

Metaphysics after Heidegger : for his eighty-fifth birthday

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'Without this theological provenance I should never have come upon the path of thinking. But provenance decides destination' (Unterwegs zur Sprache, page 96).

PROVENANCE AND GENESIS OF HEIDEGGER'S THOUGHT

Heidegger's reputation in English philosophical circles has suffered badly from his association with Nazism. It would be easy to accumulate quotations to show how the connection suffices to discredit him philosophically. Yet we have no reason for expecting philosophers to be politically informed or enlightened or even sensible. They have in fact often proved very authoritarian and elitist in their views. Furthermore, Wittgenstein visited Russia in the 1930s and seriously considered emigrating there as late as 1939, when it was surely plain enough what Stalinism was like (cf. John Moran: 'Wittgenstein and Russia', *New Left Review* No. 73), but this fact has not affected any one's estimate of his philosophical work. On the other hand, Wittgenstein's philosophy may not be so independent of his social, political and religious opinions and experience as his most devoted exponents have led us to believe. But in the context of his life Heidegger's connection with Nazism is not unintelligible.

(1) *The Swabian background*

The small town of Messkirch in which Martin Heidegger was born in 1889 lies in the province of Baden among the Swabian Alps on the main road from Ulm to Constance. The population was then, as it still is, 85 per cent Catholic. His father, a cooper by trade, was also sexton. The main church, typically rococo, is dedicated to St Martin. In *Der Feldweg*, a brief essay written in 1949, Heidegger indicates how much he owes to his background in this somewhat remote, very traditional, predominately Catholic, essentially rural society, with its nearness to hills and forests and its placid interlacement of agricultural and liturgical rhythms. It has given him a permanent point of reference, an identity and 'a locus, which has enabled him to realise some of the implications of life in an increasingly rootless and homeless society but has also made him vulnerable to mystificatory ideologies. The density of his prose comes largely from his familiarity with the rich Swabian dialect, while the sly wit

and almost ironic gaiety in much of his later writing seems to escape students unaccustomed to the ethos of a peasant community. The very name he bears is almost a joke: *Heide* = heath, moor; *Egger* = harrower: 'one who cultivates previously wild and heathery land'.

Regional loyalties remain strong in this south-west corner of Germany, and Heidegger is aware that Swabia has produced Albert the Great and Henry Suso, Schiller and Hölderlin, Hegel and Schelling (but also Daimler and Zeppelin, whom he never mentions).

(2) *The neo-scholastic training*

In 1903 Heidegger was sent as a boarder to the Catholic *gymnasium* in Constance, no doubt because the rector was a young priest from his native Messkirch. Conrad Gröber was a very gifted and cultivated man. He was to become archbishop of Freiburg in 1932 and gained some notoriety for his attempts to reach a *modus vivendi* with the local Nazis before becoming one of their most consistent and outspoken opponents (publicly condemning their racist doctrines in 1938), though never beyond the limits of their toleration for eminent ecclesiastics. It was his anxiety, expressed in pastoral letters, about a certain 'mysticism' and 'quietism' in the German liturgical movement that led to the writing of the papal encyclical *Mystici corporis* (1943). In 1907 he gave Heidegger a copy of Franz Brentano's dissertation, *On the Manifold Sense of Being according to Aristotle*, which initiated his life-long fascination with Aristotle and the question of the meaning of being. It is not without interest that, in the very year in which Modernism was condemned by the Pope, this brilliant young priest who had only recently completed his studies in Rome should have given a book by Brentano to a boy about to go to a seminary. For the name of Brentano was famous in the German Catholic world. Franz was the nephew of Clemens Maria Brentano, one of the finest of the Romantic poets, but he was well known in his own right as a priest who left the Church in 1873 over the dogma of papal infallibility. Partly through Meinong and Husserl, Brentano has exerted a good deal of influence upon modern logic and phenomenology and it is curious to note his key role in Heidegger's development too.

When he was seventeen and no doubt already instructed in the rudiments of Aristotelico-Thomistic philosophy, Heidegger passed on to the episcopal seminary in Freiburg and then spent a year with the Jesuits. By the time he was twenty he had begun to discover new intellectual horizons and gave up any idea of becoming a priest. In fact from this point onwards he ceased to be a practising Catholic. But traces of his early neo-scholastic formation are unmistakable in his later work. It would be little exaggeration to say that a knowledge of the scholastic tradition is indispensable for reading Heidegger, and even that his writing remains a closed book to those who are ignorant

of it. Indeed, as Peter Mann has pointed out (*New Blackfriars*, January 1970, page 14), 'questions in theological tradition and scholastic theses have a potential explosive power when the neo-scholastic superstructure has been dismantled'. There is a sense in which Heidegger's work is substantially a deconstruction of neo-scholastic ontological metaphysics, and his most characteristic and explosive intuitions are perhaps best approached as radicalisations of typically scholastic theses.

