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**A-Priority and Hermeneutics:
The Scientificity of Phenomenology from Husserl to Heidegger**

Abstract

Like Husserl, the young Heidegger was preoccupied with the a-priority of phenomenology. He also incorporates hermeneutics into phenomenology, though Husserl was convinced that the a-priority of phenomenology removed all interpretation from its analyses. This paper investigates how the early Heidegger is able to make hermeneutics a general condition of understanding while maintaining, in line with Husserl, that phenomenology is an a-priori science. This paper also provides insight into key debates in the history of phenomenology. I examine two places in which Heidegger departs from Husserl's phenomenology – the doctrine of categorial intuition and the “as-structure” of understanding – to show that a-priority and hermeneutic understanding come together, ontically, in facticity as the only possible starting point for phenomenology. Ontologically, however, a-priority and hermeneutics come together in the co-affectation of Dasein as understanding and being as pre-given. This co-affectation is itself dependent on Temporality as “the condition of any possible earlier”.

Keywords: Apriori, Heidegger, Hermeneutics, Husserl, Idea of Science

1. Hermeneutics and the A-Priori: Incompatibility and Coincidence

As an enthusiastic student of Husserl, the young Heidegger was preoccupied with the a-priori status of phenomenology from the very beginning. In fact, since its inception Husserl framed phenomenology as an a-priori science. Already at the time of its inauguration with the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl sought to secure the necessary and universal character of logic from the contingency of psychologism¹, and by 1910 became concerned with assuring the a-priority of phenomenology as the absolute philosophical foundation for all sciences². As he states in *Ideas I*, phenomenology must be understood «as a science of essence – as an “a priori” or, as we also say, an eidetic science»³. This means that phenomenology provides an account of the necessary and universal structures of experience. The young Heidegger agrees with his teacher that phenomenology must be an a-priori science, since for him, too, the structures of experience that phenomenology uncovers are necessary and universal. In this sense, the question of the a-priority of philosophical knowledge is central for Heidegger, and not only in *Being and Time*, as Fehér maintains⁴. The introductory sections of his magnum opus are certainly at pains to show that the question of the meaning of Being, along with the fundamental ontology that seek to answer it, have both ontic and ontological priority over all other philosophical questions and methodologies⁵. But Heidegger shows a preoccupation with such a-priority as early as 1919, where a large part of his earliest extant lecture course “*The*

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¹ Husserl (2001), vol. I.

² Staiti (2014), pp. 20-21.

³ Husserl (1983), pp. v-xxii.

⁴ Cfr. Fehér (2010), pp. 11-38.

⁵ Heidegger (2010a), pp. 9-11.

Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview is dedicated to establishing phenomenology as «primordial science» with priority over all other sciences⁶.

At the same time, however, the young Heidegger also sought to appropriate the insights of hermeneutic theory into his phenomenology. As is well known, *Being and Time* states that all understanding has the structure of interpretation even as all interpretation is grounded in understanding: «What [is] explicitly understood has the structure of *something as something*», Heidegger writes, «[where] the “as”...constitutes the interpretation»⁷. All that is understood is understood through a process of interpretation, even Dasein's own self-understanding: «The methodological meaning of phenomenological description is *interpretation*... Phenomenology of Dasein is *hermeneutics*»⁸. But Heidegger's appropriation of hermeneutics also dates as far back as the 1919 lecture course, where he states that «the circularity of epistemology» leads to an explicitly «hermeneutical intuition»⁹.

Unlike the preoccupation with the a-priority of phenomenology, Heidegger's incorporation of hermeneutics was not something he shared with Husserl. For, as Grondin shows, Husserl was famously averse to hermeneutics, exhibiting a «twofold allergy», on one hand, to Dilthey's historicism and, on the other, to any role that interpretation might play in the process of cognition¹⁰. It is exactly insofar as it is an a-priori science that Husserl sees no need for an interpretive moment in phenomenology: as eidetic science, phenomenology reaches necessary and universal conclusions about the constitutive structures of experience, conclusions that cannot vary according to the ego's situation or interpretive criteria. Thus, although phenomenology is an a-priori science for both thinkers, Husserl considers it possible to reach unvarying and univocal certainty in the analysis of experience, while Heidegger finds at the center of this analysis an ineluctable circularity whose motion consists of interpretation. More polemically put, while Husserl dismisses hermeneutics precisely because he sees it as incompatible with all claims of a-priori scientificity, Heidegger finds that this a-priority can only belong to a hermeneutic science, i.e., that a-priori and hermeneutics must fall together.

