

The Pragmatic and Transformative Dimension of Heidegger's Early Method of Formal Indication

Abstract

In the present contribution, I explore the notion of formal indication in Heidegger's early Freiburg Lectures, in order to emphasize that its pivotal meaning both as a method and an expression lies in its preparing and awaking a transformation of the reader's experience. For this purpose, I first of all draw attention to the constitutive ambivalence between the phenomenon of factual life experience and philosophy, so as to further examine the difference between formally indicative "expressions" and "order-concepts". Finally, I analyze the notion of formal indication in the 1921-22 Lecture "Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle", so as to argue that formal indication can be conceived of as a *pragmatic use* of language, which works through practical negations and addresses readers. From this perspective, I claim that formal indication embodies a task to be accomplished by readers, since it points to a transformation of the reader's experience.

Keywords: Factual Life Experience, Formal Indication, Heidegger, Pragmatics, Transformation

§1 Introduction: Heidegger's Early Phenomenology and the Key Role of Formal Indication

Heidegger's early phenomenology is pervaded by the struggle to explicate and express the phenomenon of factual life experience. This struggle concerns the possibility to unfold and put into words factual life experience without objectifying it. What is at issue, therefore, is the attempt to express the pre-theoretical and hence factual enactment of life: an "event"¹, which is already "declined".

The notion of formal indication emerges precisely within this problematic context and embodies both Heidegger's early phenomenological method as well as the structure of Heidegger's phenomenological, i.e. hermeneutic concepts. From this perspective, the notion of formal indication is key in order to shed light on the development of Heidegger's phenomenological thought leading up to *Sein und Zeit*. Thus, on the one hand, this early notion points to the implicit and «hidden weapon»² of Heidegger's early phenomenology; on the other hand, the notion of formal indication unfolds the pervading meaning of all of Heidegger's phenomenological concepts up to – and beyond – *Sein und Zeit*. As Heidegger stated as late as 1929: «Death, Resolution, Existence, [...] all these concepts are *formally indicative*»³.

In the present contribution, I will explore the notion of formal indication in Heidegger's early Freiburg Lectures. I will first of all consider the methodological remarks put forward in Heidegger's 1920-21 Lecture "Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion". These remarks constitute the most extensive examination which Heidegger offers of this notion. For this purpose, I will focus first of all on the constitutive ambivalence of the phenomenon of factual life experience, in light of the need for a transformation (i.e. a reversal) of the reader's experience in order to attain philosophy. (§2) I will further analyze the pivotal role of formal indication as a means to awake this transformation through an analysis of the

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¹ The notion of event has been spelled out by Heidegger in opposition to the concept of "*Vorgang*". On this point, see GA 57/58, p. 75.

² Kisiel (1997).

³ GA 29/30, pp. 428-429.

difference between formally indicative “expressions” and “order-concepts”, with reference to Heidegger’s examination of Husserl’s notions of generalization and formalization (§3). I will then focus on the notion of formal indication in the 1921-22 Lecture “Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle. Initiation into Phenomenological Research”. I will argue that formal indication can be conceived of as a *pragmatic use* of language, which works through the practical use of negations. From this perspective, I will emphasize that the pivotal meaning of formal indication, conceived both as a method and as a pragmatic expression, lies in its preparing and triggering a transformation of the reader’s experience. I wish to argue that this very transformation – i.e. a necessary “reversal” of the reader’s situation – is the very *task* of Heidegger’s phenomenological i.e. formally indicative concepts. (§4).

§2 *Phenomenology as Reversal: The Ambivalence of the Phenomenon of Factual Life*

I would first of all draw attention to the constitutive ambivalence which pervades the relation between factual life experience and philosophy. These preliminary remarks serve the purpose of assessing the context in which the function of formal indication emerges.