By way of illustration, three clear instances may be mentioned briefly. One of the most fundamental scholastic-metaphysical theses runs to the effect that being and truth are the same: *ens et verum convertuntur*. 'A thing is true by being what it is, and it is what it is by its entity, so that a thing is true by its entity: its entity is its truth' (Phillips, *Modern Thomistic Philosophy*, volume 2, page 178). 'Truth adds nothing to entity except a relation to the mind' (*ibid.*). However all *that* may be, the language is transposed by Heidegger to articulate his understanding of the nature of mind (man) as the place required and established for and by the communication of Being as 'truth'. The old seminary tag turns out to contain a charge of anti-idealism explosive enough to satisfy the most inveterate Thomist, though the consequent Heideggerian subordination of man to the truth of Being represents a dislodgment of the human subject which one might find it harder to accept. The anthropocentrism of the metaphysical tradition is one of Heidegger's chief targets.

Another case of Heidegger's reworking of a scholastic theme may be taken from the customary Thomist interest in the virtue of 'prudence', Aristotle's 'practical wisdom', *phronesis*. What happens in effect is that by reversing the Aristotelico-Thomistic conception of the priority of contemplative reason (theory) over practical reason (practice) Heidegger makes Aristotle's 'man of practical wisdom' (*phronimos*) the hero of *Sein und Zeit*. The intellectualism of the metaphysical tradition is another of Heidegger's targets. Thirdly and finally (though several other examples might be cited), scholastic metaphysics has always been preoccupied with the principle of causality or of the reason of being or of sufficient reason: 'nothing is without cause', *nihil est sine ratione*. In one of his most brilliant reinterpretations of a scholastic principle Heidegger argues that, though every particular being may have a reason for being what it is, there is no reason for being itself. Being is its own ground. The only reason for there being what there is, so he argues, is as Heraclitus said: 'the world is a child at play, playing draughts; the sovereignty belongs to a child' (Fragment 52). We must learn to stop wanting the explanation of life and the ground of being and begin to accept the sheer gratuity and playfulness of what is. The metaphysical determination to explain what must properly be simply accepted is perhaps what Heidegger most wants to undermine: 'it is a lack of education not to know of what

things one should seek a demonstration and of what one should not' (Aristotle).

There is a sense, then, in which Heidegger remains permanently marked by his neo-scholastic formation—in which his mature thought may be read as radical transposition of the metaphysical tradition.

(3) *Student years in Freiburg*

From 1909 until he was conscripted for military service in 1917 Heidegger continued his studies in Freiburg but now, breaking out of the Catholic world of his boyhood and seminary days, he discovered a whole new range of the human spirit and imagination: Hegel, Schelling, Hölderlin, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Rilke, Trakl. . . . As he once pointed out, it would be impossible to record all that these exciting years produced. The poets on the list were to be permanent acquisitions but he kept up his interest in theology too. In fact, looking back on his student days, he has said that it was the professor of art history and the professor of theology whose courses he remembered with most gratitude and affection.

In his chosen field of philosophy he found himself caught up in the neo-Kantian movement which had been dominant in the German universities since about 1870. The particular interest of his own professor, Heinrich Rickert, was the methodology of the historical sciences. But Heidegger had also discovered Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and his doctoral dissertation (an attempt to expel 'psychologism' from logic in a way which is reminiscent of Wittgenstein) shows the influence of Husserl as much as that of Rickert. In the thesis he had to prepare in order to qualify as a lecturer, his *Habilitationsschrift*, he took a text then attributed to Duns Scotus (though later shown by Grabmann to be by Thomas of Erfurt) and tackled head-on the problem of making something of his medieval-scholastic inheritance. His subject was the categories of being and the modes of signification and, as he says, this brought him to the problem of the relationship between being and language as well as to the problem of the relationship between being and truth. Again it seems clear that, however much his experience and perspectives had widened, the set of problems that we recognise as characteristically Heideggerian was already defined at this stage, and its scholastic provenance can hardly be gainsaid.

