

THE METAPHYSICAL NIETZSCHE?

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PIPPIN, R.: The Metaphysical Nietzsche?
FILOZOFIA, 78, 2023, No 5, pp. 321 – 337

In his influential series of lectures on Nietzsche in the 1930s and 1940s, Heidegger claimed that Nietzsche had failed to escape metaphysical thinking and had remained a metaphysician despite his own self-understanding. At the center of Heidegger's charge is his interpretation of Nietzsche's doctrine of "the will to power." The argument in this paper is that Heidegger has misinterpreted what Nietzsche means by a "philosophy of the future," and that Nietzsche's revolution in philosophy is, somewhat ironically, much closer to Heidegger's own attempt to recover the question of the meaning of being.

Keywords: Metaphysics – Being – Will to power – Meaning – Significance

I.

Throughout his extraordinary lectures in Marburg and Freiburg during the 1920s and early 1930s, Heidegger repeatedly claimed that Hegel was the "culmination" of the metaphysical tradition. He meant to say that all metaphysics up to and including Hegel had been working under the same assumption, starting with Plato's claim that reality was Idea and on through scholastic and early modern metaphysics. Moreover, Heidegger claimed that this taken-for-granted assumption was that the primary availability of all being was as present to discursive thinking, and that in all the developing variations in later philosophy and especially in modernity, this had set in place by its implications various notions of primacy, significance, orders of importance, and even social relations and relations with the natural world that have led to a disastrous self-estrangement in the modern West, a forgetfulness and lostness that ensured a permanent and ultimately desperate homelessness.

For Heidegger, Hegel had taken that mostly implicit assumption that to be was to be intelligible as far as it could be taken, and so was its "culmination" in the claim that the Absolute had been achieved, that all dualisms had been reconciled and that a complete account of all the modes of the intelligibility of being and thereby an account of any possible being had been realized. But for Heidegger, this culmination allowed us to see, in its very radicality and ambition, the disclosure of the inner

dynamic of all Western philosophy, and thereby that the most fundamental question of metaphysics, what he called the meaning of being qua being, had not yet even been posed or acknowledged as such since the pre-Socratics. Hegel's philosophy therefore also allowed us to see that philosophy had exhausted its possibilities, that all that was left for it was to recount its own moments either in some triumphalist mode or some deflationary irony (Hegel versus Derrida, say). This primary identification of Being with knowability had become so fixed in place that it was not anymore even noticed, ensuring it was also not questioned and its implications for what, by contrast, were taken to be merely subjective, psychological, and insignificant had simply been accepted.

But in his series of lectures on Nietzsche (which, he told Gadamer, "almost destroyed me") starting in 1936, Heidegger began to refer to *Nietzsche* as the "culmination of metaphysics." Especially in Heidegger's later lectures on Nietzsche – I mean the 1939 texts, "The Will to Power as Knowledge" and "The Eternal Recurrence of the Same and the Will to Power," as well as the typescript from 1940, "Nietzsche's Metaphysics" – Heidegger advances his famous interpretation that it is Nietzsche who is "the last metaphysician of the West" (*N*, III, 8). Indeed, despite Nietzsche's reputation as the destroyer of all "other-worldly" metaphysics, according to Heidegger, "Nietzsche's doctrine does not overcome metaphysics: it is the utmost unseeing adoption of the very guiding projection of metaphysics" (*N*, III, 166).

This new claim is consistent with his remarks on Hegel because Heidegger realizes that Nietzsche *took himself* to be the first post-metaphysical thinker and Heidegger is trying to say he failed; he remained a metaphysical thinker, *malgré lui*. Heidegger folds this critique into his own framework of "the history of Being" and its catastrophic consequences. He means that Nietzsche's thought is complicit in the forgetting of the question of the meaningfulness of Being that is characteristic of all post-Platonic Western thought, and which has produced the late modern West, characterized by nihilism, "the age of complete meaninglessness" (*N*, III, 175) and the technological predation of ourselves and the earth. My two questions in the following are straightforward: what does Heidegger mean by this, and is his interpretation of Nietzsche correct?

The first issue will obviously be difficult to address briefly. Even in the above summation, it is already clear that Heidegger will be invoking his own terminology. In the first pages of the *Will to Power as Knowledge*, he tells us that Nietzsche

...affirms the predominance of beings over against Being, without knowing what is involved in such an affirmation. Yet at the same time Nietzsche is that Western thinker who unconditionally and ultimately brings about this

predominance of beings and thus confronts the most unrelenting acuteness of the decision (*N*, III, 6).

