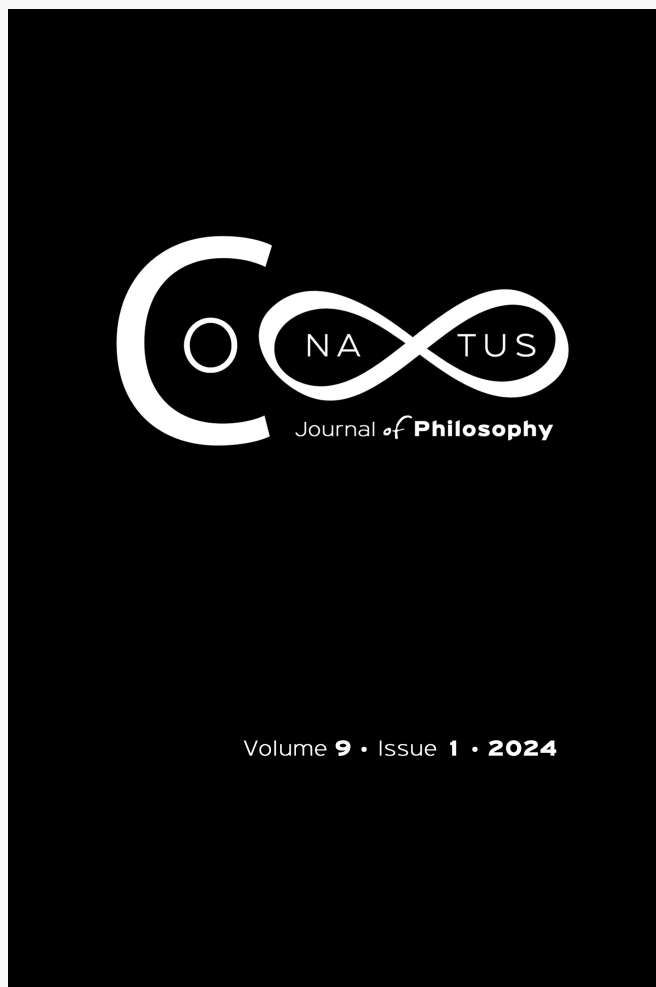


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Understanding the Concept of Being in general: From Being and Time back to Young Heidegger

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Abstract

This paper exhibits a way of understanding Heidegger's concept of being in general [Sein überhaupt] – the central aim of Being and Time's questioning – by getting insight into his early years. I argue that the term "being" [Sein] as Heidegger understands it in the early 1920s describes the meaningful relation between humans and the things of their surrounding world which is given to us as a fact. I maintain that Sein überhaupt refers to this fact, i.e., the fact that every particular being is always with a certain meaning for us. I come to this conclusion by exploring (1) Heidegger's early analysis of Umwelterlebnis, (2) his early description of medieval transcendentia, (3) his critique of formalization and the introduction of formal indication. Lastly, (4) I observe the way Heidegger introduces the concepts of Sein and Sein überhaupt pointing to the simple fact of beings' being in meaningful relation to us.

Keywords: *Heidegger; being in general; Freiburg courses; facticity; formal indication; that-character*

I. Introduction

A major problem in studying Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (henceforth SZ)¹ is related to the difficulty in understanding the treatise's central concept, that of *being in general* [Sein überhaupt]. This has to do mainly with the fact that SZ fails to fulfill its announced purpose, that is to conclude to an answer over the meaning of being in general. However, for us today it is no less than absurd to believe that Heidegger did not have during the writing of the treatise any specific orientation – if not a specific answer – regarding his central question.² The goal of this paper is to gain a better understanding of SZ's central concept, the concept of being in general, by going back to Heidegger's first years – to his *Habilitationsschrift* and his early Freiburg courses.³

This study moves in the same direction with works published in recent years which explore the *big picture* of Heidegger's thought without avoiding to examine the *Sache* of his philosophy, namely *being* [Sein] and the way Heidegger understands it.⁴ The motivation behind this effort has

¹ I make references to the German pagination of Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 19. Auflage (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006), hereafter cited as SZ, followed by the pagination of Joan Stambaugh's English translation: Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996). In general, I follow Stambaugh's translating suggestions unless it is otherwise indicated. In two or three points I have chosen Macquarrie's and Robinson's suggestions, but I keep referring to the above edition's pagination. Following Stambaugh, I write *being* [Sein] with a small "b," but I do not use the hyphen for the term "Dasein" to remain closer to the original text.

² I argue, straight from the beginning, that Heidegger should *necessarily* have a preliminary idea about the meaning of being in order for him to formulate the *Seinsfrage*. For two reasons. One, because: "As a seeking, questioning needs prior guidance from what it seeks." In the case of *Seinsfrage*, Heidegger states it explicitly: "The meaning of being must therefore already be available to us in a certain way." See SZ, S.5, p. 4. Two, Heidegger points out that we need a "preliminary look at being" not only in questioning about *Sein* but also in each case of understanding a being [Seiendes]. So, it is necessary something like a "guiding look at being [Sein]" for the understanding of *Dasein* in its being – something that is required in SZ in order for the *Seinsfrage* to be appropriately formulated. See SZ, S.8, p. 6.

³ There is a first period of very important scholarly works about *Seinsfrage* which focus mainly on early Heidegger and the period of preparation of SZ. See, for example, Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time"* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993), esp. 421-451; John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger – Rumor of the Hidden King* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), esp. 237-294; Herman Philipse, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), esp. 15-66; Steven Galt Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning: Paths Toward Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2001), esp. 115-128 and 203-221.

⁴ There is also a second, more recent, period of studies that evaluate Heidegger's overall thought. See Thomas Sheehan, "What, after all, was Heidegger about?" *Continental Philosophy Review* 47, no. 3-4 (2014): 249-274; Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift* (London and New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), esp. xi-28 and 111-185;

to do, firstly, with a need to reread Heidegger from scratch and, secondly, with a feeling that many studies on Heidegger's thought consider the concept of being as self-evident, taking its meaning for granted without clarifying it. However, isn't this self-evidence what we are supposed to question by studying Heidegger?

In what follows I argue that the concept of being in general refers to the *fact that it is, that everything is and always is* with a certain meaning for us. I come to this conclusion by analyzing Heidegger's notion of facticity and his fundamental methodological contribution, namely, formal indication.

I begin in section (2) by showing that the question about the meaning of being in general must necessarily be posed in what Heidegger calls *originary field* – a particular logical field circumscribed by the meaningful relation which shows itself as a fact, that is circumscribed by a sort of facticity of meaning. In section (3) I attempt to understand *Sein* with the help of formal-*transcendental* concepts of Scholastic philosophy. After examining in section (4) why formality is inappropriate, according to Heidegger, for a philosophy that needs to turn its gaze to the originary field of facticity, I see how he introduces formal indication. The main features that differentiate formal indications from purely formal concepts lead us to the concept of being – and its meaning – which works as the formal part of formally indicative concepts that aim at understanding *beings* [Seiende] just as they *are*, i.e., factically. In section (5) I find the interpretation of being as *fact* – as the fact of the meaningful relation – confirmed in two points of Heidegger's Freiburg courses and I stress that the concept of being in general is later introduced by pointing to the same direction. Being's strange *universality*, then, appears to refer to this *fact* itself, which is always singularizable in the meaning of every particular *being* [Seiendes] and its corresponding understanding performed by us.