In 1916 Husserl arrived in Freiburg as professor and soon made Heidegger one of his assistants (Edith Stein was another), and though after his military service Heidegger returned to Freiburg and offered courses on Aristotle, Augustine, medieval mysticism and Descartes, most of his teaching at this period comes under the rubric of phenomenology and it was as a faithful disciple of Husserl that he was invited in 1923 to take up a post in Marburg.

(4) *Marburg and the Protestant component*

From 1923 to 1928 Heidegger taught at Marburg, as beautiful a medieval university town as Freiburg, though much smaller, but, since it lies in the Lahn valley in the Prussian province of Hesse, it must have seemed almost like a foreign country to Heidegger. This is the only period in his life when he has lived outside his native Swabia. And although Marburg was the scene of the ascetical activities of St Elizabeth of Hungary (the finest church in the town was built to enshrine her relics, where they remained until 1539), the city and especially the university (built on the site of the Dominican house) have always been among the principal centres of Lutheran theology. The famous Colloquy on the subject of transubstantiation between Luther and Zwingli took place in Marburg in 1529. It was in this Protestant theological milieu that Heidegger drafted and wrote his most famous book, *Sein und Zeit*, which was to appear in 1927 (the English version, *Being and Time*, came out in 1962).

From notes by Rudolf Bultmann (in *Existence and Faith*, 1960) and by Hans-Georg Gadamer (in *Zeit und Geschichte*, 1964) we can reconstruct the intellectual climate at Marburg during these years. Bultmann himself was the leading figure among the theologians and he soon made friends with Heidegger. The tension within the theological faculty between Bultmann and Rudolf Otto (*The Idea of the Holy*) 'stirred even the students', so Bultmann reports; and discussions became very lively especially when theologians from other universities, like Karl Barth and Friedrich Gogarten, were invited to give guest lectures. As Gadamer remembers it, it was at a lecture by Eduard Thurneysen, introducing the new 'dialectical theology', that Heidegger made his first intervention, insisting that the proper task of the theologian must be to seek the language which would encourage people to believe and to remain in the faith. Other participants in the discussions at this period included Heinrich Schlier, Günther Bornkamm, Karl Löwith and Gerhard Krüger.

At this point, then, Heidegger began to affect the course of Protestant theology, particularly through his friendship with Bultmann. His influence on Bultmann has been documented in a fine study by John Macquarrie (*An existentialist Theology*, 1955), but what remains to be explored in detail is the impact of Protestant theology upon Heidegger. We know how, in his Freiburg days, he had already lectured on some classical theological texts, bringing out their anti-metaphysical potential: I Thessalonians 4 and 5 (the suddenness of the coming of the day of the Lord as disrupting the apparently dehistoricised vision of scholastic metaphysics); II Corinthians 12 (the 'thorn in the flesh' theme as anti-'mystical'); and Augustine's *Confessions*, book 10 (showing how the neo-Platonic language falsifies the experience). But it was only now, as he read Luther and Calvin, that Heidegger was led to make his most radical transformation of

the traditional metaphysical approach—for *reason* he substituted *mortality* as what differentiates mankind from other beings.

From Aristotle onwards the metaphysical tradition has been dominated by the notion of man as the 'animal endowed with reason', the *zoon logon echon*, the 'rational animal' of the Middle Ages. This notion interlocks with a conception of the relationship between reason and feeling as well as a conception of the relationship between rational knowledge of God and faith, and it has ramifications in domains which seem at first sight very remote from the metaphysical tradition. This etherial dream of logocentric man is cancelled in *Sein und Zeit* by an appeal to the brutal phenomenon of our being bound to die. That we know we are *mortal* specifies us more than the fact that we are *rational*. (The word 'death' does not occur in the index to Phillips' *Modern Thomistic Philosophy*.) As Heidegger points out in a footnote (*Sein und Zeit*, page 249), 'from Paul to Calvin's *Meditatio futurae vitae*, the doctrine of man worked out in Christian theology has always, in its interpretation of 'life', also kept in view *death*'. The thanatophobia of the ontological tradition begins to give way to an understanding of human existence as 'being-towards-death', *Sein zum Tode*. And a fresh interpretation becomes possible of the 'understanding' built into 'feeling', while a new approach to 'natural theology' is initiated on the strength of our facing the sovereignty of death in conjunction with recognising our dependence on Nature and our sense of the sacred (matters which Heidegger did not work out until much later).