It behooves us as readers of the early Heidegger to ask how it is possible that in his fundamental ontology these apparently incompatible philosophical characters, the a-priori and the hermeneutic, not only coexist but coincide. An investigation of this question is useful not only for a more nuanced grasp of the relationship between understanding [*Verstehen*] and Temporality [*Temporalität*] in fundamental ontology, as we will show. More than this, the question of the compatibility of a-priority and hermeneutics serves as a privileged access point to Heidegger's re-elaboration of some central Husserlian concepts. It is only through a sustained engagement with Husserl that Heidegger comes to differ from him so radically, and for this reason our investigation allows us to observe some crucial points of transition that indelibly mark the development of the phenomenological tradition. First, we will investigate Heidegger's engagement of Husserl's discovery of categorial intuition from the *Logical Investigations*. We will see that for Heidegger, the discovery of categorial intuition grants access to the being of beings in everyday perception, without recourse to transcendental methods. This affords the being of beings the same priority of givenness that everyday phenomena enjoy. Second, we will inquire into the radically different treatments of the «as-structure» of perception from each phenomenologist. For Husserl, the «as-structure» is first and foremost apophantic and should be understood as an unexpressed judgment, while for Heidegger this structure is fundamentally hermeneutic and represents an interpretation of

⁶ Cfr. Heidegger (2002), pp. 51-91.

⁷ Heidegger (2010a), pp. 139-144.

⁸ Ivi, pp. 35-37.

⁹ Heidegger (2002), pp. 74-5, 89-91.

¹⁰ Grondin (1995), p. 35.

the possibilities of the being of an entity. This difference in views on the «as-structure» will ultimately reveal a fundamental disagreement between the two philosophers over the purpose and scope of phenomenology as a science. Heidegger's hermeneutic account of understanding will provide an opening for the analysis of Dasein's temporality [*Zeitlichkeit*] as what makes possible the a-priority of Dasein's hermeneutic situation with respect to being. We will conclude that it is the hermeneutic simultaneity of Dasein and being, their temporal relationship, that is a-priori in fundamental ontology. As we will see, this union of hermeneutics and a-priority is ultimately possible because Dasein, as the «there» of being, is Temporal [*temporal*, not *zeitlich*] at its deepest ontological level.

2. «The Original Sense of the Apriori»: Categorical Intuition and the Priority of Being

For the young Heidegger, the a-priority of philosophical knowledge was not merely one question among others, but rather one of the central problems of philosophy. This is most easily observed in his 1925 lecture course, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, where the master of Messkirch praises Husserl's phenomenology for discovering «the original sense of the apriori», thereby gaining access to what truly comes first. According to the lecture course, Husserl's phenomenology was able to retrieve the original meaning of a-priority after modern philosophy (certainly Kant, but before him Descartes) reduced it to a determination of the subject's way of knowing. Etymologically, a-priori simply means «earlier...what from before, from earlier on already is» but since Descartes and Kant the designation «a-priori» has applied almost exclusively to a manner of knowing: knowledge is a-priori insofar as it does not appeal to empirical inductive experience. As a term for knowledge that comes before any experience of the object, the a-priori is thus ordinarily understood as «belonging specifically to the subjective sphere...before it [the subject] oversteps the bounds of its immanence». In short, the a-priori is normally taken to refer to immanent knowledge because transcendent knowledge is always empirical and therefore a-posteriori¹¹.

Against this modern view, Husserl's discovery of categorical intuition shows that the a-priori does not lie only on the subjective side of the intentional relation, but concerns the subjective as well as the objective, the immanent as well as the transcendent, or, in Husserl's own terms, the ideal as well as the real. Phenomenological description makes it clear that the underscoring of categorical structures takes place on both sides of the relation: «In the ideal as in the real...there is in reference to its objectivity something ideal that can be brought out, something in the being of the ideal and in the being of the real which is apriori, structurally earlier» Something a-priori is already contained in intuition, such that a-priority must no longer be confined to the realm of subjective comportment. The a-priori is «indifferent to subjectivity»¹².

What is a-priori in the phenomenon is a degree of structuredness that is already given in it. Heidegger uses the term «sensory idea» to refer to structures that come from the subject matter's own content, structures that are «already there in every real individuation and so [are] apriori in relation to the here and now of... a thing»¹³. But the very notion of a sensory idea is contradictory for the modern mindset, as he discusses at length in reference to Kant and Descartes. One of Husserl's greatest accomplishments is to recognize that intuition already contains categorical structures fit for conceptual elaboration, structures which he names «categorical intuitions». It is through of the doctrine of categorical intuition that the a-priori finds its original sense.

As numerous commentators have noted, Heidegger was captivated by the account of categorical intuition in the *Logical Investigations* more than by that in the later *Ideas I*¹⁴. In

¹¹ Heidegger (2009a), pp. 72-74.

