks this matter—thought thinking itself—historically, that is, as a philosophical dialogue with the history of metaphysics oriented by the historical self-comprehension of Spirit (ID 35/45).[14] Any dialogue with Hegel must therefore also be conducted speculatively-historically as a dispute concerning the matter of thinking and Being. With this aim in mind, Heidegger poses three questions, which we now shall critically consider, in order to clarify further the conversation between Hegel and Heidegger.

1) *What is the matter of thinking for Hegel and Heidegger?*

For Hegel, Heidegger contends, the matter in dispute is Being with respect to *beings*, where Being as such is *aufgehoben* in absolute or self-comprehending thinking. For Heidegger, by contrast, the matter is Being with respect to its *difference* from beings, that is, in preliminary terms the (ontological) difference *as* difference (ID 37/47). Nonetheless the matter of thinking concerns *the Same*—namely the *truth* of Being—but also differs in that Hegel thinks Being as self-comprehending Idea, which has sublated the ontological difference, while Heidegger thinks the obliterated (ontological) difference of Being and beings. The issue that arises here is how the previous discussion of the onto-poetic *identity* of mutual appropriation is to be related with the ontological *difference* as the unthought origin of the metaphysical tradition. Is (ontological) difference originary in relation to identity as appropriation, or is the latter originary in relation to (ontological) difference? Are they co-originary, and if so, how are they related or

mediated with each other? These questions, I suggest, are fundamentally at stake throughout the entire course of Heidegger's dialogue with Hegel concerning the problem of identity and difference.

2) *What is the criterion for the dialogue with the history of metaphysics?*

For Hegel, the hermeneutic task is to enter into and appropriate the force and sphere of what has been thought by previous philosophies, that is, to appropriate the history of philosophy within absolute Idealism as the self-comprehension of absolute Spirit. For Heidegger, it is also a matter of entering into the force of previous thinking. Heidegger's hermeneutic task, however, is not in the service of an appropriation of what has been thought, but aims rather at an originary recovery of that which remains *unthought*, the unthematized, originary questioning from which metaphysics receives its space of presencing [*Wesensraum*] (ID 38/48). In this sense, Heidegger's criterion of appropriating the history of philosophy involves an enveloping-uncovering of the obliterated and unthought element of the metaphysical tradition, rather than a speculative-historical appropriation of the history of philosophy in the process of its own historical self-comprehension. The metaphysical tradition is still essential, as it is for Hegel, but not as that which is integrated into a higher development and systemisation that supersedes it. Rather, the aim of Heidegger's *originary hermeneutics* is to set the ossified metaphysical tradition free into its essential having-been [*Gewesenes*], its essential historical presencing, which is still preserved and prevails within metaphysics as a whole (ID 38/48). The question is whether this relationship of enveloping-uncovering succeeds in the decisive and consequential case of Hegelian speculative thought.

3) *What is the character of this dialogue?*

The difference here concerns Hegel's suspension or *Aufhebung* that both supersedes and preserves (determinately negates) the *comprehended content* of substance- and subject-metaphysics, as opposed to Heidegger's *Schritt zurück* that uncovers the *unthought* that both makes possible, and is foreclosed by, the metaphysical tradition as a whole. Heidegger interprets the Hegelian *Aufhebung* as resulting in the speculative comprehension of truth as the completely developed certainty of self-knowing conceptual knowledge. Heidegger's "foundationalist" interpretation of Hegel as completing the Cartesian-Kantian metaphysics of subjectivity thus takes the *Aufhebung* to have the character of "the mediating concept in the sense of an absolute foundation [*Begründung*]" (ID 39/49). This interpretation, however, is questionable since Hegelian logic is supposed to be without any foundation other than its own circular, self-comprehending movement. Indeed, Hegel is perhaps closer to Heidegger than the latter will acknowledge, since both thinkers attempt to overcome the metaphysical foundationalism that finds its

modern form in Cartesianism, on the one hand, and Kantian formalism, on the other. In any event, Heidegger attempts the “step back” in order to uncover the unthought dimension, passed over in the history of metaphysics, that first of all grants Hegel the possibility of thinking the essencing of truth dialectically within speculative thought.[15] In this sense, Heidegger attempts to “surpass” Hegel not by dialectical supersession but rather by inquiring into that originary dimension which opens up the very space of possibility for metaphysics. The difference between Heidegger’s enveloping-appropriation and Hegel’s integrating-suspension becomes discernible only through performing such a hermeneutic ‘back-track,’ which is what the remainder of Heidegger’s inquiry into the onto-theological structure of metaphysics attempts to unfold.