In the 1920-21 Lecture “Introduction on the Phenomenology of Religion”, Heidegger emphasizes that philosophy entirely coincides with phenomenology. The latter, nonetheless, is no longer conceived of as a theoretical attitude, as is the case with Husserl’s formal phenomenology of consciousness. Hence, the notion of formal indication calls precisely into question the sense of “formality” belonging to Husserl’s formalization. Before considering this pivotal point in greater depth (§3), we should address the issue of the constitutive ambivalence which marks the relation between factual life experience and philosophy. Hence, according to Heidegger, factual life experience does not only embody «the point of departure for philosophizing but precisely that which essentially hinders philosophizing itself»⁴. This essential hindering lies in the tendency of factual life to experience itself according to the significant contents of experience. Hence, one experiences the surroundings world (*Umwelt*), oneself (*Selbstwelt*) and others (*Mitwelt*) as something meaningful, i.e. according to the meaningful contexts in which one has been raised and lives. As Heidegger puts this pervasive dimension of significance already in 1919: «The meaningful – that is what is primary. (*Das Bedeutsame ist das Primäre*) [...] When you live in the world, [...] everything comes at you loaded with meaning, all over the time and all over the place»⁵. Accordingly, owing to the significant character of that which is experienced, «the manner of experiencing is *not* co-experienced» and remains «indifferent»⁶. In this sense, in this early Lecture, Heidegger defines the modality of experiencing as “falling”, since life experience is concerned with meaningful contents and merges into them. Such meaningful contents, which correspond to the contexts with which ordinary life is concerned, further possess the implicit tendency to appear as “self-sufficient” and autonomous “objects”. Hence, the significant contents of our experience – i.e. the surrounding world, others and ourselves – appear as self-sufficient crystallized “meanings”, which are detached from the modality of experiencing them. As Heidegger puts this point in this early lecture: «Factual life experience is the attitudinal, falling, relationally indifferent, self-sufficient concern for significance»⁷. It is not difficult to recognize in this notion of “falling” (*abfallend*) a first formulation of the pivotal motility of “*Verfallen*”⁸ which will pervade the notion of *Dasein* in *Sein und Zeit*. In this early context, this indifferent and falling dimension concerns the *manner* of experiencing and marks the reference-sense (*Bezugssinn*) of the phenomenon of factual life. Heidegger explicates the phenomenon of factual life according to its content-sense, its reference-sense and its enactment-sense. While the content-sense refers to that which is experienced and

⁴ GA 60, p. 16.

⁵ GA 56/57, p. 73.

⁶ GA 60, p. 12.

⁷ Ivi, p. 16.

⁸ GA 2, §38.

corresponds in Husserl's term to the noematic content, the reference-sense points to the modality in which something is experienced (the noetic moment)⁹. Heidegger thematizes a further dimension, which is absent in Husserl, so as to define how the modality of experiencing is *enacted*. Hence, it is crucial to note that the sense of enactment (*Vollzugssinn*) spells out a temporal-historical motility: it points to the enactment of a modality of experiencing within an always-particular situation. By contrast to Husserl's understanding of situations as "actual circumstances", "situation" is thus for us something that belongs to understanding in the manner of enactment¹⁰. Hence, situations are no longer conceived of as «*tatsächliche Umstände*»¹¹, as empirical or psychological facts, which are objects of a historical or psychological examination, as is the case in Husserl's *First Logical Investigation*. Rather, the notion of situation spells out the modality in which the relation (*Bezugsinn*) to the significant contents of experience – that is, to our environment, to others, and to ourselves – is *enacted*. From this perspective, the sense of enactment involves a constitutive reference to a particular situation, so as to constitutively point to the personal experience of the individual who enacts it. Hence, the sense of enactment belongs to «the original "I am" [...], the departure for the situation can be taken from here»¹². The *sense of enactment*, therefore, concerns «personal existence»¹³, and indicates the sense of being of "I am", i.e. a sense of being which has to be expressed with personal pronouns, so as to include a constitutive reference to the situation in which it is expressed, this means: a necessary indexicality¹⁴. As Heidegger puts this point already in 1920-21: «The problem is the origin of the concepts of Being; the predicative "is" of theoretical explication arises out of the original "I am," not the other way around»¹⁵.