II. The question and the field – facticity and necessity

The first step on the path to understanding being in general is to get an insight into the field where the question about the meaning of being is posed. I stress that this field works as a necessary starting point for any theoretical (or hermeneutic) consideration – including the *Seinsfrage* – and that its fundamental trait is the *facticity of meaning*.

Babette Babich, "The 'New' Heidegger," in *Heidegger in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Tziouvanis Georgakis and Paul Ennis, (Frankfurt am Main: Springer, 2015), 167-187; Lee Braver, ed., *Division III of Heidegger's Being and Time: The Unanswered Question of Being* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), esp. 57-82. And an excellent connection between the above two periods that we find in Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas, eds., *Transcendental Heidegger* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

Heidegger at the beginning of SZ poses the question about the meaning of being in general as a sort of “laying bare and exhibiting the ground” [aufweisende Grund-Freilegung], juxtaposing it to a “grounding by deduction” [ableitende Begründung] which belongs to an “investigation of principles.”⁵ To better understand the particular features of this questioning, let us go back to his course of 1919 – the so-called *Kriegsnotsemester* (hereafter KNS) course – where Heidegger juxtaposed for the very first time the above two ways of investigation.⁶ On the one side, then, it was the Neo-Kantian, axiomatic view of philosophy, according to which philosophy was the science of origins of knowledge – of axioms – the so-called *originary science* [Urwissenschaft].⁷ On the other side, it was Heidegger’s view of philosophy as *Urwissenschaft* which – as he accurately formulated in his course of WS 1919/20 – “can start [ausgehen] from any point in life and begin [ansetzen] there with the method of origin-understanding.”⁸ This origin, however, should not be thought of as “an ultimate and simple principle, an axiom from which everything should be derived.” Properly understood, the origin – which is here considered by Heidegger precisely as a *starting point* – can be something completely different from the axioms, albeit “nothing mystical, mythical.”⁹ How are we to understand this notion?

In the KNS-course, Heidegger gives us a rather rich explanation of the way that the distinction between the above two philosophical views is to be drawn. Through this, he succeeds a radical reinterpretation of the concept of origin and ground, such that a new, particular, and more fundamental field of investigation is discovered, the field of the *originary* ground, the field of *Ur-sprung*. Two things can be said about this field. First, as *originary* ground it is the *necessary* point of departure for any theoretical attempt. And second, as a field of investi-

⁵ SZ, S.8, p. 6.

⁶ I refer here to Martin Heidegger, *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie; Gesamtausgabe Band 56/57*, ed. Bern Heimbüchel (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1987); it was translated by Ted Sadler as *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2000). Hereafter – other than their first appearance – I will be referring to Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe* volumes by “GA.” followed by the volume number and pagination. It will be accompanied – if not otherwise indicated – by a reference to the English edition’s pagination.

⁷ GA.56/57, S.31, p. 26. I prefer the term “originary science” to “primordial science” that appears in the English edition.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie (WS 1919/20); Gesamtausgabe Band 58*, ed. Hans-Helmuth Gander (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1992), S.239. All translations of this volume are mine. This part of the course is from Oskar Becker’s transcript.

⁹ GA.58, S.26.

gation it does not have itself a theoretical character but a *factual* one. Let us start from the second.¹⁰

Heidegger's argument begins with an important distinction between two kinds of lived experiences – i.e., the theoretical *Erlebnis* and the *Umwelterlebnis*, the lived experience of the surrounding world.¹¹ By analyzing in a phenomenological way the two lived experiences, he manages to draw a distinction between two separate fields of investigation.¹² In the first kind of *Erlebnis* – the one that has to do with theoretical questions like: “Is there something?” [Gibt es etwas?] – Heidegger discovers a certain subjective act, the act of *Setzen*, of positing. When I ask such questions, he says, “I comport myself by positing something, indeed *anything whatsoever* [etwas überhaupt], before me as questionable.”¹³

To this kind of questioning comportment, Heidegger juxtaposes one that has to do with the lived experience of the surrounding world, the *Umwelterlebnis* – a sort of ordinary experience that we can have in relation to our surrounding world and the things we encounter in it. Analyzing it phenomenologically, he discovers something very important that goes against the all-encompassing process of theoretization. When I move in my surrounding world – Heidegger appears to say –, I come across specific things like a chair, a table, or a bed; things that I can use.¹⁴ In my surroundings, I see specific, colored things in a certain practical relation to me and not something like colored surfaces cut at right angles. I perceive specific, meaningful things as wholes and not some parts that belong to my psychic process, or something like a multitude of sense *data*.¹⁵

¹⁰ Undoubtedly the most important contribution to the analysis of the KNS-course has been made through the years by Theodore Kisiel. See above all Theodore Kisiel, “Kriegsnotsemester 1919: Heidegger's Hermeneutic Breakthrough,” in *The Question of Hermeneutics*, ed. Timothy Stapleton, 155-208 (Dordrecht: Springer, 1994). For an equally excellent analysis see also Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann, *Hermeneutics and Reflection: Heidegger and Husserl on the Concept of Phenomenology* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013), esp. 16-63. I choose to stress here the consequences of a necessary point of departure.

¹¹ I choose to translate the German term “*Umwelterlebnis*” as “lived experience of the surrounding world” instead of the term “environmental experience” that appears in the English edition.

¹² As it will be clear soon, the two separate fields of investigation correspond to two different logical fields, the field of posits and the field of facticity.

¹³ GA.56/57, S.66, p. 53. The emphasis here is mine. I prefer the term “positing” for “setzend” rather than “setting.”

¹⁴ In GA.56/57, S.70-71, pp. 56-57, Heidegger describes the lived experience of someone who enters the lecture-room and sees the lecturer.

¹⁵ GA.56/57, S.85, pp. 66-67.