Heidegger’s onto-poetic thinking, as we have seen, seeks to step behind Hegel’s dialectical appropriation of the metaphysical tradition, and to uncover its hidden ground, the unthought of speculative logic. Here it is important to emphasise the difference between Hegel’s speculative-dialectical and Heidegger’s onto-poetic paths. As I have discussed, Hegel attempts to dialectically suspend and supersede the metaphysical tradition of both substance- and subject-metaphysics. Here, however, the question of precisely which elements of the subject-metaphysics are overcome or negated, and which are retained and transformed, becomes highly significant. Hegel certainly subjects the formalism of Kantian pure self-consciousness to critique, arguing that such a conception of self-grounding subjectivity lacks concrete content and cannot account for its own individuated identity and self-development. The true deduction of the categories would require a phenomenology of self-consciousness and its development and self-recognition as subjective Spirit. This self-completing scepticism would then be able to show that the True, for Hegel, is substance that is also subject. This means that subject-metaphysics requires a phenomenology of Spirit and speculative Logic that would fully account for the development of the Concept, of which our self-consciousness as subjective Spirit offers us a paradigm.[16] Subjectivity comprehended as *intersubjectively constituted* Spirit, the concrete universality that is also historically differentiated or particularised into a determinate individuality, gives us a sense of Hegel’s positive alternative to the formalist paradigm of modern subject-metaphysics.

Heidegger, by contrast, attempts rather to *detach* his thinking from all dialectics, to “step back” behind metaphysics, and thereby disclose that which remains unthought at its origin and basis. This means remaining in dialogue with the tradition, using the language of metaphysics, asking after what has remained unasked in the tradition; but it also means that the language of metaphysics itself begins to break down, undoes itself, and hints at an other kind of thought. Here the inspiration is less Nietzsche’s *dichtende Vernunft* than Hölderlin’s enigmatic “poetizing thought”. Heidegger’s philosophical conversation with Hegel, in short, must be pursued in the context of a conversation with the previous history of thinking. Indeed, this was Hegel’s own relationship to the history of philosophy, which was a

philosophical appropriation of the history of metaphysics as well as philosophical interpretation of the present. Heidegger also detaches his thinking from the metaphysical tradition, not by way of a comprehensive appropriation in the manner of Hegel, nor even by an attempt to overcome the history of ontology, but rather through a “step back” behind the origin and ground of the metaphysical tradition. Rather than complete the circle of wisdom through speculative logic, in the manner of Hegelian speculative thought, Heidegger steps back behind the circle and asks its obscured, provocative, and unthought “origin,” thus attempting to recover traces of the obliterated experience of the appropriative event of Being in technological modernity.

What emerges out of this “step back” is an ambiguity or duplicity that marks the very origin of Western metaphysics: the ambiguity between Being understood as the *ground* of beings and Being understood as the highest or *paradigmatic* being. Paradoxically, this duplicity in the origin, according to Heidegger, can be discerned by considering a text at the end of metaphysics: Hegel’s *Science of Logic*. For Hegel, Western philosophy begins, in Parmenides and Heraclitus, with the most immediate concepts of Being, Nothing, and Becoming. It passes through the reflected concept of Being as Essence, articulated in substance and subject metaphysics; and it ends with the self-developing Idea of Being as Conceptuality, articulated within speculative Logic. Hegelian Science thus clearly aims to be comprehensive philosophical knowledge, the systematic conceptual comprehension of the interconnected categorical logics of substantive, self-reflexive, and self-developing thought. From Heidegger’s point of view, Hegel’s Logic begins with the most immediate conception of Being, pure Being in its most *general* aspect, and ends with the most *mediated* conception of Being as absolute Idea, or Being in its *highest* and paradigmatic form. Indeed, from the beginning of Western metaphysics, Heidegger maintains, Being was conceived both as the *ground of all beings* and as *the highest being*; that which grounds all beings equally and the One being that surpasses and yet encompasses all other beings. In Heidegger’s terms,

Metaphysics thinks the Being of beings both in the ground-giving unity of what is most general, what is indifferently valid everywhere, and also in the unity of all that accounts for the ground, that is, of the All-Highest (ID 49/58).