What emerges here is the pervasive ambivalence which marks the relation between factual experience and philosophy. Thus, how can philosophy *express* the *enactment* of a modality of experience, which is always personal and situated, without making this very *enactment* a meaningful *content* of language, thereby reiterating the falling tendency of factual life? This pervasive difficulty intensifies even further, when one considers that factual life, in its very falling tendency, is the sole dimension that can lead philosophy to itself. Hence «philosophy arises precisely from factual life experience and springs back into it in a reversal that is entirely essential»¹⁶. Thus, it becomes clear that philosophy is able to explicate a very personal and situated *enactment* only if it addresses the reader, i.e. the very personal experience of the individual who philosophizes in her very particular situation, here and now. Philosophy, therefore, has to make the reader experience the falling tendency of her life, so as to allow her to re-enact or *reverse* her own life-experience. Only through this very re-enactment can the totality of the phenomenon of factual life be explicated in its «totality of sense [...] (content-, relational-, enactment-sense)»¹⁷. This is the pivotal transformation (i.e. the reversal) of one's own personal life-experience which is required in order to attain philosophy. As Heidegger puts it:

Philosophy itself can only be reached through a reversal (*Umwendung*), but not through a simple turning which would orient cognition merely toward different objects but, more radically, through an authentic transformation (*Umwandlung*)¹⁸ (translation modified).

⁹ See Ardovino (1998), p. 67.

¹⁰ GA 60, p. 90.

¹¹ Hua XIX, p. 81.

¹² GA 60, p. 91.

¹³ GA 59, p. 197.

¹⁴ On this notion of indexicality in relation to Heidegger's formal indication, see Cimino (2011). Furthermore, this constitutive reference to the context points to the very dimension of meaning of Husserl's *okkasionelle Ausdrücke*. On this pivotal relation see Dahlstrom (2012), Escudero (2010), and Guidi (2018). It is worth noting that the very notion of Dasein is a shifter and therefore involves a pivotal indexicality. On the notion of Dasein as a shifter see Agamben (2007), p. 71f.

¹⁵ GA 60, p. 92.

¹⁶ Ivi, p. 15.

¹⁷ Ivi, p. 62.

¹⁸ Ivi, p. 10.

From this perspective, the ambivalent relation between factual life and philosophy is a constitutive one and it is of great importance. Thus, the essential obstacle to philosophy, i.e. the falling tendency of factual life, embodies at the same time the sole dimension in which the transformation which leads to philosophy can take place: “in (factual life) the path to philosophy is made possible and the reversal which leads to philosophy is enacted”¹⁹ (translation modified). The notion of formal indication is precisely tied to this constitutive and pervasive ambivalence. Hence, the function of formal indication is to *address readers* so as to prepare the transformation (i.e. the *reversal*) of the factual life-experience of the situated individual who philosophizes. This is the “reversing-transforming”²⁰ function of formal indication²¹. «*The function of drawing attention from out of personal existence and for it is co-determining for the structure of the concept*»²².

Hence, as Heidegger clearly states as late as 1929: «the challenge to such a transformation lies within each one of these concepts [...]. These concepts are indicative because they can only ever address the challenge of such a transformation to us, but can never bring about this transformation themselves. They point into Dasein itself. But Dasein – as I understand it – is always mine»²³. Indeed, as Heidegger further claims, «(philosophical) understanding [...] is not comportment toward ... (intentionality) in any sense, but rather a *how of Dasein* itself»²⁴.

§3 *Formale Anzeigen VS Ordnungsbegriffe: Heidegger's Assessment of Husserl's Generalization and Formalization*

In order to examine the modality in which formal indication addresses readers, so as to prepare the transformation of their life-experience, it is necessary to clarify the difference between a theoretically motivated determination by means of order-concepts and an explication by means of formally indicative expressions²⁵. For this purpose, I will consider Heidegger's assessment of Husserl's distinction between generalization and formalization, so as to define, in a negative way, the meaning of “formal” pertaining to the notion of formal indication.

Heidegger emphasizes that only philosophizing, i.e. phenomenology, requires a transformation of the factual experience in order to be achieved. On the contrary, objective science lies in continuity with the factual life experience, since it radicalizes the very falling tendency of life²⁶. This is what Heidegger calls «the fundamental difference between philosophy and science»²⁷. The falling tendency of factual experience to understand itself as a self-sufficient and “meaningful content” is thus radicalized through the enactment of science, conceived of as the objective determination of a material field (*Sachgebiet*). Hence, the meaningful contents, which we experience according to an «indifferent attitude»²⁸ (*Einstellung, Bezugsinn*) in our ordinary experience, become a material region or object through the enactment of an objective determination. Within an objective determination,

¹⁹ Ivi, p. 11.