He accomplishes this by means of his “unique thought of the will to power.” And this is problematic because Nietzsche’s understanding of the beings inherits the meaning of being that has “destined” the West, φύσις, understood as “beings that as such subsist and come to presence of themselves” (*N*, III, 6). Heidegger’s most common term for this understanding of the meaning of Being is “standing presence,” *ständige Anwesenheit*. The consequence is, “What is inevitable is what has come to word in Nietzsche’s thought of will to power as the historical ground of what is happening in the context of the modern age of Western history” (*N*, III, 8).

We shall return shortly to the question of what Heidegger means by this characterization of the history of metaphysics, but Heidegger’s basic charge is clear enough: all of Nietzsche’s philosophy rests on a claim about being, the nature of the whole, what anything at all must be. Nietzsche’s doctrine – that the meaning of being is will to power – is a version of the metaphysics of presence, that which could stand as the detectable object of human assertion. What we need to understand is why Heidegger thinks this basis assumes that being is such standing presence, and what it means to say that Nietzsche has an account of all the beings in these terms but has neglected the question of the meaningfulness of Being itself. This will lead to the question of what a strictly post-metaphysical or post-philosophical enterprise would look like.

The second difficulty in understanding Heidegger’s interpretation is that he does not mean it to be a “mere” interpretation, bound by the ideal of textual fidelity. Instead, it is a “confrontation,” one which can understand the author better than he understands himself. “Of course, every interpretation must not only take things from the text but must also, without forcing the matter, be able quietly to give something of its own, something of its own concerns” (*N*, III, 191). Moreover, the 1150 pages of the original Nietzsche volumes of the Nietzsche lectures make hardly any reference to Nietzsche’s published work. Heidegger’s text is the *Nachlaß*, especially the notes written (probably) between 1883 and 1888, and especially between 1885-88.

Each of these peculiarities is worth extended study and comment, and I realize that for some this approach is so irresponsible as to render Heidegger’s claims immediately irrelevant, but I propose to deal here only with the central philosophical claims of the later lectures because I think there is a great deal to be learned from Heidegger’s “confrontation” with Nietzsche. These claims are, as we have seen, the claim that Nietzsche does have a doctrine about the totality of all beings, that is, a metaphysics. That doctrine has two elements, which somehow say the same thing

but in different ways, the will to power (what beings are) and the eternal return of the same (how the beings are). Or more clearly, from the *Nachlaß*: “‘That everything recurs’ is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being” (*WP*, § 617). (Heidegger sometimes will list five basic tenets of Nietzschean “doctrine,” adding to these two the overman, nihilism, and the transvaluation of value, but they all rely on the two central elements.)

Further, Nietzsche’s work is said to be not only continuous with the post-Platonic tradition, but it reveals in his culmination of that tradition the fundamental continuity between the Platonic doctrine of εἶδος and Nietzsche’s own notion of value, and Nietzsche is said to fail to show that his transvaluation of values escapes nihilism. And finally, Nietzsche is especially complicit with *modern* metaphysics, which Heidegger understands as the metaphysics of subjectivity. As he says, “We must grasp Nietzsche’s philosophy as the metaphysics of subjectivity” (*N*, IV, 147). And when we do, we “leave Being itself unthought in its truth from the outset.... The pro-posing of Being as a value posited by the will to power is merely the final step of modern metaphysics, in which Being comes to appearance as will to power” (*N*, III, 234). This is quite a flurry of Heideggerian and Nietzschean terms. Obviously, we first need some orientation for Heidegger’s understanding of the problem of metaphysics. He clearly does not mean a priori knowledge of substance by pure reason. The problem of metaphysics is the problem of the meaning of Being qua being. What is that problem?

II.

This will have to be quite telegraphic, and the following is by no means a standard interpretation. In his 1927 lecture course, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger is unambiguous about what he considers *the* basic philosophical problem. “We assert now that being is the proper and sole theme of philosophy” (*BPP*, 11). Philosophy itself is said to be “the science of being” (*BPP*, 13). That Heidegger believes this is unambiguous. But the issue is made difficult because Heidegger is eager to qualify and to some extent marginalize the usual philosophical approaches; for example, very familiar semantic ways of addressing the problem: the various senses of the word “is.” (His word for such an approach is “logic,” or a “logical understanding” of the meaning of Being via analysis of the copula.) Neither the “is of existence” (“There are bears in those woods”), the “is of predication” (“The bears in those woods are black.”), nor the “is of identity” (“That black bear is the one who ate my strawberries.”) is adequate as a path to such an issue. They all, even the first, presuppose the more fundamental *meaning* of Being qua Being; all already assume that bears, woods, and colors are and are available, and he means this to be