“Being” names both the grounding unity of beings in the most general sense, and the ultimate or highest being that accounts for this ground-giving unity, namely God. Each aspect of this dual interpretation of Being—the most general and the ultimate—receives its own grounding account or *logos*: the *logos* of the ground of beings, or onto-logic, and theo-logic, the *logos* of the highest being. Since metaphysics inquires after Being in its most general sense and in Being in its highest sense,

Western metaphysics, Heidegger contends, can be called *onto-theo-logic*.

It is in this regard that Hegel's *Science of Logic* encompasses this duality at the origin of metaphysics; it articulates the essential constitution of metaphysics as based on "the unity of beings as such in the universal and in that which is highest" (ID 57/61). It moves from Being in the most general and abstract sense to Being in its highest and most developed sense, and thus completes the—circular or indeed 'spiralling'—trajectory of metaphysics as onto-theo-logy. At the same time, Hegelian Idealism gathers together the Platonic sense of Idea, the Aristotelian conception of substance, the Cartesian self-certain subject and the Kantian domain of the transcendental, which are all suspended in the thought of Conceptuality. The completion of substance- and subject-metaphysics can therefore be found in the Hegelian conception of absolute subjectivity. The metaphysical foundations of natural sciences and technology, for Heidegger, thus draw upon the modern metaphysics of subjectivity in its development from Descartes, through Kant, to Hegel and Nietzsche.

In order to explicate the fundamental connection Heidegger draws between metaphysics and modernity, we need to consider more closely Heidegger's thesis that the metaphysics of subjectivity prepares the ground for the modern interpretation of Being as *technology* (in the sense of en-framing or *Ge-stell*). According to Heidegger, the transition from a metaphysics of substance to a metaphysics of subjectivity is begun by Descartes, delimited by Kant, and completed by Hegel. It is the Cartesian turn to the self-certainty of the thinking subject that marks the beginning of the foundation of modern metaphysics. Indeed, modernity itself, according to Heidegger, is defined by the principle of *absolute subjectivity*, the primacy of representation guaranteed by the self-grounding certainty of the cognitive subject. Here we must ask what is meant by the "subject" in this context. Heidegger explains that Cartesian metaphysics marks the decisive shift from a conception of beings as grounded in an underlying *sub-iectum*—the Latin translation and interpretation of the Greek *hypokeimenon* as that which underlies or provides the basis of something—to a conception where the *cognitive subject* takes on this role of the underlying ground of the intelligibility of beings. In other words, Descartes marks the point at which a conception of beings is transformed into a conception of beings grounded in self-certain *subjectivity*. Hence Heidegger's question:

Since Descartes and through Descartes, man, the human "I," has in a pre-eminent way come to be the "subject" in metaphysics. How does man come to play the role of the one and only *subject* proper? why is the human subject transposed into the "I," so that subjectivity here becomes coterminous with I-ness? (N II 141/iv 96).

With the Cartesian turn towards the *ego cogito* as the grounding principle of all knowledge, the

intelligibility of beings is taken to be that which can be presented for the representing 'I'. The metaphysical question of the meaning of Being is thereby transformed into an epistemological search for the correct method of securing certain cognitive representation of beings. Thus, for Heidegger, the human being as "human 'I'" has come to be grasped as "subject" in metaphysics" through the turn towards the Cartesian cogito (N II 141/iv 96). The latter provides the basis for the self-grounding "method" that will secure the certainty of the subjective representability of beings. The traditional metaphysical question—what are beings in their Being?—is transformed into a question about the *fundamentum absolutum inconcussum veritatis*, "the absolute, unshakeable ground of truth" grasped as certainty of representation (N II 142/iv 97).