Through Heidegger's analysis of the *Umwelterlebnis*, is revealed something extremely important. It is revealed that what is primary is the *meaningful* – *das Bedeutsame* –, namely, things with a certain meaning for us. “The meaningful,” says Heidegger, “is the primary [das Primäre], it is given to me immediately, without any detour of thought [gedanklicher Umweg] through something as a thing apprehension [Sacherfassen].”¹⁶ In other words, things in our surrounding world do not appear to us as meaningful after a theoretical explanation or description. On the contrary, things have *always already* a concrete significance, a certain meaning within our world. “Living in a surrounding world,” Heidegger says in a rather emblematic phrase, “it signifies to me everywhere and always, everything is mundane, ‘it worlds’ [es weltet].”¹⁷

We come across a revolutionary point here. *All of us always* live in a world that surrounds us. In this world, things always have a certain meaning for us, they appear to us together with their meaning.¹⁸ The chair in my room as the one that I can sit on, the table as the place where I can sit and write. This is something, however, that does not seem to have a theoretical character at all. Rather, if we think about it, it looks like an undeniable *fact*; a fact from which we find ourselves obliged to begin our theoretical considerations.¹⁹ We may say that the meaning we encounter in our surrounding world is not something theoretical, but something factual – *faktisch*. We have a sort of *meaningful relation* with the world and the things that surround us, which is given to us as an undeniable fact. In our *Umwelt* there is a kind of *facticity of meaning*.

Let us come now to the first point from above, that of necessity. Heidegger discovers in the lived experience of theoretical attitude the element of “deprivation of life” [Ent-lebung]. As he observes, in the *Umwelterlebnis* there is always an “I” that takes part in. The table is too high for me to write, the room is too dark for me to read, etc.²⁰ On the

¹⁶ GA.56/57, S.73, p. 58. I choose to translate “gedanklicher Umweg” as “detour of thought” instead of “mental detour.”

¹⁷ GA.56/57, S.73, p. 58.

¹⁸ Heidegger, to better explain the meaning of this “always,” describes the hypothetical example of a foreigner from Senegal. See GA.56/57, S.71-72, pp. 57-58. This “always” of the *fact* of meaning is strongly connected with the ‘always already’ of SZ, the so-called “perfect a-priori.” See SZ, S.85, p. 79.

¹⁹ It does not help us to understand Heidegger's project if we regard this fact as a sort of primacy of practice instead of theory. I argue that we should rather stay to the same *fact*. In the lecture course of WS 1919/20 Heidegger states it clearly: “Ausgangspunkt der Philosophie: das faktische Leben als Faktum.” See GA.58, S. 162.

²⁰ GA.56/57, S.69, p. 56. This is why Heidegger calls the immediate experience of the surround-

contrary, in the experience of the theoretical question, “Is there something?” there is a certain absence of the “I.”²¹ What we set as questionable, we set it as something that does not affect us immediately. Heidegger describes this experience as something that begins and ends, like a “process” that passes by before us, like a *Vor-gang*.²²

But there is a very specific – let us provisionally say – temporal trick here. This deprivation that Heidegger describes is possible only because it necessarily *presupposes* the immediate experience of the surrounding world.²³ As he comments regarding this *priority*: “the experience of the surrounding world is, from the point of view of epistemology and without further examination, *itself a presupposition* [Voraussetzung].”²⁴

The notion of presupposition is central here and Heidegger seeks to broaden its meaning. He underlines that when we generally speak of “presupposition,” this “pre-” does not have the sense of a spatial or temporal priority, but rather, it “has something to do with ordering, a ‘pre-’ within an order of positions [Stellen], laws and posits [Setzungen].”²⁵ This “pre-” refers to a relation of logical ordering, to “a relation of grounding and logical ground-laying: *if this is valid, so is that*.”²⁶

We find ourselves at a key point now. If, on the one hand, living in the surrounding world is a logical *presupposition* for every moment of theorizing, on the other hand, it is clear that in the same lived experience of the surrounding world there is “no *theoretical positing* at all.” But if there is no positing, we cannot properly speak about a presupposition. As Heidegger formulates it: “presupposition and presuppositionlessness [Voraussetzungslosigkeit] have any meaning only in the theoretical.”²⁷

ing world as an “event of appropriation” [Er-eignis], as something “meaningful” [Bedeutung-shaftes], as something “not thing-like” [nicht sach-artig]. See also GA.56/57, S.75, p. 60 and S.78, p. 62. The concept of *Ereignis*, as it appears here, is the beginning of a line that connects – as very plausibly has shown van Buren in van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, 270-294 – early Heidegger’s philosophical observations with his later thought. I believe that the point I make here could play the role of the central column for such bridging.

²¹ GA.56/57, S.68, p. 55.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ I use the verb “presuppose” in a provisional way here. Heidegger below criticizes the same notion of “presupposition” of being overall epistemological and belonging to the theoretical sphere.

²⁴ GA.56/57, S.93, p. 72.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ GA.56/57, S.93, p. 73. I prefer here the term “grounding” for “Begründung” rather than “founding.” The text continues: “Wenn das gilt, *gilt* jenes. Statt dieser hypothetischen Grundlegung ist auch eine *kategorische* möglich: ein ‘*so ist es*.’” This is the reason why I make reference to different *logical* fields. See also below notes 28-29.

²⁷ GA.56/57, S.94, p. 73.

We stumble upon something important. The originarity [Ursprünglichkeit] of the *Umwelterlebnis* has to do with a certain *priority* over the theoretical attitude. It is a sort of *pure* logical priority. This originarity, in a way, erases the term “presupposition,” as it exceeds the sphere of the theoretical where the latter belongs to. This exceeding has also a purely logical character, in the sense that here we are talking about a quite different logical field or “sphere” [Sphäre].²⁸ It seems that the *Umwelterlebnis* belongs to a *logical* sphere that has certain features which differ from the theoretical sphere, the “sphere of posits.”²⁹ And this is the reason why Heidegger distinguishes between two different kinds of exhibiting the ground: a logico-deductive “hypothetical” ground-laying of the type “if this is valid, so is that,” and another, factual or “categorical” one, which has to do with “a ‘so it is’ [so ist es].”³⁰ These two ways of exhibiting the ground correspond to the two different types of investigation that we saw Heidegger referring to in the first pages of SZ.³¹

Now, we can put everything together. We find in our lived experience of the surrounding world a certain *facticity of meaning* since we encounter the surrounding world and the things around us as having *always already* a certain meaning. Their meaning is given to us as a fact. And this has also a certain necessity. There is no posit out of nothing, a *creatio ex nihilo* of the meanings. On the contrary, there is a certain *facticity of meaning* in our living experience, and this is from where we are obliged to start in any theoretical or hermeneutic attempt, including the *Seinsfrage*.³² For our interpretation, this undeniable *fact*, this “so it is” of the surrounding world, circumscribes the special logical field where the *Umwelterlebnis* belongs to, the one that Heidegger in the lecture course of WS 1919/20 called for the first time “factual life” [faktisches Leben].³³ As he mentioned there: “I live always factually caught up in meaning.”³⁴

²⁸ In GA.56/57, S.89, p. 69. Heidegger makes reference here to an “atheoretische Sphäre.” Elsewhere he characterized this field as “Ursphäre.” See GA.56/57, S.60-61, p. 47.

²⁹ GA.56/57, S.94, p. 73. “Nur wenn ich mich überhaupt in der Sphäre von Setzungen bewege, hat die Rede von Voraussetzungen einen möglichen Sinn.”