¹² Ivi, p. 74.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Esposito (2013), van Buren (1994), and Polt (2013).

this earlier work, the categorial is a different kind of intuition from the sensory in that it apprehends not raw sense data, but «such constituents in entities which in traditional fashion are designated as categories»¹⁵. Husserl's famous example of expression and its relation to perception helps us to understand precisely what categorial intuition apprehends and how it apprehends it. A piece of white paper in front of us is perceived and the expression of this simple perception is «white paper». Yet Husserl notes that in perceiving the white paper «another act is plainly present, which... is different from [purely sensory]: the *paper* is known as white, or rather as a white thing, whenever we express our percept in the words “white paper”... [but] a surplus of meaning remains over, a form which finds nothing in the appearance itself to confirm it»¹⁶. This surplus of meaning is nothing less than the *being*-white of the paper. Both expressions, «white paper» and «the paper is white», state what the subject intuits because the *being*-white of the paper is contained in the intuition as well. At the same time, however, we must take care not to collapse the ideal content of the being-white into the simple perception of white paper. These acts are of radically different kinds: the white paper is intuited sensorily while the *being*-white of the paper is intuited categorially, as a founded structure and not merely as sensory matter.

What interests the young Heidegger in Husserl's notion of categorial intuition is precisely this discovery that being itself is given in everyday intuitions in a manner that is not reducible to sensible content. As Husserl states, «I can see color, but not *being*-colored, I can feel smoothness, but not *being*-smooth... Being is nothing *in* the object...[but] also nothing attaching *to* an object»¹⁷, which is to say that being is neither a sensible moment in the perception nor a category that the subject attaches to the purely sensory. The being of the copula, of what marks the difference between simple perception and state of affairs, is given in an act of synthesis that itself gives «a form of more authentic objectification of the given matter»¹⁸. Acts of synthesis and acts of ideation alike are categorial acts which correspond to being-structures that inhere in intuition itself and are founded upon it. The state of affairs that corresponds to an act of synthesis, as well as the ideal universal that corresponds to an act of ideation, are not less real or objective simply because they are not given in sensory intuition. Rather, the fact that our everyday, unthematized experience is full of categorial intuitions of these kinds should lead us to broaden the narrow definitions of reality and objectivity under which we frequently operate, and to realize that objectivity in the broadest sense is much richer than the sensory aspect of a thing¹⁹.

It is this richer understanding of objectivity that leads Heidegger to proclaim that phenomenology understands the true sense of the a-priori. Intentional consciousness is capable of highlighting structural features that are already contained in intuition. Thus, «the apriori phenomenologically understood is not a title for comportment [i.e., for the subject's manner of knowing] but a *title for being*»²⁰. The a-priori is not confined to one pole of the intentional relation but rather permeates the noetic as well as the noematic, and therefore the way of access to it is neither a transcendental deduction nor the positing of axioms, but simply the intentional relation, intuition and its corresponding acts, the phenomenon as it is given to the ego. Thus, what is a-priori, or in Heidegger's terms «that which already always is the earlier» is being itself insofar as categorial meaning is already a characteristic of the real and of the ideal alike²¹. Through Husserl's discovery of categorial intuition, Heidegger finally has

¹⁵ Heidegger (2009a), p. 48.

¹⁶ Husserl (2001), vol. II, p. 273.

¹⁷ Ivi, p. 277. Author's emphasis.

¹⁸ Heidegger (2009a), p. 53.

¹⁹ Husserl (2001), vol. 2, pp. 280-281; Heidegger (2009a), p. 72.

²⁰ Heidegger (2009a), p. 74.

²¹ Ivi, p. 73.

access not just to entities, but to the being of these entities. The intentional being directs itself toward the being of entities through categorial acts, for the categories that are found in simple intuition are nothing other than the categorial structures of being itself²².

We must, however, heed Heidegger's warning that a clear grasp of the original sense of the a-priori «presupposes the understanding of what we are seeking: *time*»²³. The doctrine of categorial intuition, as that which reveals the authentic sense of the a-priori, brings to the fore both being and time – being, as what is given in its categorial structures, and time, as the priority that intuition affords to being. We must at this point clarify the essentially temporal dimension entailed in the a-priority of being.

3. Apophansis and Hermeneutics: Husserl and Heidegger on the «As-Structure»

For our purposes, *Being and Time* must be read as a meditation on the a-priori as it relates to both being and time. Granted, the question of the meaning of being is not explicitly stated in terms of the a-priori, and yet Heidegger is at pains throughout the introductory sections to establish the ontic and ontological priority of this question. In this way, the question of the temporal character of a-priority, in its relation to the categorial being found in the *Logical Investigations*, leads directly to the central inquiry of *Being and Time*. Our purpose in this section will be to show how Heidegger reshapes process of categorial understanding as described in Husserlian phenomenology into a fundamentally hermeneutic process. This takes the form of a transition from apophantic to hermeneutic understanding. The former is a process in which the structure of “predicability,” so to say, founds apophantic judgments, while the latter is a process in which the articulation of what is understood is founded on the structure of interpretability.