This Cartesian revolution marks the transition into the epoch of modernity. Indeed, Descartes' metaphysics, Heidegger claims, provides the decisive beginning of the foundation of metaphysics in the modern age: "It was his task *to ground the metaphysical ground of man's liberation to new freedom of self-assured self-legislation.*" (N II 147/iv 100). This formulation can be compared with Hegel's claim in the *Philosophy of Right* that the philosophical understanding of "modernity" is characterised by "the right of *subjective freedom*" (PR §124R/151). For Heidegger, this right of subjectivity becomes a key element of the modern "world-picture" in which "man" becomes "the primary and only real *subiectum.*" (QT 128). The question of modernity could therefore be expressed as the question concerning the *freedom* of self-grounding subjectivity. Modernity is equally defined by a new interpretation of the meaning of *freedom* as self-legislating autonomy. If we take both these aspects together—namely the "subject" as metaphysical ground of all representing and securing of beings, and the "subject" as the self-legislating ground of all human freedom—we thereby gain a clearer sense of Heidegger's understanding of the metaphysical basis of the modern age. He writes,

Western history has now begun to enter into the completion of the period we call the *modern*, and which is defined by the fact that man becomes the measure and the centre of beings. Man is what lies at the ground of all beings; that is, in modern terms, at the ground of all objectification and representability (QT 28).

This shift to subjectivity as the basis of the intelligibility of beings in their representability is coupled with a shift to self-grounding subjectivity as the locus of autonomous freedom. As Heidegger states,

To be free now means that, in place of the certitude of salvation, which was the standard of all truth, man posits the kind of certitude by virtue of which and in which he becomes certain of himself as the being that thus founds itself on itself (N II 143/iv 97).

In the modern age, Being has been completely subordinated to man grasped as an autonomous, willing, representing, and acting subject. Heidegger thus connects the “anthropocentrism” of modern metaphysics with the self-willing autonomy of modern subjectivity. Together these aspects consolidate the “objectifying” or “reifying” tendencies of modernity, which culminates in the modern domination over Being through technological ordering and calculability. The Being of beings now becomes that which can be represented within an organised totality of technically manipulable resources. Thus, for Heidegger, the modern metaphysics of subjectivity embodies the most extreme form of objectifying thought, a metaphysical objectification underlying the modern instrumentalisation of Being. Indeed, the modern epoch of technology, Heidegger warns, establishes the possibility of a complete domination over Being by self-empowering subjectivity. Modern nihilism, Heidegger concludes, stands revealed in the planetary domination of technology.

Man has become *subiectum*. Therefore he can determine and realise the essence of subjectivity always in keeping with the way in which he himself conceives and wills himself. Man as a rational being in the age of Enlightenment is no less subject than man who grasps himself as a nation, wills himself as a people, fosters himself as a race, and, finally, empowers himself as the lord of the earth [...] In the planetary imperialism of technologically organised man, the subjectivism of man attains its peak, from which point it will descend to the level of organised uniformity and establish itself there. This uniformity becomes the surest instrument of total, ie, technological rule over the earth (QT 152-3).

This is perhaps one of Heidegger’s most dramatic formulations of the connection between the metaphysics of subjectivity and the nihilism of technological modernity. What is striking here is the *reversal* of freedom involved in the assertion of autonomous subjectivity: the metaphysics of self-willing subjectivity as the ground of self-legislative freedom results in the *abandonment* of the freedom of subjectivity altogether. Technological modernity as the peak of “the subjectivism of man” descends into “organised uniformity” and technological domination over the earth. The tragic outcome is that the self-willing subjectivity of modernity—indeed humanity itself—is transformed into a mere “standing reserve,” a manipulable and calculable resource. Our contemporary experience of Being in the epoch of technological modernity is thus the culmination of the nihilism of Western metaphysics as a whole: the utter objectification of subjectivity within the all-encompassing frame-work of modern technology.