³⁰ See above note 26.

³¹ SZ, S.8, p. 6.

³² It is not by chance that the whole project of SZ begins from the *fact* of *Seinverständnis*. See SZ, S.15, p. 12, “Die Seinsfrage ist dann aber nichts anderes als die Radikalisierung [...] des vorontologischen Seinsverständnisses.” And SZ, S.5, p. 4, “Dieses durchschnittliche und vage Seinsverständnis ist ein Faktum.”

³³ See GA.58, S.41-64, Division I, Chapter 2. Heidegger introduced his particular understanding of – the, till then, neo-Kantian term – “Faktizität” in SS 1920. See also below notes 77 and 92.

³⁴ GA.58, S.104. “Ich lebe faktisch immer *bedeutsamkeitsgefangen*.”

But if we are obliged to start any theoretical or hermeneutic attempt from this originary field of facticity, then *being* [Sein] as concept must be somehow related to this field. In order to understand the special features of this relation let us turn to medieval transcendental concepts to see how they connect with this originary field.

III. Understanding *being* as *transcendens*

Heidegger in SZ characterizes *being* [Sein] as the “*transcendens schlechthin*,”³⁵ giving us a clue to look in the direction of medieval transcendental concepts, the so-called *transcendentia*,³⁶ to find an answer about being’s peculiar *universality*. These concepts – namely *ens*, *unum*, and *verum* – show a completely formal character; they are the most formal predicates of beings. Thus, in a way, they pertain [betreffen] to every being as far as its form is concerned. But to pertain to every being is also one of the basic requirements for *being* [Sein], according to SZ’s introduction.³⁷ Let us briefly see how these formal concepts connect with the field of facticity and how could *being* [Sein] be related to them.

According to Heidegger’s phenomenological description, these concepts can be thought of as having emerged from our meaningful relation to the things of the surrounding world [Umwelt], from what he would later describe as the originary field of facticity. In what follows, I summarize his description aiming to gain a phenomenological insight into their formation as concepts.

Everything that is around us, precisely as something that is outside –let us say– of our body, is “Something” [Etwas] that stands “opposite us” [gegenüber], is an “object” [Gegenstand]. Everything – no matter what and how it is, if it is big or small, red or blue – is primarily an object. According to Heidegger’s interpretation, “every object in general [überhaupt] is [...] an *ens*,” and *ens* refers to every object. *Ens* is the formal concept that corresponds to the above phrase: *Something is an object*.³⁸ No matter what it is or how it is, the thing that appears *outside* us is an object. It can be said that the formal character of the concept shows a certain indifference against the specific “what” and “how.”

³⁵ SZ, S.38, pp. 33-34.

³⁶ Needless to say, “*transcendens*” is the singular form of the term “*transcendentia*.”

³⁷ See SZ, S.38, p. 33. “Das Sein als Grundthema der Philosophie ist keine Gattung eines Seienden, und doch betrifft es jedes Seiende.”

³⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften (1912–1916): Gesamtausgabe Band 1*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1978), S.214. All translations of this volume are mine.

In this way, before any categorial determination³⁹ – i.e., at the outset for the phenomenological gaze – the objectual [das Gegenständliche] is given as a Something [ein Etwas]. We find here a completely formal category. The *ens* is a *maxime scibile*, it is the one which is known “primordially” [uranfänglich], and “characterizes the originary element [Urelement] of the objectual, i.e., the objecthood [die Gegenständlichkeit].”⁴⁰ *Ens* is not an object; as *Urelement*, it represents the formal character of our relation with the objects, their *being-object*. *Ens* is a completely formal concept that reflects the mere *fact that* there is something that stands there opposite us, a *Gegen-stand*. *Being* [Sein], as the *transcendens schlechthin*, must also in a way have this originary character.

Now, in the same way – i.e., by turning our gaze to what it appears –, we may infer the other two transcendentals. Everything that appears in front of us *is* something, and, as *this* something, it is *a* something.⁴¹ “The something is *a* something,” says Heidegger.⁴² In other words: “Everything that is, *is* (object), as long as it is *one*.”⁴³ This seems to be a sort of formal conceptual principle that can be phenomenologically attested. Now, because of their formal character, *unum*, as much as *ens*, cannot relate to the “content of the essence of the object.” Both concepts refer to the object’s form. Everything that is in our surroundings, every object, says Heidegger, is a “what” [Was] that stands “in the form of the *unum*.”⁴⁴

Also, just as *unum* has to do with an *originary form* [Urform], so too *verum* is conceived as a “relation of form” [Formverhältnis].⁴⁵ Heidegger following Scotus affirms: “Every object is *one* object. Every object is a *true* object.”⁴⁶ We continue to talk here about completely formal concepts that stand in formal relations with the object. They are not something adjoined to the object. They do not *exist* apart and then are added to it. Considering it phenomenologically, these formal

³⁹ However, Heidegger at another point of the text critically acknowledges that the same notion of “opposite” sets a first, implicit categorial determination that transforms the thing to an “object.” He says at GA.1, S. 223, “Schon das, Gegenüber selbst ist eine bestimmte Hinsicht (ein Respectus), eine Bewandtnis, die es mit dem Gegenstande hat.”

⁴⁰ GA.1, S.215.

⁴¹ GA.1, S.216.

⁴² GA.1, S.217-218.

⁴³ GA.1, S.221.

⁴⁴ GA.1, S.222.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ GA.1, S.265.

concepts are given simultaneously, together with the appearance of an object to a subject. According to this, every object that itself appears to us, i.e., to our knowledge or cognition, is a “true” object. To say it in a reversed way: “Insofar as the object *is an object of knowledge* [Erkenntnis], it can be called true object.”⁴⁷

The medieval concept of *verum*, as Heidegger interprets it, does not refer to something other than the *meaningful relation* that we *always already* have with the things of our surrounding world – the relation that Heidegger would describe some years later in his KNS-course. All the things that we encounter in our world are true things, in the sense that they are always intelligible to us. Things *always* have meaning. We live in meaning. And this is a fact that cannot be denied. Formal concepts describe certain aspects of this *fact*.

Now, it is clear that the idea of formality is the key element for the connection of these transcendental concepts with the field of facticity. To understand how this works, we must turn to the phenomenological theory of concept formation and Heidegger’s description of it during the course of WS 1920/21.⁴⁸

If we think it in a phenomenological way, formal concepts emerge through a sort of abstention from determinations of content [gehaltlich]. They have to do more with the immediacy of our *meaningful relation* with the thing. According to Heidegger’s description,⁴⁹ formalization – unlike generalization – has nothing to do with the “what-content as such” [Wasgehalt überhaupt], but it arises as a process from the “relational sense [Bezugssinn] of the pure attitudinal relation [Einstellungsbezugs] itself.”⁵⁰ If we take an example of what is called “formal predication” – i.e., a proposition like “the stone is an object” –, the “attitude” there, according to Heidegger, “is not bound to the materiality of things [Sachhaltigkeit] [...], but is free in terms of its material contents.”⁵¹ We don’t have a determination of an object’s “what,” of its “what-content,” but instead we have a highlighting of our *meaning-*

⁴⁷ GA.1, S.266.