understood as: in some meaningful way “manifest as what they are,” the familiar ways they make immediate sense to us in our encounters. Moreover, it is not just linguistic or semantic meaning that Heidegger excludes as his topic. That is why his issue is so hard to get a handle on. If the question is “the meaning of Being,” it would seem natural to begin by appreciating that *meaning* is what we understand in attending to another’s or a text’s words, or that meaning is what we come to understand when someone’s actions seem unintelligible to us until we learn what her ends are and her intentions to achieve it. Or meaning is understood in an intentionality context where it means determinate content, the meaning of something intended *as* something, such as consciousness being onto a determinate content. Then we say we understand the meaning of what she is saying or what she is doing, or we understand a determinate content of an intention. It would therefore seem natural to understand the question as asking what someone means to say when he says something exists or declares the meaning of some action, declares it to be what it is, *that* action or that someone is aware of that object as such-and-such, some determinate content is present to the mind and in that sense “is.” Because it is understood as just that such-and-such, it is meaningful, in the sense of intelligible. If we respond that Heidegger always considers such formulations as about “ontic” matters that leave the basic question unclarified, then again we might think he wants to ask “what it means to be at all” in this semantic or intentional sense of meaning. But he tells us that such formulations assume the answer to the question he is trying to pose, and so do not point to a way of addressing it. It assumes the question is about the criterion of existence, and that already means *whether* something is present-at-hand or present, as he will say, or as in “a content as such” is present to consciousness. Moreover, if Heidegger’s lifelong claim is that forgetting the question of the meaning of being is a catastrophic event in the history of mankind, that it leads to nihilism and a predatory, self-destructive technical manipulation of the earth, then it is extremely hard to see how one could claim that this has come about because we do not have an adequate account of what we mean when we say that anything is. The forgetting of the meaning of being is “the age of complete *meaninglessness*” (*N*, III, 174). So, any retrieval of the question must be a path towards a renewed meaningfulness of being. Accordingly, we must keep that in mind in any of Heidegger’s formulations about the “problem of Being.”

I suggest we take our bearings by passages like these in *Being and Time*: “Significance [*Bedeutsamkeit*] is that on the basis of which the world is disclosed as such” (*BT*, 182). The problem is not the criterion of being, but “the meaning of Being,” understood here as the problem of the meaningfulness of beings; that is, beings in the way they do or do not matter, *Bedeutsamkeit*. Their way of mattering is their original way of being available; they become salient in a familiarity permeated

by degrees of significance; it is how beings originally show up for us in our experience. That possibility of the question of the meaningfulness of Being cannot be raised in strict distinction from the meaningfulness of beings, but they are very different questions. There is a profound difference between the two regimes of meaningfulness, what Heidegger calls the ontological difference. He means that the source of any possible meaningfulness, familiarity, or availability in a historical world should not itself be addressed as if it were itself a being, a possible object of assertoric judgment, or a definable content. The world, the horizon of any possible significance, cannot be an object *in* a meaningful world. And our orientation within such a horizon, our being informed by such a source, is not a matter of intending an intentional object or cognition or a belief. In Heidegger's famous phrase, the availability of meaningful being is a matter of a pre-reflective "attunement" (*Stimmung*) to that meaningfulness. That any pre-reflective attunement to such original meaningfulness has been lost, forgotten, or at best deeply obscured, is how Heidegger wants to characterize our "destitute" time, a time of homelessness. The meaning of being, what has come first of all to matter to us, has been reduced to the mere perceivable presence of beings, a kind of barely meaningful form of intelligibility, and is a conception that is a distortion of our original attunement to mattering.

Heidegger claims that the dominant understanding of Being since antiquity and because of the Greek enlightenment is what is simply present, at hand, there, extended in the present, substance, and enduring through a sequence of presents. We have convinced ourselves that beings show up because what has come to matter to us after Plato must first of all be their intelligibility, their εἶδος and thereby, not coincidentally, their manipulability. Hence, the claim that Heidegger's question is "what it means to be" or "what it means to be a being" is far too elliptical and thus misleading. It sends us to questions of linguistic meaning or conceptual clarification and Heidegger never tires of denying that this is his interest. So he summarizes: "Let us provisionally define world as those beings which are in each case accessible and may be dealt with, accessible in such a way that dealing with such beings is possible or necessary for the kind of being pertaining to a particular being" (*FCM*, 196). And, "From this it follows that world properly means accessibility of beings as such. Yet this accessibility is grounded upon a manifestness of beings as such. Finally, it was revealed that this is not a manifestness of just any kind whatsoever, but rather manifestness of beings as such as a whole" (*FCM*, 284). For Heidegger, world is not the totality of what there is, as in Kant, or all that is the case, as in Wittgenstein. World is a necessarily presupposed condition for the possible available or meaningful accessibility of beings within such a world in the first place, a horizon of possible sense or meaningfulness always within which and in terms of which beings are encountered. This notion of availability as deep familiarity