²⁰ GA 61, p. 153.

²¹ On this very reversal-transformative function see Dahlstrom (1994), p. 783.

²² GA 57, p. 196. In the same lecture, “Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression. Theory of Philosophical Concept Formation”, Heidegger states: «Die formale Anzeige hat innerhalb der Philosophie eine umgängliche Bedeutung, die verständlich gemacht werden kann, allerdings nur dann, wenn die formale Anzeige und das mit ihr Angezeigte nicht hypostasiert und zum Ziel und Gegenstand philosophischer Betrachtung gemacht wird, sondern in einer fest bestimmten Weise im Dienste der Aufgabe der Philosophie steht: des aufmerksam machenden Ursprungsverstehens» (ivi, p. 85).

²³ GA 29/30, p. 428.

²⁴ GA 63, p. 15.

²⁵ The formal indication has been at the center of a rich debate over the last 25 years. In this context, special emphasis has been placed on the difference between formal-indicating expression and order-concepts. See (among others) Kisiel (1995, 2006), Shockey (2010), Vetter (2016).

²⁶ Cf. GA 60, p. 15f.

²⁷ Ivi, p. 7.

²⁸ Ivi, p. 12.

therefore, the reference-sense to the content of the experience is no longer enacted in an indifferent way, as is the case in our factual life experience; rather, it undergoes a complete devitalization:

With this “attitude” [*Einstellung*] the living relation [...] has “ceased” [*eingestellt*] (in the sense of “it will cease,” for instance, as one says, “The struggle has ceased”). We have then a double meaning in the word “attitude”: first an attitude toward a realm of the matter, secondly a ceasing of the entire human relation to the material complex²⁹.

According to this “devitalizing” attitude (*Bezugssinn*) an objective process of determination as generalization takes place. At this stage, a material complex becomes a material region, which can be determined. It is here that the determining process of generalization takes place. As Heidegger emphasizes with reference to Husserl’s concept of generalization,

the generalization is bound in its enactment to a certain material domain. The order of stages of ‘generalities’ (genus and species) is determined according to the matter at issue [*sachhaltig bestimmt*]. The measuring to [*Anmessung an*] the material context is essential³⁰.

Heidegger recalls here Husserl’s notion of generalization, in order to distinguish the latter from the process of formalization, which pertains to Husserl’s phenomenology. Hence, with the notion of generalization, Husserl points to that process of determination of a singular material object through the general category conceived of as *genus*. With regard to the process of generalization, Husserl clarifies: «e.g. the essence triangle is subordinate to the summum genus Spatial Shape; and the essence, red, to the summum genus, Sensuous Quality»³¹. Heidegger emphasizes that generalization is a «way of ordering»³² which is tied to the material content of the object. Generalization is therefore bound to a circumscribed material region. Hence, this way of ordering is «linked to a certain material area of things (*Sachgebiet*) and presupposes a whole complex of *Sachgebiete* structured in a hierarchical way, which requires the *a priori* judgment to proceed according to a pre-defined series of degrees. In this sense, for example, red is a sensuous quality just because it is a color»³³. Heidegger describes the way of ordering pertaining to the process of generalization as follows:

Generalization is thus ordering; it is determination from another, such that this other belongs, as encompassing, to the same material region [*Sachregion*] as that to be determined. Generalization is thus an integration into the material complex of another³⁴.

On the contrary, the process of formalization, which marks Husserl’s phenomenology, is a radically different one. Thus, the predicate “essence”, for example, is not the genus of the species “red”, like the encompassing material *summum genus* “sensuous quality”. Rather, the predicate essence pertains to every object, it «can be said of anything and everything»³⁵. Hence, the predicate “essence” belongs to those “eidetic singularities”, at the top of which stands the «formal-ontological category in general»³⁶. Thus, formalization does not spell out a process, which determines an object through the encompassing general material category conceived of as *genus*. Rather, formalization abstracts from the materiality of the object, i.e. from its content, so as to bring out the various ways in which it is given. As

²⁹ Ivi, p. 48.

³⁰ Ivi, p. 58.

³¹ Hua III/1, p. 32.