⁴⁸ I make reference here to Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens; Gesamtausgabe Band 60*, ed. Matthias Jung and Thomas Regehly (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1995); it was translated by Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei as *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

⁴⁹ Heidegger praises Husserl for his contribution to this field of study, by saying that he was the first philosopher who explicitly differentiated “formalization” from “generalization.” He refers here to the final chapter of Volume I of *Logical Investigations* and to §13 of *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology*. See GA.60, S.57, p. 39.

⁵⁰ GA.60, S.58-59, p. 40.

⁵¹ GA.60, S.58, p. 40.

ful relation with the thing or object. In formalization, it is announced, in a way, the relation with the object; the object is observed “according to the aspect in which it is given.”⁵²

We are at another key point here. Heidegger describes the fundamental features of formalization by going deeper into the conceptual structure of the meaningful relation itself. He underlines – and this is quite important for our argument – that in the process of formalization we “must see away from the what-content and attend only to *the fact that* [daß] the object is a given [ein gegebenes ist],” *that* it is an “attitudinally grasped one.”⁵³ In formalization, we must maintain ourselves in the same *fact that* the object is given to us, we must maintain ourselves in the “that” [das Daß] of our *relation* with it. Heidegger concludes with the following phrase: “The origin of the formal lies thus in the relational sense.”⁵⁴

The formal does not have to do so much with the thing itself but with the meaning of the relation – i.e., the *meaningful relation* itself which we come across as fact in the ordinary field of facticity. But the question remains: Is Heidegger’s concept of being in general formal in the same sense that medieval transcendental concepts are? The quick answer is *no*. Being cannot refer to the “something” that appears to the phenomenological gaze, neither as *object* nor as *one* and *true*. It must point somewhere “beyond” [über].⁵⁵ As verb, *being* [Sein] should point to the *appearing* itself and its particular features. To get a better understanding of this, let us go to Heidegger’s methodological notion of formal indication. We need to go deeper into the conceptual structure of the phenomenon’s meaningful appearance to see how the concept of being works there.

IV. The critique of formalization and formal indication

Another reason why Heidegger could not have considered *being* [Sein] as a sort of formal-transcendental concept is that he sharply criticizes formalization as a process of concept formation as early as his course of WS 1920/21. There, Heidegger continues his KNS-argument against theoretization and he argues that formalization does not fit the scope

⁵² GA.60, S.61, p. 42.

⁵³ GA.60, S.58, p. 40. “Ich muß vom Wasgehalt wegsehen und nur darauf sehen, daß der Gegenstand ein gegebenes, einstellungsmäßig erfaßter ist.” The emphasis here is mine.

⁵⁴ GA.60, S.59, p. 40.

⁵⁵ SZ, S.38, p. 33. “Seine ‘Universalität’ ist höher zu suchen. Sein und Seinsstruktur liegen über jedes Seiende und jede mögliche seiende Bestimmtheit eines Seienden hinaus.”

of philosophy as originary science, precisely because it is excessively biased towards theoretical stance and, for this reason, cannot gain access to the originary field of facticity.⁵⁶

Heidegger's critique of formalization has its roots in his early critique of *Gegebenheit*. We were saying in the previous section, that in formalization we "see away from the what-content and attend only to the fact that [daß] the object is a given."⁵⁷ But if we think it a little, to turn our gaze to the same "that" of the object as *given* means that we define something about the "what" of the object. We are saying that the object is a "given." Now, this notion of the thing as "given" had already been criticized by Heidegger in his basic argument of the KNS-course. He said there: "'Given' already signifies an inconspicuous but genuine theoretical reflection inflicted upon the surrounding world."⁵⁸ For the immediate originary experience of the *Umwelterlebnis* – see section II. –, to say that things that we come across in our surrounding world are "given" is nothing less than a theoretical characterization, an infiltration of a theoretical element in an originary, "a-theoretical sphere." This critique of *Gegebenheit* is transformed during the course of WS 1920/21 into a critique against the process of formalization itself.

Heidegger remarks that in the process of formalization – just like in the case of generalization – there is a certain "materiality" [Sachhaltigkeit]. When we talk about "formal ontology," he says, we talk about "already something objectually formed out [ein gegenständlich Ausgeformtes]."⁵⁹ For him, who seeks to establish a connection between philosophy and the originary field – i.e., the field of *faktisches Leben* –, the use of concepts that are already object-oriented leads to the fatal error of a previous theoretization. As he states, the "accepted formal-ontological grasp of the object is prejudicing,"⁶⁰ and it is prejudicing precisely as a theoretical grasp. The so-called formal region is in a broader sense a "material domain" [Sachgebiet].⁶¹ And this is because it emerges as a region through a very specific orientation of our gaze, through thematic-theoretical grasp. In contrast to it, Heidegger points

⁵⁶ GA.60, S.55-57, pp. 38-39.

⁵⁷ GA.60, S.58, p. 40. The emphasis here is mine.

⁵⁸ GA.56/57, S.88-89, p. 69. "Die 'Gegebenheit' ist also sehr wohl schon eine theoretische Form."

⁵⁹ GA.60, S.58, p. 40. I use the term "objectually" instead of "materially" that appears in the English edition. See above note 39.

⁶⁰ GA.60, S.62, p. 43.

⁶¹ GA.60, S.59, p. 41.

out that the relational sense [Bezugssinn] – which refers to the *meaningful relation* between humans and the things of their world that we come across in the originary field – “is not an order, not a region.”⁶²

We find ourselves here at the center of the argument.⁶³ Just like the originary relation was not even a *presupposition* for Heidegger of 1919, the *Bezugssinn* now is not even a region. How can we think of this? As I see it, behind both claims hides the logic of *facticity*. The relational sense does nothing less than describe dimensions of the originary meaningful relation which we come across as a *fact* in our factual living, in our *being*. This is why Heidegger believes that through the formal grasp of the object, the richness and the “diversity” of the relational sense⁶⁴ is cut down and limited, the meaningful relation is turned into a theoretical relation.⁶⁵

For the above reasons, Heidegger introduces his view of philosophical concepts as formal indications. These concepts respect the factual character of the meaningful relation, its richness, and diversity. In contrast to formalization where we turn our gaze to the “that” of an object’s appearance defining at the same time unthoughtfully something about its “what,” in formal indication’s *Bezugssinn* we turn our sight to the “that” of the meaningful *relation* itself, without prejudicing the “what” of this relation. Nevertheless, can we think of *being* [Sein] as a formally indicative concept? I believe that we can and, as we will see in the next section (IV), probably we should. But let us see first briefly how formal indications work concretely towards respecting facticity.