implies a kind of immediacy in our original encounter with beings in the world, but not like the direct presence of intentional objects as in theories of a pure “given,” something that is an abstraction from what is immediately available. Anything available in this familiarity is already embedded in, understood in terms of, its historical world and is a matter of a pre-reflective attunement. This means that such a being is not first encountered as a thing and then interpreted, any more than a string of sounds is first heard as such and then interpreted as language. This implies a kind of immersion in the field of significances, what Heidegger, following the lead of Emil Lask in his early years, calls *Hingabe* or submission to the world, as well as in contexts he will describe as also, secondarily, permitting a possible reflexive attentiveness.

This also means that the very enterprise of a post-metaphysical thought must be rethought as well.

The concept is thus something like a determinative representation. The fundamental concepts of metaphysics and the concepts of philosophy, however, will evidently not be like this at all, if we recall that they themselves are anchored in our being gripped [*in einer Ergriffenheit gegründet*], in which we do not represent before us that which we conceptually comprehend, but maintain ourselves in a quite different comportment, one which is originally and fundamentally different from any scientific kind (*FCM*, 9).

All metaphysics too is oriented by a sense of mattering. Even in the much later (1951-2) and highly speculative context of *What is Called Thinking*, when Heidegger is trying to explain to his students the mysterious saying of Parmenides that it is “useful” or “needful” to say and think being, his translation insists that the meaning of thinking, νοεῖν, in the passage is “taking to heart” (*WT*, 203).

The task of metaphysics is said to be to “awaken” a fundamental attunement to the world (or to awaken us to the realization that we are always already attuned), to call to mind what might be disclosed to us in such a fundamental attunement: a way of being “onto,” receptive to, what matters and the possibility of mattering that is not an issue of belief or consciousness but, as in the musical sense of being tuned, on the right wave length, or appreciatively engaged in this field of what matters. At the philosophical level, this sense of “being gripped” is not being intrigued by conceptual paradoxes but by what Heidegger says, following Novalis, is the condition of all genuine philosophy, homesickness, an uncanniness at our dependence on a regime of mattering whose source is difficult to bring to light and understand, is always originally “hidden.” The ontologically significant states that disclose such meaningfulness as such are attunements like anxiety or boredom, where all such mattering in a sense *fails*, and so, in such a brutal contrast, the

fundamentality (and contingency) of meaningfulness and manifestness as such is itself salient. And Heidegger always insists that such a significance, degrees of mattering, cannot be understood as a subject projecting onto otherwise meaningless entities. There are no two steps in such *Bedeutsamkeit*, meaningfulness: an encounter with a mere object and then a subjective projection of value by an individual or community. There are not two steps because there is no such first step; Dasein is “always already” within the world of meaningfulness. It is the only way things show up for Dasein or bear on it. We can, however, take objects to be available in a way that conflicts with and covers up their actual availability. Scientism is like this. The insistence, thanks to the philosophical tradition, that things are manifest for Dasein primarily in their cognitive intelligibility is another distortion; that is, in their being rendered intelligible by “λόγος” (all of which is what is brought to that culmination in German Idealism in general and in Hegel’s *Science of Logic* in particular). Everyday thoughtlessness is another (*FCM*, 275ff.).

III.

This should help us get at least something of a handle on what Heidegger means by claiming that Nietzsche is still wedded to the metaphysical tradition. Heidegger cannot mean that he thinks Nietzsche is a doctrinal thinker who claims to know what the true world is in itself. He cites Nietzsche’s famous aphorism from *Twilight of the Idols*: “The true world is gone: which world is left? The illusory one, perhaps? ... But no! *we got rid of the illusory world along with the true one!* (Noon; moment of shortest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity: INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)” (*TI*, 171). Nietzsche of course does not mean that there is “nothing” left, just that there can be no sense to the notion of our world as “apparent” once the contrast with a “true” world is inapplicable. Heidegger though is quite interested in what Nietzsche does think is left, a world of pure becoming, or as he will put it, “chaos,” a characterization we will come to soon.