The metaphysics of subjectivity, which extends from Descartes to its culmination in Hegel and Nietzsche, is tantamount to the technological domination over Being. This thesis is fundamental to Heidegger’s critical confrontation with modern metaphysics and its role in the advent of technological modernity. Indeed, this profound but obscure connection between metaphysics and modernity is fundamental to Heidegger’s own confrontation with Hegel. The preceding discussion has supplied a

context for understanding Heidegger's otherwise exceedingly compressed and seemingly ungrounded claims concerning the need for an onto-poetic thinking of the mutual appropriation between man and Being as a response to the dangers of planetary technology. Let us turn in conclusion to a brief discussion of Heidegger's non-metaphysical, onto-poetic conception of the relationship between Being, man, and beings, which Heidegger intimates is a response to the domination and objectification of beings and man within technological modernity.

What Heidegger calls the "resolution" or "perdurance" [*Austrag*] describes the hidden or obscured unity-in-difference of Being and beings, which has remained, Heidegger maintains, the unthought element of the metaphysical tradition from Plato to Hegel: "The difference of Being and beings, as the differentiation of overwhelming and arrival, is the perdurance (*Austrag*) of the two in *unconcealing keeping in concealment*" (ID 57/65). Being is now understood as a movement of 'coming-over' or process that unconceals beings, and beings are what arrive into presence through this movement of unconcealing. This movement of coming-over and arrival into presence is that which both differentiates and unites Being and beings: Being shows itself as the overwhelming-unconcealing, while beings arrive into presence such that their arrival remains concealed within this movement. To think onto-poetically of the difference between Being and beings means to think the perdurance or resolution of their originary difference. It means to 'step back' out of the oblivion of the (ontological) difference and to think the (onto-poetic) unity-in-difference of the *resolution* of Being and beings (as overwhelming-unconcealing and concealing-arrival). We arrive here at Heidegger's decidedly obscure answer to our earlier question concerning the relationship between onto-poetically conceived identity and difference. But we should note that in this reformulation of the relationship of identity and difference as the *Austrag* between (overwhelming) Being and (arriving) beings, it is not the (ontological) "difference as difference" but rather (onto-poetic) *identity* or *unity* that appears as the overwhelming moment.

This "non-metaphysical" interpretation of the relationship between Being and beings as perdurance or resolution [*Austrag*] attempts to make thematic the unity-in-difference as such prevailing between them. At the same time, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Heidegger once again returns to the priority of *unity*—thought onto-poetically as the *Austrag* or resolution of Being and beings—over the (ontological) *difference* as such. The Same that Heidegger describes here as the *Austrag* recalls the Same previously discussed as the mutual appropriation of man and Being in the appropriative event. These are in fact the Same matter [*Sache*] thought from different perspectives (the Being-beings relationship and the Being-man relationship which together make up the threefold relationship between Being, beings, and human beings). Within this threefold relationship, Heidegger gives primacy to the *unity* or Sameness of Being and beings in their differentiation, which was also the case with his

emphasis on the unity or Sameness of man and Being in their mutual appropriation.

As Heidegger also acknowledges, the difficulty here is how to avoid simply reproducing metaphysics in the attempt to recollect its unthought origins. This difficulty is connected with the fact that Being always reveals itself *historically*: “There is Being only in this or that historic character: *physis*, *logos*, *ben*, *idea*, *energeia*, Substantiality, Objectivity, Subjectivity, the Will, the Will to Power, the Will to Will” (ID 58/66). At first glance, one is struck by Heidegger’s proximity here to Hegel’s history of philosophy as the unfolding of absolute Spirit in its self-comprehension under historical conditions of modernity.^[17] To be sure, Heidegger claims to have recollected, through the ‘step back’ out of the metaphysical tradition, the *unthought* oblivion of the difference between Being and beings. Moreover, Heidegger ventures to think the forgotten unity-in-difference as the *Austrag* or resolution of unconcealing overcoming and self-keeping arrival (ID 59/67). But the problem is how to think this “One-All” of the unity-in-difference without lapsing back into metaphysics and reproducing its will-to-ground the Whole. In more pointed terms, how does Heidegger think this “all-pervading” difference, which “pervades Being’s destiny from its beginning to its completion” (ID 60/67), without thereby reproducing Hegelian dialectics?