According to Heidegger, formal indication “falls outside of the attitudinally theoretical”⁶⁶ and is connected with three “directions of sense” – the content-, relational- and enactment-sense [Gehalts-, Bezugs-, Vollzugssinn]. Every phenomenon has to do with “the totali-

⁶² GA.60, S.61, p. 42. “Aber der Bezugssinn ist keine Ordnung, keine Region.”

⁶³ For the methodological importance of Heidegger’s formal indication see Eric Nelson’s and Theodore Kisiel’s important contributions in Alfred Denker and Holger Zaborowski, eds., *Heidegger und die Logik (Elementa 79)* (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi BV, 2006), 31-64. See also Steven Galt Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger*, 129-151 and Daniel Dahlstrom, “Heidegger’s Method: Philosophical Concepts as Formal Indications,” *Review of Metaphysics* 47, no. 4 (1994): 775-795. I am indebted to professor Ramón Rodríguez for helping me to recognize the deep importance of formal indication for Heidegger’s hermeneutic project. See the excellent book Ramón Rodríguez, *La Transformación hermenéutica de la Fenomenología: Una interpretación de la obra temprana de Heidegger* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1992), esp. 51-56 and 162-174.

⁶⁴ GA.60, S.61-62, p. 42. “Aufgabe der Ausformung der Mannigfaltigkeit des Bezugssinnes.”

⁶⁵ GA.60, S.63, p. 43. “[...] weil sie [die formale Bestimmung] einen theoretischen Bezugssinn vorschreibt oder wenigstens mit vorschreibt.”

⁶⁶ GA.60, S.59, p. 41.

ty of sense in these three directions.”⁶⁷ By dividing the meaning of a phenomenon into these three dimensions, Heidegger manages to keep separate though together the formal part and the singularized one –the “that” of the relation and the “what” of its instantiation in a particular phenomenon’s meaning.

Now, if the formal character of formal indication designates “something relational” [etwas Bezugsmäßiges], on the other side, the element of indication works negatively as a “warn.”⁶⁸ As Heidegger remarks, a phenomenon must be given in such a manner that “its relational sense is held in abeyance” [Schwebe].⁶⁹ We have here something like a prior undecidability regarding the phenomenon’s relational sense. Heidegger states: “One must prevent oneself from taking it for granted that its relational sense is originally theoretical.”⁷⁰ There is a certain difference from the theoretical-scientific spirit. With formal indication, there is “no insertion into a material domain.” The *Bezugssinn* remains undecidable and it does not point to a theoretical relation with the things of our world. Its richness and openness are respected. As Heidegger puts it: “What is pre-given is a bond [Bindung] that is indeterminate as to content.”⁷¹ Along with this, the enactment of the phenomenon is not previously fully determined. The formal indication is something like a “defense” [Abwehr], a kind of “preliminary securing” so that the enactment-character of the phenomenon “still remains free.”⁷²

The formal part of formal indication describes something relational, a *Bindung*, and its “sense-structure” [Sinnstruktur] is described by

⁶⁷ GA.60, S.63, p. 43.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ GA.60, S.63-64, pp. 43-44. There is an inconsistency in translating the term “Bezugssinn” in the English edition of the course, which I follow as I find it useful. Hereafter, I keep the term “relational sense” for “Bezugssinn.”

⁷⁰ GA.60, S.64, p. 44.

⁷¹ I turn here to Heidegger’s WS 1921/22 course published in Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung; Gesamtausgabe Band 61*, ed. Walter Bröcker and Käte Bröcker-Oltmanns (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1985); it was translated by Richard Rojcewicz as *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation Into Phenomenological Research* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001). The above quote is from GA.61, S.20, p. 17. “Es ist eine gehaltlich unbestimmte, vollzugshaft bestimmte Bindung vorgegeben.” Heidegger maintains that the formal part of formal indication, in a way, determines the way of actualization, that it has an initial or “approach-character” [Ansatzcharakter]. See GA.61, S.33, p. 26. “Das leer Gehaltliche in seiner Sinnstruktur ist zugleich das, was die Vollzugsrichtung gibt.” And GA.61, S.34, p. 27. “Das Formale ist nicht ‘Form’ und Anzeige deren Inhalt, sondern ‘formal’ ist Bestimmungsansatz; Ansatzcharakter!”

⁷² GA.60, S.64, p. 44.

Heidegger as an “empty content” [*leeres Gehaltliche*].⁷³ It is precisely because this formal part describes only a *bond* – a meaningful relation and nothing more – that it can be empty of contents. It describes a relation that is given to us as a *fact* and leaves open its specific contents to be acquired in a singularly performed understanding so as the phenomenon’s meaning to be properly and fully grasped. “[T]he more radical is the understanding of what is empty, as formal,” Heidegger says, “the richer it becomes, because it leads to the concrete.”⁷⁴

In contrast to formalization which unthoughtfully presupposed that it is possible a mere *being-there* (*existentia*, *Vorhandensein*)⁷⁵ of the object without former characterizations, the formal part of formal indication is always open and always points to singularization through specific “whats” and “hows” at the level of a singularly performed understanding.⁷⁶ We might also turn our gaze to a “that,” to formal as empty, but this “that” explicitly belongs to the meaningful relation itself – to the *Bindung* – which is given to us as fact. Formally indicative concepts describe dimensions of the *meaningful relation as fact*. They describe it in its facticity.⁷⁷ We turn our sight to the “that” of this relation, knowing at the same time that there is always a “what” and a “how.” *That* the meaningful relation with things *is* in such and such way, leads us to the concept of being in general. We have a *universal* “that” of the fact of meaningful relation – *that* beings [*Seiende*] always *are* with a certain meaning for us, i.e., *that* being [*Sein*] *is* –, which is always singularized in specific “whats” and “hows.”

V. Understanding being in general through the meaningful relation as *fact*

But, again, is it *being* [*Sein*] a formally indicative concept? The quick answer is yes. Heidegger explicitly states in his course of WS 1921/22 that *Sein* is “what is indicated formally and emptily [*das angezeigte Formal-leere*], and yet it strictly determines the direction of the understanding.”⁷⁸

⁷³ GA.61, S.33, p. 26. See above note 71.

⁷⁴ GA.61, S.33, p. 26. I alter here the translation.

⁷⁵ SZ, S.42, p. 39. “*Existentia* besagt nach der Überlieferung ontologisch soviel wie *Vorhandensein*.”

⁷⁶ I am deeply indebted to Professor Georg Xiropaidis for his key observation – among other helpful comments and his general support – about the deep and complex connection between hermeneutic concepts and the concepts of traditional metaphysics.

⁷⁷ I imply here a richer concept of facticity that Heidegger seems to use during those years and which unfolds in SZ. See also below note 92. For the background of the concept of facticity see the excellent study, Theodore Kisiel, “Das Entstehen des Begriffsfeldes ‘Faktizität’ im Frühwerk Heideggers,” *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* 4 (1986-1987): 91-120.