But since this will get fairly complicated, I should state now in a summary way the heart of Heidegger’s claim. It concerns an inference he thinks Nietzsche makes. Because, in contrast to our Platonic inheritance, there is no knowable order or constancy in the world of becoming that we can have any confidence in knowing, we are left with what would be a disordered, indeterminate unpredictable flux. But we could not get our bearings at all if we could not count on more order and regularity than this; life would not be livable without such reliable constancy, so the human subject must project or impose various constructed forms of order and constancy. Knowledge, Heidegger has Nietzsche saying, is the “schematization” of such chaos that arises out of our need to do so. (As many will know, for all the distinctness of

Heidegger's interpretation, this is actually a pretty standard picture of Nietzsche, especially in anglophone interpretations.) It is this projection and imposition that is attributable to the will to power. This is all complicit with the metaphysics of presence because first, Nietzsche accepts that what it would be for the meaning of being to be available as knowable is for there to be a way to know with certainty such order and constancy. There is not, though. So, and here the inference, he accepts again that such a meaning of being must be projected as a condition of life. This completes the modern metaphysical project that ties the intelligibility of the beings to the requirements of a self-reflective, autonomous subjectivity, a project begun by Descartes and completed by Kant and Hegel. It re-appears in Nietzsche as a *dichtende Vernunft*, a poetizing reason, tied to the body, all of which must be explained, but which still clearly assumes that the only possibly meaningful being is enduring or standing presence. Nietzsche just insists that it is the result of this *dichtende Vernunft*.

This is the surface meaning of the later lectures. But there are indications that sometimes Heidegger comes close to what I think is a deeper and more thoughtful interpretation of those passages he cites. For one thing, Heidegger misidentifies Nietzsche's primary interest in "becoming." Consider this somewhat Heideggerian passage from *Twilight of the Idols*:

...there is nothing that can judge, measure, compare or condemn our being, because that would mean judging, measuring, comparing and condemning the whole ... *But there is nothing outside the whole!* – That fact that nobody is held responsible anymore, that being is not the sort of thing that can be traced back to a *causa prima*, that the world is not unified as either a *sensorium* or a spirit, *only this can constitute the great liberation*, – only this begins to restore the *innocence* of becoming... (TI, 182).

The context here is ways in which the world might be said either to matter or to fail to measure up to what we think ought to matter, and Nietzsche's interest is in this notion of innocence, a way of mattering that is neither celebratory, nor condemning nor frighteningly chaotic, *nor up to us or some sort of result*. That would not be "innocence."

For another, in what would have to be called a Heideggerian reading, what Nietzsche has determined is that the traditional understanding of the meaningfulness of being as substance, as formal order, constancy and predictability, even if projected and imposed, cannot in fact provide any source of meaningfulness and cannot even properly account for how human beings can orient themselves "for life" from any such source of meaningfulness. It is the alternate picture of any such source and our relation to it that then emerges as the crucial question. Moreover, when

Zarathustra says, in the paragraph “On Self-Overcoming,” in addressing, with notable irony, “the wisest ones” that

Will to the thinkability of all being, that’s what *I* call your will!
You want to *make* all being thinkable, because you doubt, with proper suspicion, whether it is even thinkable.
But for you it shall behave and bend! Thus your will wants it (*TSZ*, 88).

He hardly identifies himself with this attempt and even calls this will itself, “the will to power,” “your danger” (*TSZ*, 88).

For the moment, we should also note in passing that Heidegger makes clear in his lecture on “Nietzsche’s Alleged Biologism” (*Nietzsches angeblicher Biologismus*) that he realizes that Nietzsche’s references to the body do not rest on a kind of amateur biologism or, as is common nowadays in the Nietzsche literature, a scientific naturalism. That is not his metaphysics. The question is what it means to rethink ourselves as body when freed from Platonic-Christian metaphysics, and the availability of body is also a question of it mattering in some new way. Also, when Heidegger approvingly cites Nietzsche’s claim that “trust in reason” does not prove the “truth” of reason’s knowledge and so that it would be dogmatic to assume that “reason is the measure of what is, what can be and what should be,” and that instead truth is understood as what is “useful for” or a “condition of” life, he also dismisses any crude pragmatism as an interpretation and he notes that everything depends on how we understand “life.” (In keeping with a more Heideggerian interpretation of Nietzsche, what would be needed for life is a source of meaningfulness that could support and sustain a lived-out commitment to a life, something that mere order and regularity could not.) This though begins Heidegger’s problem with Nietzsche because now he begins to present his interpretation of Nietzsche’s claim that this “life” is for Nietzsche the will to power. And this will lead to his understanding of Nietzsche’s alleged complicity with the modern metaphysics of subjectivity.

With these issues cleared away, we can now chart the course of Heidegger’s attempt to show that Nietzsche is the culmination of the metaphysical tradition and thereby “leaves Being unthought in its truth.” That course goes through Nietzsche’s notions of truth, life, chaos, becoming, the will to power and so to the claim that “the will to power in its most profound essence is nothing other than the permanentizing of Becoming into presence” (*N*, III, 156).