³² GA 60, p. 59.

³³ Bancalari (2015), p. 144 (my translation).

³⁴ GA 60, p. 60.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ Hua III/1, p. 32.

Heidegger puts this point:

Formalization is not bound to the particular “what” of the object to be determined. The determination turns away from the materiality of the object, it observes the object according to the aspect in which it is given; it is determined as that which is grasped; as that to which the cognizing relation refers. An “object as such” means only the “to which” of the theoretical attitudinal relation³⁷.

According to Heidegger, the unquestioned pre-conception – which is entailed by the notion of formalization – lies in its reference or relational-sense (*Bezugsinn*), i.e. in the *modality* in which a phenomenon is given. Hence, formalization is a way of ordering which determines phenomena as the *correlata* of a theoretical attitude. Heidegger articulates his critique of the notion of formalization as follows:

One could say that a formal-ontological determinateness says nothing about the “what” of that which it determines, and thus does not prejudice anything. But exactly because the formal determination is entirely indifferent as to content, it is fatal for the relational – and enactment-aspect of the phenomenon – because it prescribes [...] a theoretical relational meaning. *It hides the enactment-character (das Vollzugsmäßige)* ³⁸ (my emphasis).

According to Heidegger, Husserl's phenomenology presupposes that the *modality* in which a phenomenon is given can be grasped within a theoretical attitude, namely by means of an act of reflection within the formal sphere of consciousness. According to Heidegger, on the contrary, factual life-experience cannot be grasped within a theoretical attitude, since the modality in which factual life is “given” is already *enacted*, which means that it is already personal, linguistic, and temporally-historically situated. Indeed, the *indifference* concerning the manner in which experience is enacted, i.e. the very falling tendency of life, as emphasized in the previous section, does not correspond to an accidental “hindering”, but rather points to an «essential [one]»³⁹. The *indifference* which marks the *modality* of experiencing, therefore, cannot be deliberately and voluntarily overcome through the process of reductions, so as to grasp the modality of experiencing in a theoretical attitude within the formal sphere of consciousness⁴⁰. Rather, the indifference of the modality of experiencing refers to the very fallen tendency of life, and has to be experienced as such by readers within their factual situations. For this reason, the meaning of “formal” entailed by the notion of *formal* indication must be distinguished from any theoretically motivated determination conceived of as a *way of ordering*, and therefore both from generalization and formalization. Heidegger writes:

Formalization and generalization are thus (...) theoretically motivated. Ordering occurs in their enactment: directly in generalization, indirectly in formalization. To the contrary, the “formal indication” does not concern an order. In the formal indication one stays away from any classification; everything is precisely kept open. The formal indication has meaning only in relation to the phenomenological explication⁴¹.

Formal indication, therefore, does not correspond to a “way of ordering” and hence it does not match a concept-order (*Ordnungsbegriff*). Rather, it is what Heidegger calls an “*expression*” (*Ausdrucksbegriff*)⁴². Thus, formal indication embodies the «*use of a sense in*

³⁷ GA 60, p. 61.

³⁸ Ivi, p. 63.

³⁹ Ivi, p. 16.

⁴⁰ For a comprehensive assessment of the relation between Heidegger and Husserl's phenomenology, see (for instance) Figal and Gander (2009).

⁴¹ GA 60, p. 64.

⁴² GA 59, p. 197.

its general meaning»⁴³ (my emphasis), which guides the phenomenological explication. From this perspective, I wish to argue that this expression embodies a pragmatic use of language, the very same which prepares and awakes a transformation in the reader's personal and situated experience, i.e. existence.

4§ The Pragmatic Use of Formal Indication as a Transformative Task

In this last section, I aim to examine some distinctive features of formal indication, by considering Heidegger's 1921-22 Lecture "Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle. Initiation into the Phenomenological Research", so as to emphasize that formal indication corresponds to a *pragmatic use* of language, which aims to awake a transformation of the reader's situated and personal existence – an "*Umkehr*"⁴⁴ of her own factual life. From this perspective, I wish to argue that formal indication embodies a transformative task to be accomplished by the reader. This transformation lies in experiencing the very falling tendency of one's own life, so as to bring back the *enactment* of life to its constitutive "*Fraglichkeit*"⁴⁵, or "necessary uncertainty"⁴⁶, i.e. to the impossibility to found and ground one's own factual life as such.