⁷⁸ GA.61, S.61, p. 46.

Let us attempt to understand this claim by examining how Heidegger introduces in this course the concept of being for the very first time and, what is more, as the main target of philosophical questioning.

Heidegger's main purpose there is to continue in the same line of rejection of theoretical priority over the originary field of facticity. In fact, the concept of *being* [Sein] helps him to refer to this field and, specifically to the meaningful relation itself, without prejudicing theoretically its meaning, that is, respecting at the same time its factual character. Just as Heidegger suggested that one "must prevent oneself from taking it for granted that its relational sense is originally theoretical,"⁷⁹ in the same way, he now comments that philosophy should stop studying beings as objects.⁸⁰ The formal determination of beings – the basic mechanism through which traditional philosophy works⁸¹ – is totally blind to the originary field of facticity and transforms all beings, independent of their particular relation to us, into objectual forms.

Now, Heidegger wants to preserve the *universal* character of philosophy and at the same time undo its theoretical bias. He maintained that philosophy is a kind of "knowing comportment" [erkennendes Verhalten],⁸² which does not investigate a specific being or "region of being" [Seinsgebiet]⁸³ but beings as beings, "beings, ultimately considered."⁸⁴ Philosophy does not study beings as objects but simply as beings – i.e., without prejudicing them. But to study beings as beings, to study them "ultimately," means *not* to study them in relation to another *being* [Seiendes] but regarding their ontological dimension – that is, to study beings just as they *are*, in their *being*. For Heidegger, what philosophy finally asks is "*being* [Sein] or, more determinately, in respect to the way such 'being' [Sein] is graspable: the 'sense of being' [Seinsinn]."⁸⁵

Of course, being here is not understood as a universal for all beings, as their "*Allgemeines*," neither as the "highest genus" nor the "highest

⁷⁹ GA.60, S.64, p. 44.

⁸⁰ GA.61, S.55, p. 42. "Demnach scheint auch über das 'Philosophieren' nichts weiter mehr gegeben werden zu können als: 'erkennendes Verhalten zu ...,' wobei der Gegenstand als Erkenntnisgegenstand als Seiendes angesprochen wird."

⁸¹ GA.60, S.63, p. 43.

⁸² GA.61, S.54, p. 41. I prefer here "knowing" for the adjective "erkennend" rather than "cognitive" that appears in the English edition.

⁸³ GA.61, S.57, p. 43. Heidegger, in GA.61, S.58, p. 44, states that it remains open whether philosophy is "comportment to each and every being, to all 'regions' [Gebieten], or, on the contrary, to no region at all, *as region*." See also GA.60, S.62, p. 43.

⁸⁴ GA.61, S.58, p. 44. "[...] das Seiende, letztlich betrachtet, nicht in bezug auf anderes Seiendes, sondern es bei sich selbst und als solches."

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

region.”⁸⁶ It is precisely understood as *das angezeigte Formalleere*, as “what is indicated formally and emptily.” How can we conceive this?

According to what has been mentioned so far, to indicate “formally and emptily,” would mean to point to the mere “that” of the relation as fact and leave open its specific contents – the specific “whats” and “hows” – to be acquired through performative understanding. *Sein*, then, would be nothing else than a completely *formal* term that refers to a *relation* as to its “that,” namely, to beings’ *being* in meaningful relation to us. Formal here does not have the meaning of formalized but of an open and rich indication towards the meaningful relation which is singularized in each case of understanding a *being* [Seiendes].

Now, if the concept of *being* [Sein] is introduced as a *universal* concept that does not prejudice theoretically the meaningful relation itself – which means that it cannot be considered as a formal concept but as a formally indicative one – and if as a formally indicative concept cannot but point to the meaningful relation itself as fact, then *being* [Sein] refers to this fact. I argue that *being* [Sein] *is* this *fact*. And, in this context, the simple “that” of the fact – emptily considered but always singularizable – gains a priority against the specific “what” and “how.”

Heidegger confirms this interpretation in three cases at least. First, when he refers, in the same course of WS 1921/22, to the being of “the having [des Habens] of the comportment.” The being of the comportment is important because philosophy is a cognitive comportment “toward beings in terms of being (meaning of being).”⁸⁷ Heidegger states there:

At issue is *being* [Sein], i.e. that it ‘is’ [daß es ‘ist’], the *sense of being* [Seinssein (sic)], that being ‘is’ [daß Sein ‘ist’], i.e. is there as being genuinely and according to its import (in the phenomenon).⁸⁸

Taking a close look at these phrases, we observe that the “sense of being” coincides with the fact “that it ‘is,’” with “that being ‘is,’” with the *fact* that it is there as *being* [Sein]. Heidegger seems to declare for the very first time that behind every phenomenon’s particular meaning it hides the

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ GA.61, S.60, p. 46. “*Philosophie ist prinzipiell erkennendes Verhalten zu Seiendem als Sein (Seinsinn).*” I translate “das Haben” as “the having.” The English edition reads “the possessing.”

⁸⁸ GA.61, S.61, p. 46. As the translator of the English version also did, I consider here “Seinssein” to be a typo for “Seinsinn.”

meaning of the *fact that everything is*, that *there is being* [es gibt Sein]. This is the formal part (*Bezugssinn*) of a formal indication that is singularized in the sense of specific beings (*Gehalt-*) and actualized (*Vollzugssinn*) in our understanding of them. *Being* [Sein], then, will be connected with the simple “that” [daß], with the mere *fact that – that* it is.

Another formulation of the above claim we find in the lecture course of SS 1922.⁸⁹ There – a few years before SZ –, Heidegger appears to discover explicitly the “fundamental sense of being” [der Grundsinn von Sein] in the direction of its own accessibility, namely, in the “being [Sein] of factual life (facticity).”⁹⁰ The concepts of facticity and *being* [Sein] are tied now closely together. In *faktisches Leben*, *being* [Sein] in one way or another becomes manifest, it becomes historically important “for its facticity,” as Heidegger states.⁹¹ Here again, facticity should not be understood as a simple synonym of human Dasein⁹² but as a sort of logical field – see section II. – which is circumscribed by the meaningful relation as fact.

Now, the way that the field of facticity *is* – its giving to us as a fact, its *being* – has, according to Heidegger, “its decisive, fundamental structure in *that*-character [Daß-Charakter].”⁹³ In other words, as Heidegger states: “The sense of being [Seinssinn] of the factual is a *that*-being [Daß-Sein].” Heidegger calls our attention to the facticity of factual life, where the “that” dimension of being has, according to this transcript, a certain priority. But this fact is usually kept hidden. In everyday life “the ‘what’ is pushed before the ‘that’. What matters most to it, is what is being lived.” It is in a way “crucial” for factual life “that it bars itself from *that*-character.”⁹⁴

⁸⁹ I make reference here to Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretation ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zu Ontologie und Logik; Gesamtausgabe Band 62*, ed. Günther Neumann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2005). All translations of this volume are mine. The part of the course that I quote below is from Walter Bröcker’s – editor of *Gesamtausgabe* Vol. 61 – transcript.