On the issue of truth, Heidegger focuses on how he understands Nietzsche’s claim that “Truth is in its essence an estimation of value” (*N*, III, 63). He takes this to mean that such an estimation is always oriented from “what is necessary for life.” As we have seen, Heidegger does not attribute to Nietzsche a crude, pragmatic or

instrumentalist notion of truth, but he does suggest that such a condition involves a need for some reassuring sense of constancy in the mere presence of beings, that Nietzsche falls back on what we have inherited from ancient metaphysics. For example:

To be able to be as life, life needs the constant fixity of a “belief,” but this “belief” calls for holding something to be constant and fixed, taking something as “in being.” Since life posits values, yet is at the same time concerned about its own securing of permanence, a valuation must belong to life in which it takes something as constant and fixed; that is, as in being; that is, as true (*N*, III, 62 – 63).

And Heidegger accepts what he takes to be Nietzsche’s claim that “Therefore what is necessary is that something must be held to be true – *not* that something *is* true” (*WP*, § 507). Heidegger accepts the paradoxical nature of this claim, that “truth must exist, but what is true about this truth does not need to be true” (*N*, III, 55). He realizes that Nietzsche does not deny that there is still a difference between true and false claims, but he seems to suggest that what counts as true in our ontological assumptions is determined by our need for “holding something constant and fixed.” (Heidegger does not seem aware of this passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*: “No one would consider a doctrine to be true just because it makes people happy or virtuous ... Happiness and virtue are not arguments” (*BGE*, 37). Neither, one could infer, are security and constancy.)

Heidegger’s is already a tendentious reading and is the beginning of the problem with his exclusive use of the *Nachlaß*. For one thing, that text does not allow one to be clear about the “voice” we hear in the text. Given that there is no way, in the conventional sense, to reassure ourselves that there *is* such constancy in existence, and not just that we need to believe there is, and given that Heidegger will soon claim that Nietzsche holds that there is in fact *no* such constancy that we can count on, it is not at all clear that Nietzsche himself is subscribing to this indifference to the truth of such constancy, this mere need for it. It would be very hard indeed for Nietzsche himself or for anyone who has read Nietzsche to hold both that there is no such constancy and that nevertheless he will believe it anyway because one needs to. In fact, the situation is even more complicated because Heidegger distinguishes between the disorder that requires that knowing be understood as the “schematizing of chaos in accordance with practical need” where, on the one hand, such chaos is understood as the “inexhaustible, urgent and unmastered abundance and self-creation” and, very much on the other hand, subjects who find themselves “in the illusion of the tangled and confused as encountered by the individual living beings” (*N*, III, 82). Abundance and self-creation (and one could recall, innocence) is one thing;

the *illusion* of a world as chaotic, as tangled and confused, is another. This implies that Nietzsche knows that the experience that prompts a need for the schematization of chaos is a need most people experience in their anxious, illusory confusion. This then means that he attributes this need and its fulfillment to what most human beings generally subscribe to, presumably while still finding a way to reassure themselves in some sort of self-deceit that what they believe is true.

Hence the problem of voice: about whom, to whom, in what context, to what purpose and in whose name Nietzsche was imagining when he wrote the notes. The rhetorical complexity of such an issue in his published writings does not, I assume, need to be demonstrated. Perhaps it is enough to cite what he writes in § 289 toward the end of *Beyond Good and Evil*:

The hermit does not believe that a philosopher – given that a philosopher was always a hermit first – has ever expressed his actual and final opinions in books: don't people write books precisely to keep what they hide to themselves? ... Every philosophy *conceals* a philosophy too: every opinion is also a hiding place, every word is also a mask (*BGE*, 173).

For another thing, “truth is in its essence an estimation of value” need not at all mean that Nietzsche believes that we simply take to be true whatever we value, and that it is a good and necessary thing that we do. As noted earlier, we cannot believe something to be true while we know that we are believing it because we think it is good for us, life-enhancing, to believe it is true. On the one hand, he certainly means that the world in which things show up for us as what they “primordially” are is a world of significance, importance, or “value.” On the other hand, in line with what Nietzsche had been saying throughout his creative period, truth always carries with it an estimation of value, but fundamentally an estimation of its own value, that it is the highest value, the one thing that matters most. But life, things mattering to us in a way that can sustain a lived commitment to projects both individual and collective, does not require, certainly not primordially, true judgments about the beings. This is so because things that come to matter do not come to matter because we believe that reason shows us that they ought in truth to matter, at least not unless reason has somehow itself come to matter that much, and it is hard to see that any such use of reason has ever succeeded. This means that there is a way to read Nietzsche in a more Heideggerian vein, as suggested above. That is, what we need to understand in Nietzsche is what we need to understand in Heidegger: sources of *Bedeutsamkeit*, significance, mattering. In that context, Nietzsche would be claiming something similar to the early Heidegger: that knowing (and so a drive for truth or certainty) has come to matter in a way that elevates a secondary or “founded” phenomenon to