I would first of all recall that formal indication is nothing other than «the use of a sense in its general meaning»⁴⁷. Hence, the methodical function of formal indication, as well as the peculiar way in which phenomenological concepts as formally indicative expressions explicate phenomena, can be conceived of as the *pragmatic use* of language. The pragmatic dimension of language – to put it in very general terms – is focused on *what happens beyond saying something*: what speech-acts are performed *in* or *by* saying what is said, and further what is *generated* by saying what is said⁴⁸. Correspondingly, formal indication points to the *use* of a general meaning and therefore it does not communicate an univocal and determinate *semantic* content. Hence, this general meaning is, «preliminarily, (still) taken in an *entirely undetermined sense*»⁴⁹. Moreover, the *use* of an indeterminate and general meaning entails a pragmatic function, since it *addresses* readers, so as to *warn them* not to adopt a theoretical attitude. As Heidegger puts this point:

the indication should indicate beforehand the relation of the phenomenon (*Bezugsinn*) – in the negative sense, however, the same as if to warn! A phenomenon must be so stipulated, such that its relational meaning is held in abeyance. One must prevent oneself from taking it for granted that its relational meaning is originally theoretical. The relation and enactment of the phenomenon is not preliminarily determined, but is held in abeyance⁵⁰.

This is the very *pragmatic* "prohibitive-negative" function of the formal indication. Hence, «the formal indication is a *defense* [*Abwehr*], a preliminary *securing*, so that the enactment-character (*Vollzugscharakter*) still remains free»⁵¹. As Heidegger describes this function in the 1921-22 lecture "Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle", formal indication possess together with "an indicating also a *prohibitive* (detering, denying) *character*"⁵².

This prohibitive-indication goes together with the pragmatic "use of negation"⁵³. The

⁴³ GA 60, p. 54.

⁴⁴ GA 61, p. 72.

⁴⁵ Ivi, p. 35.

⁴⁶ GA 60, p. 105.

⁴⁷ Ivi, p. 54.

⁴⁸ For an overview of the notion, see Korta and Perry John (2015). The pragmatic dimension of Heidegger's formal indication and its relation to Wittgenstein's language-games has been underlined by Rentsch (2003), in particular pp. 139-168.

⁴⁹ GA 60, p. 64.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² GA 61, p. 141.

⁵³ GA 58, p. 263 (my translation).

pragmatic use of negation takes as its starting point an ordinary, i.e. "inauthentic"⁵⁴, meaning, the very meaning according to which factual life understands itself and on the base of which it is enacted. The indeterminate and general meaning, which is formally indicated, is therefore an "inauthentic" one. Hence, in addition to having a prohibitive function, formal indication pragmatically *negates* the inauthentic "meaningful content" of life experience, so as to make it empty, for the purpose of drawing readers' attention to the *very falling modality of enactment*, which belongs to their factual life. Heidegger explains:

"*Fomally indicated*" here means that that which is said is of the character of the "formal," and so is admittedly inauthentic (*uneigentlich*). Yet precisely in this "in" (*un*) there resides at the same time a positive reference. The empty content in its sense-structure is at the same time that which provides direction toward the enactment. There resides in the formal indication a very definite bond; this bond says that I stand in a quite definite direction of approach, and it points out the only way of arriving at what is authentic, namely, by *exhausting and fulfilling what is inauthentically indicated*⁵⁵.