⁹⁰ GA.62, S.180. The title of the section is: “Der Grundsinn von Sein als Sein des faktischen Lebens (Faktizität) in der Grundstruktur des Daß-Charakters. Der Vorrang des Daß-Seins vor dem Was-Sein. Der konkreteste Zugang des Daß-Charakters aus seinem spezifischen Nicht, dem Tod.”

⁹¹ GA.62, S.180. “Als Grundsinn des Seins ist anzusetzen *das* Sein, auf das es geschichtlich-historisch im faktischen Leben für dessen Faktizität ausdrücklich oder nicht ankommt.” The emphasis here is mine. I underline that facticity *has* whatever is given as a *fact*.

⁹² There is a deep connection, though, between the concepts of facticity and Dasein. “Da-sein,” “being-there,” means to find oneself being there as a fact. I intend to develop this connection in a future paper on the centrality of facticity in SZ’s project.

⁹³ Ibid. “Dieses Sein des faktischen Lebens, das wir zusammenfassend bezeichnen als *Faktizität*, hat seine entscheidende Grundstruktur in dem *Daß*-Charakter.”

⁹⁴ Ibid.

According to this transcript, the *Grundsinn von Sein* is to be found in the being of facticity – of this particular logical field – which has as its basic character the that-character. Heidegger also points in the same direction when he introduces the concept of being in general for the first time.

“Being in general,” as a concept and as a question, is introduced during Heidegger’s course of WS 1924/25 on Plato’s *Sophist*.⁹⁵ According to Heidegger’s interpretation of Plato’s phrases, when I speak (or think) about something, I do it always by thinking of this something *as* something. “Every something *is* as something,” Heidegger says. And this means that the meaning of “is” – of *being* [Sein] – accompanies every being [Seiendes], even if this meaning remains indeterminate in the first place.⁹⁶ For this reason, the question about the meaning of being in general – and the preparation of a ground to ask this question – becomes “the primary task of any possible ontology.”⁹⁷

It is not by chance that the hermeneutic “as” comes into play here. Heidegger connects the concept of being in general with the understanding of every being *as* something, *as* something meaningful. Behind the phrase “every something *is* as something” – which reveals the *universal* character of being, points to Heidegger’s concept of being in general, and introduces the question about its meaning – we find the *facticity* of meaning from where our trajectory has started. Every something is *as* something; every something is understood *as* something – and this is a *fact*. Being in general reflects this fact. It reflects the fact *that* everything *is* with a certain meaning, *that* everything *is* meaningful – *that* it is.

To close, Heidegger with the term “being in general” seems to suggest a notion of being that moves beyond the various historical formulations of being of beings. In SZ he comments: “being [Sein] is found in that- [Daß-] and how-it-is [Sosein], in reality, presence-at-hand [Vorhandenheit], subsistence [Bestand], validity, existence [Dasein],* in the “there is” [es gibt].”⁹⁸ I argue that the meaning of being which *transcends* all the historical formulations of being comes from the di-

⁹⁵ I make reference here to Martin Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes; Gesamtausgabe Band 19*, ed. Ingeborg Schübler (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1992); it was translated by Richard Rojcewicz as *Plato’s Sophist* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997). In fact, the term “being in general” appears for the first time in the course of WS 1923/24, when Heidegger refers to Descartes’ conviction of God’s existence.

⁹⁶ GA.19, S.418, p. 289. “Ich kann das τί, etwas, nicht entblößt vom Sein überhaupt sagen. Jedes Etwas *ist* als Etwas, wobei der Sinn von Ist und Sein ganz unbestimmt bleibt.”

⁹⁷ GA.19, S.447-8, p. 309.

⁹⁸ SZ, S.7, p. 5. I alter here Stambaugh’s translation. In a later marginal note, Heidegger comments here (*): “Still the common concept, and no other.”

rection of the facticity of meaning. Facticity circumscribes a logical field that comes to us as a necessary starting point, as an origin [Ursprung], precisely because it is given to us as an undeniable fact. *Sein*, then, will refer to this fact, and its “that” will be a way to grasp it. In *SZ* we find traces of this in the concept of *Befindlichkeit*,⁹⁹ of *Angst*,¹⁰⁰ and of care.¹⁰¹ Quite interestingly, Heidegger refers there to a “naked” or “pure” “*Daß*.” How this takes place in *SZ* and what problems can it cause are questions that transcend the scope of the present paper.

VI. Conclusion

This paper exhibited a way of understanding Heidegger’s concept of being in general, the central aim of *SZ*’s questioning. I argued that the term *being* [Sein] as Heidegger understands it in the early 1920s describes the meaningful relation between humans and the things of their surrounding world. This meaningful relation – dimensions of which are described through the relational sense [Bezugssinn] of Heidegger’s formally indicative concepts – comes to us as a fact. This fact of meaningful relation circumscribes the originary, logical field of facticity. Living factically means *that* I always come across certain meanings, and I never find anything radically without meaning.

Everything around us *is* meaningful and we find ourselves in a way trapped in this meaning. If we keep that in mind, then being in general would not simply refer to this meaning or to its intelligibility but to this as a *fact* behind of which we cannot go. Being in general, then, would point to the *fact that* everything is *always* encountered by us as having a certain meaning.¹⁰² This understanding of the concept of being in general complements properly, I believe, the intelligibility interpretation of being and it could offer a very specific and plausible bridge for passing to later Heidegger’s view of being as event – *Sein als Ereignis*. The latter remains open for the future.

⁹⁹ *SZ*, S.134-135, p. 127. “Und gerade in der gleichgültigsten und harmlosesten Alltäglichkeit kann das Sein des Daseins als nacktes ‘Daß es ist und zu sein hat’ aufbrechen. Das pure ‘daß es ist’ zeigt sich, das Woher und Wohin bleiben im Dunkel.”

¹⁰⁰ *SZ*, S.276-277, p. 255. “Der Rufer ist in seinem Wer ‘weltlich’ durch nichts bestimmbar. Er ist das Dasein in seiner Unheimlichkeit, das ursprüngliche geworfene In-der-Welt-sein als Unzuhaus, das nackte ‘Daß’ im Nichts der Welt.”

¹⁰¹ *SZ*, S.284, p. 262. “Die Geworfenheit aber liegt nicht hinter ihm als ein tatsächlich vorgefallenes und vom Dasein wieder losgefallenes Ereignis, das mit ihm geschah, sondern das Dasein ist ständig – solange es ist – als Sorge sein ‘Daß.’”

¹⁰² It should be emphasized that a better consideration of the meaning of being in general requires a new reading of *SZ*. See above note 92.

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