a prominence and a need which allows it to obscure a more primordial level of mattering and a different way of being “onto” such significances. Likewise, Nietzsche’s metaphysics would in this sense be a fundamental ontology, an account of the primordially in the availability of being of *Bedeutsamkeit*, mattering, significance, or what Nietzsche calls value, *Wert*.

This would open up a different and ironically more Heideggerian way to read the passages Heidegger cites. So when Heidegger summarizes his claim this way:

The metaphysics of will to power – and it alone – is rightly and necessarily a value thinking. In reckoning with values and in estimating according to relations of value, will to power reckons with itself.... The metaphysics of will to power interprets all the fundamental metaphysical positions that precede it in the light of valuative thought. Every metaphysical dispute proves to be a decision concerning the hierarchy of values (*N*, III, 202).

This could be read in a way different from the subjectivism Heidegger wants to attribute to Nietzsche. That being is tied to value and value thinking could be tied to Heidegger’s own notion of *Bedeutsamkeit*, significance, mattering. Being is available primordially in its mattering, significance. And available through value thinking could mean a “thinking” that amounts to an attunement to such mattering. That this should all be understood as a manifestation of the will to power need not mean that human beings, least of all individual human beings, willfully impose whatever order on the flux of becoming that they need to in order to be able to live, but that human being is always thrown into a horizon of possible meaningfulness already historically destined, a horizon and destiny that could be said to have power over us, such that we are subjected to it, not the subjects of it. That would put Nietzsche’s views more in line with what Heidegger had claimed in *Being and Time*. “Basically, all ontology ... remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not already first clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task” (*BT*, 31).

In his earlier 1936-7 Nietzsche lectures Heidegger had characterized the “decisive question” at the end of Western philosophy as “the question about the meaning of Being, not only about the Being of beings”; and, he goes on, “‘meaning’ [*Sinn*] is thereby delimited in its concept as that whence and on the basis of which Being in general as such can be revealed and come into truth [*in die Wahrheit kommen*]” (*N*, I, 26). But he does not try to locate Nietzsche within this understanding of being and locates him instead in the Cartesian subjective tradition, a tradition guilty of having forgotten this question of possible meaningfulness. And he does not note that Nietzschean nihilism, on such a reading, would be the collapse of such mattering, or in Heidegger’s terms

the collapse of any attunement to value, something that can occur wholly contingently. That God has died, not been refuted or abandoned, is one indication of this *kind* of collapse. Or, when he writes: “What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devalue themselves. The aim is lacking; ‘why?’ finds no answer” (*WP*, § 2), and we ask what it could possibly mean to say that values *devalue themselves*, we are pushed towards Heidegger’s own notion of their having lost their grip, having simply ceased to matter. And Heidegger certainly does not note that everything Heidegger cites in Nietzsche about projecting, value, will, humanization of Being and so forth has, according to Nietzsche, failed, collapsed into nihilism the same way Heidegger characterizes the experience of nihilism in attunements like despair, or anxiety or boredom.

[T]he totality of involvements [*Bewandtnisganzheit*] of the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand discovered within the world is, as such, of no consequence [*ohne Belang*]; it collapses into itself; the world has the character of completely lacking significance [*Die Welt hat den Charakter völliger Unbedeutsamkeit*] (*BT*, 231).

And there are clear links between Nietzsche on power and Heidegger on what he calls prevailing, *walten*. Heidegger says that the most original and insightful understanding of Being was φύσις, the Greek word often translated as nature. “φύσις is Being itself, by virtue of which beings first become and remain observable” (*IM*, 15). And this is actually the way Heidegger invokes his own notion of a kind of power. “We shall now translate φύσις more clearly and closer to the originally intended sense not so much by growth, but by the ‘self-forming prevailing of beings as a whole’ [*sich selbst bildenen Walten des Seienden im Ganzen*]” (*FCM*, 25).

And, “φύσις means this whole prevailing that prevails through man himself, a prevailing that he does not have power over, but which precisely prevails through and around him – him, man, who has always already spoken out about this” (*FCM*, 26). This would give us a much different reading of a passage Heidegger quotes and then glosses.

To stamp Becoming with the character of Being – that is the supreme will to power (*WP*, § 617).