Hence, the function of formal indication lies precisely in making readers re-enact, and hence "fulfil" or experience, the falling and inauthentic "enactment" of their own factual life. In 1921-22 Heidegger refers to this very falling tendency as the essential and unavoidable "declining" (*Ruinanz*) motility of life⁵⁶. Hence, this declining, i.e. falling, dimension cannot be eliminated as such. Rather, the very task of formal indication is to make readers aware of and attentive to this falling motility, i.e. to the fact that one life already understands itself on the base of the inherited meanings in which it merges. Hence, formally indicative concepts aim precisely to make readers experience this very motility of falling, i.e. the fact that their own factual life and existence are «necessarily already declined»⁵⁷. The pragmatic use of formal indication aims to "intensify"⁵⁸ (*Steigerung*) this declining and fallen motility, so as to "hold" factual life "genuinely in the decline" (*im Abfall aber genuin festgehalten*)⁵⁹. This is the transformation which formal indication is intended to trigger. From this perspective, I would argue that formal indicative concepts embody a task to be accomplished by readers, since readers have to (re-)enact this declining tendency and hence transform the modality of their comportment toward it. This is the "*Umwendung*"⁶⁰, the "*Umkehr*"⁶¹ or "*Gegenruinante Bewegtheit*"⁶² in the reader's personal and situated existence which formal indication aims to awake. With the intensification of this falling character, one is brought back to the very *motility* or enactment of one's own life, so as to experience the impossibility to found and assure it. Experiencing the very declining tendency of life, i.e. the "fact" that one understands oneself on the basis of the inherited meanings in which one is immersed and with which one merges means experiencing the "*Fraglichkeit*"⁶³ or "necessary uncertainty"⁶⁴ of one's own life: the impossibility to control, found and assure it. As Heidegger puts it:

⁵⁴ GA 61, p. 33.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ See, for instance, *ivi*, p. 131.

⁵⁷ As Oudemans puts this pivotal point: «Diese Gegen-Ruinanz kann nicht bedeuten, daß es eine Position außerhalb der Ruinanz gibt - diese ist ja total. Es geht Heidegger um einen Kampf des Philosophierens gegen sich selbst [...], oder, was dasselbe ist, um einen Kampf der Ruinanz gegen sich selbst. Der Philosoph kann nichts anderes tun, als sich völlig in diese Ruinanz oder Uneigentlichkeit hineinzustellen, aber dann nur so, daß er sich damit zugleich in entgegengesetzter Richtung bewegt [...]». Oudemans (1990), p. 88.

⁵⁸ GA 61, p. 139.

⁵⁹ GA 61, p. 33.

⁶⁰ GA 60, p. 10.

⁶¹ GA 61, p. 73.

⁶² *Ivi*, p. 153.

⁶³ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁴ GA 60, p. 105.

The authentic foundation of philosophy is a radical, existentiell grasp of and maturation of questionableness (*Zeitigung der Fraglichkeit*); to pose in questionableness (*Fraglichkeit*) oneself and the life's decisive enactment⁶⁵.

Hence, formal indication points to a transformative task to be accomplished by readers, since it has «*the function of drawing attention from out of personal existence and for it (Die Funktion des Aufmerksam-machens – von personaler Existenz aus und für sie)*»⁶⁶ Nonetheless, the pragmatic use of formal indication prepares this transformation but is not able to «bring it about»⁶⁷, since the latter is tied to «the wakefulness of Dasein for itself»⁶⁸, i.e. to the transformation of one's own personal existence.

In conclusion, I have argued that formal indication embodies a pragmatic use of language and possesses a very transformative function: it aims to make readers acknowledge the falling tendency of their life, so as to make them aware of it. Hence, the pragmatic dimension of formally indicative concepts embodies a task to be accomplished by readers, since it is subject to the very experience of the constitutive *Fraglichkeit* and necessary uncertainty of one's own life. From this perspective, a formally indicative phenomenology is tied to the transformation of the situated and personal existence of the individual who philosophizes. The transformative task which is entailed by formal indication spells out the pervasive dimension of all the “existential” characters of Dasein in *Sein und Zeit* as “formally indicative concepts”⁶⁹, and embodies, therefore, the very core of Heidegger's account of philosophy⁷⁰. Hence, as Heidegger emphasizes as late as 1929: «*what philosophy deals with only discloses itself at all within and from out of a transformation of human Dasein*»⁷¹.

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⁶⁵ GA 61, p. 35 (translation modified).

⁶⁶ GA 57, p. 197.

⁶⁷ GA 29/30, p. 429.

⁶⁸ GA 63, p. 15.

⁶⁹ GA 29/30, p. 429.

⁷⁰ For an in-depth analysis of the formal indicative dimension of all the existential concepts in *Sein und Zeit*, see Dahlstrom (2001), in particular pp. 231-255 and Guidi (2016), Chapter I.

⁷¹ GA 29/30, p. 423.

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