Let us begin with Husserl and return to the piece of white paper as an example of categorial intuition. As we saw above, the «paper-as-white» can only be understood as such if intuition holds more than merely sensory content. A purely perceptive act cannot know the paper-as-white because this apophantic “as” belies a further act that is not perceptive, but logical or categorial: we must see – in an extended sense of seeing – that the paper is white if we are to know the paper “as” white. For Husserl, the paper-as-white is, so to say, a “contracted” categorial intuition in which the being of the paper is known but passed over. It takes a careful phenomenological analysis to recognize the founding relation between the sensory and the categorial in the paper-as-white, that is, in the categorially laden intuition of the paper whose categorial structure has not been articulated. The paper is indeed intuited as white, but this being-white of the paper that allows us to know it *as* white, remains hidden. The intuition of the paper-as-white is a peculiar transitory stage between the simple sensory perception of white paper and the fully articulated judgment “this paper is white.” This entirely peculiar character of being as “excess” or “surplus” of meaning, as a feature of experience that is given and yet is neither something in the percept (real) nor something merely attached to it (ideal)²⁴, is what brings the young Heidegger to rework the apophantic “as” of the unthematized categorial act into the interpretive “as” of hermeneutic understanding. This new “as” is no longer the mark of an ego's theoretical activity, but rather the sign of practically concerned living; the paper-as-white is for Heidegger the paper-as-for-writing whose being is encountered most authentically in its structure *as* something useful [*Zeug*], and not in the apophantic judgment that predicates being²⁵. We see just how important Husserl's doctrine of categorial intuition is for Heidegger's philosophical development. Not only does categorial intuition allow the recovery of the original sense of the a-priori, but it also lays bare the essence of the being of beings as what remain concealed in factual life.

²² van Buren (1994), pp. 207-8.

²³ Heidegger (2009a), p. 74.

²⁴ Husserl (2001), vol. 2, pp. 278-80.

²⁵ Heidegger (2010a), pp. 64-68.

The “as-structure” thus becomes for Heidegger the mark of hermeneutic understanding, an interpretive process developed and articulated through interpretation. Understanding is “already there”, so to say, before the interpretation of this or that particular entity articulates *as what* it is understood. Heidegger’s analysis of *Weltlichkeit* makes this clear: Dasein does not understand its world by cobbling it together out of individual entities understood one at a time. Rather, Dasein understands its world first as a whole such that entities are ontically disclosed not as individual objects, but as useful things whose significance rests on this whole of meaningful references. What is understood first is the whole, and only in the context of this fore-understanding does a thing have any significance²⁶. In this sense, «the beings encountered and taken care of are... pre-ontologically hidden at first in their being», for the context of relevance within which they find their significance remains hidden²⁷.

It is the process of interpretation that articulates Dasein’s understanding and reveals the being that is usually hidden. To understand an entity explicitly means to reveal the structure of «*something as something*», so that the significance of an entity in the world is interpreted according to its in-order-to or for-the-sake-of. «The “as”», Heidegger writes, «constitutes the structure of the explicitness of what is understood; it constitutes interpretation»²⁸. Just as with Husserl’s paper-as-white, which is known as being-white but only unthematically, Heidegger’s paper-as-for-writing is simply made use of, and thus understood in its being as a useful thing, without the thematization of this factual significance. For Husserl, one who thematizes the categorial structure of the paper-as-white must articulate its being-white, and likewise, for Heidegger, the significance of the paper-as-for-writing is articulated in the revelation of its place within the whole of in-order-to relations. We see here that the Husserlian and Heideggerian accounts have the same formal structure, i.e., that of an «a-structure» to be articulated. At the same time, we see that Heidegger’s designation of understanding as an interpretive process departs radically from his teacher.

Husserl and Heidegger both recognize that things in the world are first encountered in their as-structure, be this a theoretical-perceptive or a practical «as». When being attentive to it, we never encounter mere white paper, but only paper-as-white, paper-as-for-writing. And in both cases this encounter of the thing in its «as-structure» already contains the being of the thing, though only in its pre-ontological hiddenness. Here we observe Heidegger’s debt to Husserl, especially in the claim that categorial intuitions, intuitions of the being of the thing, are unremarkable and unremarked everyday occurrences. However, Heidegger’s understanding of the «as-structure» is influenced just as much by his reading of Husserl as by his reading of Aristotle. The key to Heidegger’s understanding of this structure as an ultimately interpretive manner of understanding being that has its source in his reading of Aristotle.