The answer remains unclear, as Heidegger intimates: “it remains difficult to say how this all-pervasiveness is to be thought if it is neither something universal, valid in all cases, nor a law guaranteeing the necessity of a process in the sense of the dialectical” (ID 60/68). There is no dialectical “necessity,” for Heidegger, in the unfolding of the oblivion of the difference between Being and beings, yet it is not entirely arbitrary. There is no “universality” of the difference between Being and beings, yet the difference as *Austrag* is all-pervasive: it “begins the history of metaphysics, governs all of its epochs, and yet remains everywhere concealed *as* perdurance, and thus forgotten in an oblivion which escapes even itself” (ID 60/68). There is even an apparent *telos* in Heidegger’s narrative, namely the utter oblivion of Being in the epoch of technology that serves as a prelude to the event of appropriation. All pervasive yet absent, non-necessary yet governing, such is the paradoxical status of the *Austrag* or ‘perduring resolution’ between Being, beings, and human beings. The question is whether Heidegger can account for the *Austrag* (as quasi-universal and quasi-necessary) between humans, beings, and Being, without thereby lapsing into another metaphysical principle naming the Being of beings as such.

The major problem raised by Heidegger’s attempt to perform an enveloping appropriation of Hegelian metaphysics can be formulated as follows. Heidegger’s attempt to think the (ontological) “difference as difference” ends up affirming the onto-poetically conceived identity that holds sway in the *Austrag* or resolution of Being (as overwhelming-unconcealing) and (the arrival of) beings.

However, at the very point where the issue arises of the precise relationship between identity and difference, Heidegger reverts to a mode of poetising thought that has withdrawn all claims to providing a grounding account of this relationship. At the point where one would have to explain or at least account for the apparent reversal from the *ontological difference* to *ontopoetic identity*, Heidegger instead merely *gestures* towards the “resolution” of identity and difference in the onto-poetically conceived *Austrag*. The interpretative difficulty is therefore neatly avoided or “covered over” through Heidegger’s gesture towards the *Austrag* between Being, beings, and human beings, the figure of reconciliation between ontological difference and onto-poetic identity. In this respect, the relationship between identity and difference in the *Austrag* remains ungrounded: it is onto-poetically evoked in gestural figures of poetising thought, but not explicitly articulated through any grounding account of the relationship between identity and difference. To be sure, this is consistent with the performance of the ‘step back’ behind the will-to-ground of the metaphysical tradition. Moreover, from a ‘Heideggerian’ point of view, this “no grounding” criticism would seem to miss the mark, for it seems to presuppose the “modernist” demand for rational-grounding account of the phenomenon in question (the relationship between Being, beings, and human beings, which is itself the “ungrounded ground” of reason and thinking). Indeed, this demand for a grounding account, or expression of the modernist “will to ground” with respect to human subjectivity as such, is characteristic of the project of modern metaphysics and technological modernity itself. And this is precisely this fundamental “metaphysical” assumption or paradigm of modern thinking and action that Heidegger seeks to question.

Having said this, however, the question of the plausibility of Heidegger’s reading of the metaphysical bases of modernity still remains. Given competing interpretations of the “metaphysics of modernity,” especially the extraordinarily powerful version presented in Hegel’s speculative system, why should we accept Heidegger’s claim to have uncovered (and indeed undermined) in a more thoroughgoing and comprehensive manner the metaphysical origins and foundations of technological modernity? We arrive here at a dialogical impasse or ‘antinomy’ in the confrontation between Hegel and Heidegger: the conflict between Hegel’s speculative-dialectical path, his critical affirmation and legitimation of modernity, which seeks to ‘reconcile’ us (in speculative thought) with modernity’s self-reproducing and self-resolving antinomies; and Heidegger’s onto-poetic path, which culminates in a ‘despairing’ negation of modernity as the epoch of technology grounded in the metaphysics of subjectivity, but which also points to the possibility of a non-metaphysical experience of the mutual appropriation of Being, beings, and human beings evoked in onto-poetic meditation. The “impasse” consists in the conflict between Hegel’s critical affirmation that promotes as modernity’s great achievement *subjective freedom* constituted through reciprocal recognition within communal intersubjectivity, but at the same time seeks to reconcile us within the closure of the self-sustaining but