We ask: Why is this the supreme will to power? The answer is, because will to power in its most profound essence is nothing other than the permanentizing of Becoming into presence (*N*, III, 156).

On the Heideggerian notion of prevailing or ruling, *walten*, the note Heidegger quotes could be read as endorsing the ontological difference, that the meaning of the beings we encounter depends on, always already assumes, the possible meaningfulness of Being as such, that the latter prevails over the former, into which we are thrown. And Heidegger's gloss could be referring to the inherited metaphysics of presence that Nietzsche himself need not be affirming as much as indicating its supreme "power" for us now (catastrophically). And this also need have nothing to do with what Heidegger describes as "this ruthless and extreme anthropomorphizing of the world that tears apart the last illusions of the fundamental metaphysical position; it takes the positing of man as *subiectum* seriously" (*N*, III, 155), any more than Heidegger's own account the mutual implicability of the meaningfulness of Being and a being appropriately open to such meaningfulness is an anthropomorphizing of Being.

This would all send us in another interpretive direction than the apotheosis of subjectivism, as when Heidegger cites this passage from "The Way of the Creator" from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "Can you give yourself your own evil and your own good and proclaim your own will over yourself as a law? Can you be your own judge and avenger of your law?" (*TSZ*, 46). His question could be more subtle than "can you make up whatever distinction you like between good and evil," but rather "can you own up to your own stake in what aspects of that distinction have simply come to matter to you, not avoid your commitment by appealing to a moral law or notion of virtue you take yourself to be bound by?" Or "can you authentically or resolutely own up to what has come to matter as your own and can you bear the contingency of mattering?"

The reference to Zarathustra suggests a final way to indicate what Heidegger has missed, missed, in effect, *himself in Nietzsche*. Consider some of the oft quoted aphorisms from that strange book. "The overman is the meaning of the earth [*der Sinn der Erde*]" (*TSZ*, 6). That is, he is a new source of meaningfulness, not that overman should be understood as some new earthly, corporeal being. This task, of a new meaning of the earth is mentioned often throughout the first two parts on Zarathustra's journey. And so do his early pronouncements about the problem we face: "Humanity still has no goal.... if humanity still lacks a goal, does it not also still lack – humanity itself?" (*TSZ*, 44). If we start thinking of Nietzsche in this way, other famous passages look different as well. For example, "Now it is beginning to dawn on maybe five or six brains that physics too is only an interpretation and arrangement of the world (according to ourselves! if I may say so) and *not* an explanation of the world" (*BGE*, 15). This is regularly taken to mean that Nietzsche thinks the science of physics is more like a poem than a statement of facts, that in reality there "are no" electrons and photons, no Newtonian laws of mechanics, that

everything putatively factually true is really just “interpretation all the way down.” But if the context throughout Nietzsche is the problem of meaningfulness, then the interpretation Nietzsche notes would be an interpretation of the importance, the primordiality of physics, our interpretation of the ways and whys of its mattering as much as it has come to. Such a reading resonates much more than the traditional one with the end of that paragraph.

“Where man has nothing more to see and grasp, he has nothing more to do” – this imperative is certainly different from the Platonic one, but for a sturdy, industrious race of machinists and bridge-builders of the future, people with *tough* work to do, it just might be the right imperative for the job (*BGE*, 16).

Nietzsche is clearly interested in what the dominance of a physicalist view of the world means, why it matters so much for such a race.

Finally, if we ask what follows if we read Nietzsche this way – and admittedly, this can all serve only as a mere suggestion at this point – we would get a Nietzsche recommending something quite different than the proponent of the self-assertive, ultimately predatory subjectivity that emerges from Heidegger’s later Nietzsche lectures. There is no better summation of this Heideggerian Nietzsche than this passage from *Twilight of the Idols*:

Learning to *see* – habituating the eye to repose, to patience, to letting things come to it; learning to defer judgement, to investigate and comprehend the individual in all its aspects. This is the first schooling in spirituality: *not* to react immediately to a stimulus, but to have the restraining, stock-taking instincts in one’s control. Learning to *see*, as I understand it, is almost what is called in unphilosophical language strong will-power [*starken Willen*]: the essence of it is precisely *not* to ‘will,’ the *ability* to defer decision. All unspirituality, all vulgarity, is due to the incapacity to resist a stimulus – one *has* to react, one obeys a stimulus. In many instances, such a compulsion is already morbidity, decline, a symptom of exhaustion.... To stand with all doors open, to prostrate oneself submissively before every petty fact, to be ever itching to mingle with, *plunge into* other people and other things, in short our celebrated modern “objectivity,” is bad taste, is ignoble *par excellence* (*TI*, 64 – 65).

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