There are several aspects of his reading of Aristotle that contribute to Heidegger’s understanding of understanding as hermeneutic, aspects that coincide in the unitary phenomenon of facticity. First, Heidegger takes over from the Stagirite a conception of worldly entities as first and foremost things of practical concern, a conception that is solidified in his designation of worldly beings as useful things: «It is no accident that the Greek designation for the things they first encounter is πράγματα, “beings with which one constantly has to do”, and χρήματα, “what is taken into use”» Heidegger states in the lecture course from SS 1294²⁹, and we find this Greek way of encountering things entirely taken up in *Being and Time*³⁰. The conception of worldly entities as useful things implies, on one hand, that things are never

²⁶ Ivi, pp. 59-63, 84-89.

²⁷ Ivi, pp. 63-68.

²⁸ Ivi, pp. 139-149.

²⁹ Heidegger (2009b), p. 19.

³⁰ Heidegger (2010a), pp. 64-69.

originally encountered individually (hence the plural of Stambaugh's translation of *Zeug*) and, on the other, that they are always encountered within a world as a context of relevance. This understanding of world is described at length in *Being and Time*, but this description does not show the extent to which its Aristotelian provenance shapes Heidegger's understanding of the as-structure as hermeneutic. We will refer instead to the lecture course *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, where the clarification of the term φαινόμενον is tied from the start with an elucidation of «daylight» as the context in which it is possible for things to appear of themselves, and of «darkness» as the context in which things are also seen, but not of themselves³¹.

Daylight and darkness are equally constitutive of the world as the context in which phenomena become manifest, and this fundamental duality is the ground for the possibility of the «elusiveness» and «deception» of the world. Heidegger insists, in fact, that «in existence itself error and deception are interwoven in a completely fundamental way and do not merely surface in the world as some defective property that one has to overcome»³². The very being of the world contains the possibility of deception and elusiveness, and this makes a deceptive encounter not a modification of an encounter with the thing manifest «as it really is», but a modality of encounter that is just as basic and primordial as a daylight encounter. This duality in manifestation between truthfulness and deception lies also in λόγος, which does not find its essence in the λόγος ἀποφαντικός that points out an entity just as it is itself, but in a broader understanding of speech that also contains the possibility of the ψεῦδος or falsehood. The primordial instance of deceit in speech is not willful lying, but can only be found in *factual* speech, that is, in speech that takes place in a concrete world of concern and at a particular time. In factual speech, deceit is a basic possibility because speech necessarily points something out by «offsetting» [*abheben*] it from something else. In such offsetting, «what is offset becomes accessible and can be grasped as here», but only at the price of setting all other things aside³³. This is the case not only when setting something apart from another thing, but also when setting in relief a certain aspect of the thing and not another.

Both things and speech thus contain a basic possibility for deceit as well as truthfulness, but this dual possibility can only be properly understood if things, speech, and the human being are taken as aspects of the unitary phenomenon of facticity. It is this primordial duality in facticity, this mingling of daylight and darkness, truth and falsehood, and *eigentlichkeit* and *uneigentlichkeit*, that serves as the ground for the hermeneutic structure of understanding. For in factual life the piece of paper is found to be paper-as-for-writing, but this is at the expense of all other possibilities that belong to the being of the paper. The paper is paper-as-for-writing and not paper-as-for-burning because of the practical circumstances and projects that characterize the structure of factual life. For this reason, «we do not see things as subject matters in the sense that they are an object of a scientific investigation. [The] existence of things is much richer and affords much more fluctuating possibilities than have been thematically prepared»³⁴. Heidegger calls worldly entities «useful things» precisely because their being is understood according to how Dasein takes them up as meaningful in the concerns of its practical life, and not in a scientific attitude that modifies the factual.

This brief excursus puts us in a position to return to Husserl's and Heidegger's differences over the proper understanding of the as-structure. Following his interpretation of Aristotle, Heidegger proclaims the ontological priority of facticity over the Husserlian transcendental delimitation of consciousness, and it is *here* that he departs from his teacher. For Heidegger, the articulation of the being of the paper *as* useful in the context of writing makes explicit what is, at bottom, an interpretation of the being of the paper on the basis of Dasein's context

³¹ Heidegger (2005), pp. 4-7.

³² Ivi, p. 29.

³³ Ivi, p. 19.

³⁴ Ivi, p. 28.

of concern. To understand the being of the paper *as* for writing is not to exhaust its ontological possibilities, but rather to see that the meaning of the being of the paper fluctuates according to its context of relevance, and thus that any articulation of the significance of the paper in Dasein's factual dealings is an interpretation of this being according to *this* ontological possibility and not another. In this sense, the «as-structure» is an interpretive structure.