also self-resolving, antinomies of modernity. And, on the other hand, we have Heidegger's despairing negation of technological modernity in the name of an esoteric evocation of the numinous sense of Being, which can unfortunately only speak to those already 'called' to hear and heed its voice, those "few and rare" thinkers attuned to the onto-poetically revealed voice of Being, now almost obliterated in modernity, those who can silently discern the possibility of a 'non-metaphysical' attunement between humankind and Being with the all-encompassing frame-work of technological modernity. Hegelian *reconciliation* with actuality provides determinate content for the critical legitimation of the project of modernity, but also remains committed to the 'conservative' reconciliation with the 'closure' of modernity (as the endpoint of history), a 'closure' of history in which the possibility of radical social and political transformation has been seemingly exhausted. Heideggerian *releasement*, on the other hand, remains 'radically' open to the coming event of appropriation, but for this very reason unable to determine the concrete content of the transformation of modernity. For to provide any determinate content to the anticipated transformation of modernity would be to turn *releasement* into *engagement*; it would turn the coming 'post-modern' epoch of metaphysics or next destinal gift of Being into the self-willed project of autonomous subjectivity, the posited historical object of a collective human will, and thus would repeat the self-willing project of modern subjectivity that Heidegger sees as most symptomatic of the nihilism and forgetting of Being in modernity. This apparent impasse in our dialogue between Hegel and Heidegger pointedly articulates the difficulty of thinking identity, difference, and subjectivity in modernity. In conclusion I shall briefly consider this contrast between two different kinds of 'closure'—Hegelian dialectical reconciliation and Heideggerian onto-poetic releasement—and ask what prospects these two paths of thinking offer for engaging our contemporary philosophical 'needs'. The question I wish to address concerns viability of the philosophical "modernism" of Hegel and philosophical "post-modernism" of Heidegger for thinking through the problems of modernity. I shall suggest that Hegel's modernist philosophical legitimation of modernity is in fact more 'radical' in its confrontation with the dissatisfactions of modernity than Heidegger's 'post-modernist' resignation, his "beautiful soul," romantic rejection of the project of modern freedom.

[1] Cf. "Yet here the erroneous determination of the relationship between "distinguishing" and transcendence. Transcendence prevails in essence in the distinguishing — the latter is the carrying through [*Austrag*] of the distinction. Here the preparation of the quite other commencement; everything still mixed and confused; contorted into phenomenological-existential and transcendental "research"; occurrence not as "leap," and the latter? Comes into its own in the event of appropriation." (WM 159/123 note b). Heidegger's cryptic note comments on the "erroneously conceived" relationship between the ontological difference and Da-sein transcendence as the freedom to project and ground its

being-in-the-world. At this stage the latter is viewed as the “ground” of the former, whereas the Heidegger’s later viewpoint (enacted now through a “leap” rather than a metaphysical “will to ground”) is precisely the reverse. Da-sein’s freedom for grounding is rooted in the ontological difference or originary difference as pointing to the concealed event of appropriation.

[2] The “essence” in question here, according to Heidegger’s later marginal notes, is thought in a threefold sense: 1) the *quidditas*—the “what”—*koionon*; 2) the enabling or condition of possibility; 3) the *ground* of enabling (WM 177/135 note a).

[3] Here I follow the convention in the English translation of the *Beiträge* and render “Seyn” as “Be-ing”.

[4] See Biemel’s detailed discussion (1992) and Pöggeler’s account (1995) of the significance of Heidegger’s ‘critique’ of Hegelian speculative negativity.

[5] Cf. “The actual development of the science which starts from the ego shows that in that development the object has and retains the perennial character of an other for the ego, and that the ego which formed the starting-point is, therefore, still entangled in the world of appearance and is not the pure knowing which has in truth overcome the opposition of consciousness.” (WL I/1 64/77).