By contrast, Husserl's treatment of the «as-structure» of categorial intuition ultimately reveals, in Heidegger's view, his teacher's commitment to an idea of scientific certainty that guides his phenomenology from the beginning. Despite what Heidegger states in his lecture courses³⁵, the difference between his account of understanding and Husserl's does not have its roots in the opposition of a phenomenology of the theoretical (Husserl) versus a phenomenology of the practical (Heidegger). For, as Husserl states, the *Logical Investigations* could have just as easily used an instance of practical concern as an example instead of the paper-as-white, without any change to the categorial analysis³⁶. The difference in their treatment of the «as-structure» is but a symptom of their fundamental disagreement over the nature and purpose of phenomenology itself. Husserl leaves unquestioned the guiding principle of rigorous science, or, in Heidegger's terms, the «care about already known knowledge»³⁷, and determines ahead of time that phenomenology must be this kind of scientific endeavor. «For the idea of philosophy [in Husserl's *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*], the guiding *criterion* is formally whether philosophy has come so far that it can lay down an objectively communicable, doctrinal content that is binding for all times», Heidegger states. «To the extent that it cannot, it is not a rigorous science»³⁸. We see that Husserl is guided by this idea of rigorous science not only in the essay Heidegger cites, but in the analysis of categorial intuition itself, where Husserl lets the symbolic form of logical judgment («*A is P*... «an *S is P*», «This *S is P*» etc.) decide how intuition is to be divided into the sensory and the categorial³⁹. This shows that for Husserl, formal judgment is a privileged form of λόγος that provides a secure, unambiguous basis for a scientific taxonomy of intuition. Heidegger, by contrast, privileges the λόγος of facticity, a speech that is always already involved in factual life and which, therefore, can only be a hermeneutic articulation of the entities Dasein encounters. The radicality of Heidegger's understanding of the «as-structure» lies precisely in this, that every explication of the «as» is based on an interpretive process that discloses it in the first place, but this interpretive process is itself derivative of a pre-theoretical understanding of worldly significance.

There is a distinct temporal character in Heidegger's account of understanding, and it is in the peculiar temporality of understanding that a-priority makes another appearance. Already in the *Logical Investigations* we find that the fulfillment of intentions has a temporal dimension: There is, Husserl states, a «phenomenologically peculiar form of unity» between the name and the intuitive datum that is named in the intending of a thing, and this unity is the «consciousness of fulfillment»⁴⁰. When the achievement of fulfillment is taken «dynamically», i.e., from the point of view of intending consciousness, the members of the relation «unfold themselves in a temporal pattern». Fulfillment, the truth-begetting coincidence of intuition and intention, occurs both as «temporal and material coincidence». The dynamic fulfillment of an intention, that is, fulfillment considered from the subjective side, is for Husserl «an event of self-fulfillment»⁴¹.

³⁵ See *ivi*, §6-7; Heidegger (2009a), §10-12.

³⁶ Husserl (2001), vol. 2, p. 271.

³⁷ Heidegger (2005), pp. 42-47.

³⁸ *Ivi*, p. 46.

³⁹ Husserl (2001), vol. 2, pp. 275-6.

⁴⁰ *Ivi*, p. 206.

⁴¹ *Ivi*, p. 207.

Heidegger adapts this Husserlian insight to his phenomenology of factual existence, in which fulfillment as event becomes the present interpretation of an entity which makes explicit the context of an already understood world. The disclosive intention of Husserl's conscious fulfillment becomes for Heidegger Dasein's disclosive interpretation with its basis in a fore-understanding of the world. It is within this temporal context that «the apriori existential constitution of understanding» comes to the fore⁴². The articulation of the «as-structure» of an entity depends on the significance of the world as a set of interrelated meanings, and this significance of the whole is a-priori with respect to any ontic interpretation that might articulate Dasein's understanding. This peculiar a-priority is precisely the fore-structure of understanding that inconspicuously determines the possibility of the understanding of useful things. Thus, when a naïve interpreter states that her interpretation is based simply on what is there, «that which initially "is there" is nothing other than the self-evident, undiscussed prejudice of the interpreted which necessarily lies in every interpretive approach... namely, that which is pre-given *in* [the fore-structure of understanding]»⁴³. Thus, the interpretive process of understanding is the first place in Heidegger's phenomenology where a-priority and hermeneutics are joined.

At play here is a singular kind of temporality that, on one hand, conditions the possibility of understanding and, on the other, depends on the temporality of Dasein itself. For the fore-structure of understanding is Dasein itself as its own project: the fore-structured significance of the world signifies according to Dasein's project, the project that defines the way in which Dasein is in the world as caring [*sorgend*]. We must inquire further into the structures of project and care in order to grasp more fundamentally the temporality that joins a-priority and hermeneutics in fundamental ontology.

4. Projection of Possibility and Futurality of Understanding

Understanding is not a faculty of Dasein, but an aspect of its very being. As understanding, Dasein projects meaning onto the world – not as a determination thrown over a world that is simply present [*vorhandene*], but as possibility. What Dasein projects is a particular possibility of being, according to which the world is disclosed as significant in this or that way. Yet «possibility as an existential is the most primordial and the ultimate positive ontological determination of Dasein», so much so that Heidegger refers to Dasein as «potentiality of being» and «being-possible»⁴⁴. The unity of Dasein and the world is thus highlighted in understanding as the projection of Dasein's possibility-for being, for it is ultimately Dasein itself as being-in-the-world that is understood. In disclosing the totality of relevance of the world, Dasein at the same time discloses how its own being is to be understood. As we stated above, this disclosure is a-priori with respect to each instance of understanding, or, in Heidegger's terms, «Dasein... has always already projected itself and is, as long as it is, projecting»⁴⁵.

In its priority, the structure of projection reveals a difference, a temporal gap, within Dasein's being as being-possible. On one hand, factual Dasein is as it is because the projection of its own possibility belongs essentially to facticity. A particular possibility has always already been projected such that Dasein always already finds itself within an already significant world. On the other hand, considered according to its being-possible, Dasein is always more than it factually is because its being-possible exceeds its factual being. In this sense, Dasein is said to be ahead of itself in its understanding: it has always already thrown

⁴² Heidegger (2010a), pp. 140-149.

⁴³ Ivi, pp. 146-150.

⁴⁴ Ivi, pp. 140-149.

⁴⁵ Ivi, pp. 136-145.

ahead of itself a possibility that it will work out interpretively in its facticity. On the basis of this differential temporality, Dasein can say to itself with Nietzsche, «become what you are!»⁴⁶.

We now begin to grasp the temporality of understanding more fully. If Dasein understands its being-in-the-world projectively, then «the future underlies this understanding, and it does so as a coming-toward-oneself»⁴⁷. That is to say, in interpreting a world that is always already significant, Dasein encounters nothing other than a possibility-of-being that it itself is – it encounters itself. Dasein's ontological movement toward its world is therefore a movement toward itself, toward the ontological “more” of its being-possible. In this sense, Dasein is «constantly ahead-of-itself» and the temporality of understanding is «primarily futural»⁴⁸. Understanding is thus the futural dimension of Dasein which, as ontologically prior, makes possible the interpretive encounter of the ecstatic present. The exposition of understanding as projected possibility made present discloses understanding more clearly as hermeneutic and a-priori at once – the former, because making entities present in their significance is Dasein's fundamental hermeneutic situation; the latter, because this hermeneutic situation is grounded in the temporality of understanding, whose *fore*-structure constitutes its priority.

5. *Ontology of Dasein: A-Priori Hermeneutics and the Horizon of Time*

Our inquiry into Heidegger's conception of understanding has thus far indicated that Dasein's own temporality brings hermeneutics and a-priority together. To conclude this investigation, we must clarify this insight by re-inserting it in its broader context, namely, in the ontological question that motivates the analytic of Dasein in the first place. The answer to the question of the meaning of being begins, in fact, with the analytic or «hermeneutic of Dasein» and in turn the hermeneutic of Dasein finds its motivating force in the ontological question⁴⁹. In this sense, the *Daseinsanalyse of Being and Time* is not a philosophy of subjectivity, but a preparation for the ontology of being as such. In the same way, our investigation of understanding is best understood not as a strange epistemology, but as preparatory remarks on the possibility of the understanding of being.

Heidegger undertakes the analytic of Dasein because «the sole ground of possibility for the question of being as such is *Dasein itself insofar as it is possible*»⁵⁰. What makes Dasein such a ground is that Dasein has a fore-understanding of being; the question of the meaning of being is possible only insofar as Dasein somehow understands being «ahead of time». In turn, the fore-understanding of being is possible insofar as being itself is given to understand. This hermeneutic situation, fore-understanding and pre-given being, is therefore the very «place» from which the answer to the ontological question can begin⁵¹. Being itself is pre-given as the «matter at hand» for factual Dasein to take up, but being itself is more fundamentally given “to” Dasein as that about which Dasein cannot help but be concerned, i.e., as that which Dasein has necessarily fore-understood. The articulation of the horizon of sense against which beings are understood, i.e., understanding in the “as” of interpretation, is therefore not merely the elucidation of this or that possibility which factual Dasein has projected, but rather, in its deepest ontological significance, the only possible way to work out the meaning of being as such⁵². Furthermore, we now see that Dasein itself is the very question of being because it is given to its own interpretive activity as that peculiar being who is pre-occupied with, who has a fore-understanding of, its own being.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ Ivi, pp. 309-336.