[6] See Lecture One in SG (1957, 21-24/8-9).

[7] Heidegger draws here on the ordinary sense of *Gestell* as framework or casing but also on the differing meanings of the verb *stellen* (to order, to set up, to posit). He draws the parallel with the verb *setzen* from which the noun *Gesetz* [law] derives, and suggests that a similar move can be made from *stellen* to the *Ge-stell* as the en-framing im-position which defines the essence of technology.

[8] Heidegger generally distinguishes appropriation [Ereignis] between human being and Being from the event of appropriation [Er-eignis] as the eventing-process that first opens up the realm of presencing in which the mutual appropriation of humans and Being can happen.

[9] We should note here the relation between Heidegger’s notion of authenticity [*Eigentlichkeit*] in *Being and Time*, and his later thinking of appropriation [marked by cognate terms such as *eigenen* and *an-eigenen*] and the event of appropriation [Er-eignis]. The more originary and appropriate, that is to say “authentic,” belonging-together of man and Being is made possible through the “authentic” truth of Being as *Er-eignis*.

[10] Cf. Heidegger’s invocation of these solitary, esoteric thinkers: “For the few who from time to time again *ask the question*, i.e., who put up anew the essential sway of truth for decision/For the rare who bring the utmost courage for solitude, in order to think the nobility of be-ing and to speak of its uniqueness” (GA 65: 11/9).

[11] See Janicaud (1995, 15-37) for an extended mediation on this theme that touches on the relationship between Hegel and Heidegger concerning the problem of identity and difference.

[12] This important gloss on the significance of the matter of thinking and its character as disputation is unfortunately omitted in Stambaugh’s English translation, as is Heidegger’s discussion of the meaning of *Ge-stell* in regard to the various senses of *stellen* and as analogous to the connection between *setzen* and *Gesetz*.

[13] Souche-Dagues (1992) also notes the tendentiousness of Heidegger’s interpretation of the matter of thinking for Hegel as “der Gedanke” rather than “das Denken”: “with Hegel, *der Gedanke* leans towards thought understood subjectively (cf. para. 465 *Enzyklopädie*: (die Gedanke) sind Inhalt und Gegenstand (der Intelligenz)). Undoubtedly, Heidegger finds in ‘Gedanke’ the ‘Dank’ which, for him, is the meaning of *Denken*.” (Ibid., p.274. fn.68).

[14] As Manfred Riedel has argued, Heidegger articulates in his confrontation with Hegel the difference between the “first beginning” and “other beginning” of metaphysics: the “first” beginning

names Heidegger's account of the memorialised history or "recollection [*Erinnerung*]" of ontology, of metaphysics as "first philosophy," as the thought-history of the various accounts of the logically grounded Being of beings in the path of Western philosophy from Parmenides to Hegel. This is contrasted with the "other beginning" which recollects an event that remains originally concealed within this history of metaphysics (1989, 178), namely the obliterated ontological difference between Being and beings in which metaphysics finds its origin and concealed element. Hegel's *Logic*, Heidegger objects, begins with this end of metaphysics, but instead of genuinely returning to the (concealed) origins of thought, Hegelian logic remains with the progress of the development of the pure Concept, through which the beginning of metaphysics becomes transparent. Consequently, the happening of thought is dialectically reduced to the logical form of grounding principles in the history of philosophy (Riedel, 1989 178).

[15] Heidegger will develop this theme in his reading of Hegel's interpretation of Greek philosophy, in particular of Parmenides and Heraclitus, in order to argue that Hegel's starting point in the history of philosophy obliterates the originary experience of truth as concealing-unconcealment or *Aletheia*. See "Hegel and the Greeks" in WM.

[16] The precise manner in which Hegel develops his novel conception of subjectivity as Spirit, and thereby overcomes certain deficiencies of subject-metaphysics up to Kant, remain crucial questions of contemporary Hegel interpretation. See the debate between Terry Pinkard and Robert Pippin on the issue of Hegel's "Kantianism": Pinkard (1990) and Pippin (1990).

[17] See Haar (1980) for a study of this structural relationship and critical distance between Hegel and Heidegger on the question of history.