⁴⁸ Ivi, pp. 337-310.

⁴⁹ Ivi, pp. 437-497.

⁵⁰ Heidegger (2009a), p. 136.

⁵¹ McNeill (1994), p. 402.

⁵² Ivi, p. 404.

We are finally able to bring together hermeneutics and a-priority in their deepest ontological intimacy. Their togetherness constitutes nothing short of the locus of the ontological question, the place where the question at once arises and finds the methodology for its own address. The ontology of Dasein, as the most fundamental level of hermeneutic articulation, is always «*structured and guided in advance* in accordance with the [fore-understanding] of hermeneutic interpretation»⁵³. Therefore, the development of understanding in interpretation, the hermeneutic understanding analyzed thus far, is the only possible method for coming to properly ontological, that is, a-priori conclusions regarding the question of being.

The lecture course *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* makes the last step toward this inextricability of a-priority and hermeneutics in fundamental ontology. The end of the course focuses on difference in an ontological and temporal sense: the difference between being and beings, and the difference between temporality and Temporality. It is within this differential context that Heidegger writes, «because they are assertions about being *in the light of time*, all ontological propositions are Temporal propositions». Only as Temporal can ontological propositions be properly ontological, which is to say «*a priori propositions*»⁵⁴. If at the origin of fundamental ontology lies the hermeneutic situation – originarily given being that is interpreted according to an always already a-priori understanding – the priority of both fore-understanding and being is only possible because time is the horizontal condition against which the question of being can arise at all. Thus Heidegger states that «if being, which has always already been understood “earlier” is to become an express *object*, then the objectification of this *prius*, which was forgotten, must have the character of a coming back to what was already once and already earlier understood»⁵⁵. The understanding of being is fundamentally inscribed in time because its possibility depends on the futural being-ahead-of-itself of Dasein as projecting, that is, on the temporal and ontological difference that lies at the heart of Dasein. At once factual and ontological, Dasein carries within itself difference as ek-stasis, as that which makes possible the prior and the posterior, as that which structures understanding as hermeneutically circular. Thus, the possibility of understanding being is such that it requires a fore-understanding of being, and the possibility of this fore-understanding demands a «pre-cursory» projection upon time itself. For «*time is earlier than any possible earlier... it is the condition for an earlier as such*»⁵⁶. We can conclude, therefore, that the hermeneutic situation of ontological understanding is what is a-priori in fundamental ontology, but the a-priori as such, the ‘earlier’ as such, finds its possibility in its inscription in the *primitivus*, in time itself.

6. Conclusion

We can conclude that in his engagement of Husserl, particularly in the *Logical Investigations*, but also through his interpretation of Aristotle, Heidegger forges a phenomenology in which a-priority and hermeneutics are inseparable. In the account of categorial intuition of the *Logical Investigation* Heidegger finds a kind of a-priority that is not limited to the immanence of the subject. Husserl shows that the being of beings in its categorial determinations is given in simple intuition as a *sui generis* excess of meaning, and this leads Heidegger to conclude that phenomenology is the only possible methodology for working out a fundamental ontology. Furthermore, the differing treatment of the «as-structure» between the two phenomenologists showed itself to be symptomatic of a much deeper, if not fundamental, difference between their philosophical approaches. While Husserl is guided in advance by the idea of rigorous science, Heidegger’s Aristotelian heritage leads him to outline the phenomenon of facticity as the only possible point of departure for all phenomenological investigations. Thus, where

⁵³ Ivi, p. 405.

⁵⁴ Heidegger (1988), p. 324.

⁵⁵ Ivi, p. 326.

⁵⁶ Ivi, p. 325.

Husserl's «care for already known knowledge» leads him to demand scientific results that are «binding for all time», Heidegger's analysis of facticity leads him to a conception of being that depends on interpretation for its meaning. In this way, Heidegger brings an essentially hermeneutic understanding of understanding to bear on Husserl's conception of truth as fulfillment. Phenomenological truth for Husserl must be understood as the event of truth, as unavoidably temporal in character, and it is into this temporal context that Heidegger brings his idea of phenomenology as the hermeneutics of facticity. The result of Heidegger's conception of Dasein as self-understanding in a fundamentally futural, temporal way. What Dasein works out in interpreting its interaction with factual entities is in fact its own fore-understanding of being, which is to say, Dasein itself in its potentiality-of-being, in its understanding openness to being. Ultimately, it is Dasein's hermeneutic relation to being, its hermeneutic situation with respect to being, that is a-priori, but the very possibility for this temporal determination is grounded and inscribed in Dasein's own Temporality. Time itself, as the condition of possibility for any «earlier» as such, is what makes possible the a-priority of the hermeneutic of Dasein.

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