(5) *Freiburg in the Nazi period*

In 1928 Heidegger was invited back to Freiburg to succeed Husserl. Though it was as a disciple of Husserl that he was invited, and though his first courses were announced as 'phenomenology', he was now almost forty and had discovered his own 'way' which was rapidly to lead him away from anything that might be labelled 'phenomenology'. He began to follow out his own programme, as announced in *Sein und Zeit*, for a reinterpretation (a 'deconstruction') of the whole tradition of western philosophy. He was convinced by now that 'modern philosophy', from neo-Kantianism to phenomenology and logical positivism (not to mention 'existentialism'), was unintelligible except as the continuation of the approach and problematic defined particularly by Descartes, while Descartes could make sense only as a student of Suarez, who led back then to the scholastic metaphysics of the Middle Ages and thence to Aristotle and Plato. No one has ever been more convinced than Heidegger of the truth of Whitehead's dictum that philosophy is only a set of footnotes to Plato. He began to re-read Plato and Aristotle intent on finding hints as to what they decided not to say or simply left unsaid and unthought.

He started to work seriously on the pre-Socratic texts to discover what the Platonic-metaphysical tradition left unexplored and unassimilated.

His researches were soon interrupted. The world-wide economic crisis of 1929 created a situation in Germany where, thanks to mass unemployment and bourgeois desperation, the National Socialist German Workers' Party became the largest political unit in the country. In January 1933 Adolf Hitler was installed as chancellor of the republic at the instigation of a group of politicians, industrialists and landed gentry. The Nazis at once began to deal drastically with the crisis. In April, Professor von Möllendorf, rector of Freiburg university, a member of the Social Democratic Party and well known locally for his hostility to the Nazis, decided to resign. He prevailed upon his uncommitted and non-political friend Heidegger to stand for nomination, and he was elected by the senate, unanimously but for one vote. He was enthusiastically welcomed by the student body the following day. In a typically academic effort to protect the independence of the university, that is to say, the anti-Nazi rector stood down in order to make way for a man who would be 'neutral'. It was precisely because of his political naivety that Heidegger was drawn into politics.

Nothing in his previous experience had prepared him to meet the crisis with any more insight than was shown by most of his contemporaries. In fact, his peasant Catholic background and seminary training probably only made him that much more prone to side with a movement declaring itself to be against international capitalism, communism, liberalism, etc., and for the renewal of national respect and independence, etc. As those holding public office were increasingly required to do, he formally joined the Party in May 1933 and tried for ten months to guide the university into its supposed new role as an instrument of national renewal. The text of his rectorial address shows him insisting that the university staff and students must learn to consider themselves as 'workers' with an essential contribution to make to the reconstruction of the body politic. Even here, the perspective is that of subverting the metaphysical tradition because in fact he takes the tripartite structure of producers-warriors-philosophers from Plato's *Republic*, and insists, against the tradition, on the primacy of manual work: the stress one would expect from *Sein und Zeit*.

In February 1934 Heidegger was summoned to the Ministry of Education in Karlsruhe and instructed to dismiss, for their anti-Nazism, two of the deans of faculty whom he had appointed: von Möllendorf, his predecessor as rector, and the eminent jurist Erich Wolf, another personal friend. He refused and threatened to resign if any more such pressure was put on him. A week or so later he resigned as rector. His successor was appointed by the government (not elected by his peers), and hailed in the local press as the 'first' Nazi rector of the university. Heidegger did not attend his installa-

tion and nobody at the time in Freiburg was in any doubt that he was publicly acknowledging his mistake in ever trying to work with the Nazis.

It might be thought that his break with Nazism in February 1934 was as significant as his adherence to the Party in May 1933. In fact he learned much more quickly than most of his contemporaries. It may be hoped that in future references to his involvement with Nazism attention should also be paid to the manner of his disengagement: it took a certain courage and manifested a certain lucidity. Copies of his rectorial address were immediately seized by local Nazi officials, he was not given a visa to attend a philosophical congress in Prague that same year, and his lecture courses were monitored from then onwards. Jean-Michel Palmier, in the book from which most of the above information is taken (*Les Ecrits politiques de Heidegger*, 1968), prints large extracts from virulent attacks by Nazi 'philosophers' in the official journals upon Heidegger, which show knowledge of then unpublished researches.

The notion current in England that, after 1934, Heidegger relapsed into silence politically and took to lecturing on the harmless subject of poetry has no basis in fact. His lecture courses on Nietzsche, delivered from 1936 to 1942, have been published, and we now see that the main burden of his teaching throughout that period was to offer an alternative interpretation of the significance of the philosophical texts which the Party had misappropriated. He never ran the risk of being arrested and taken to a concentration camp, but for a man whose lectures were kept under surveillance he showed again a certain courage. The Nietzsche volumes, incidentally, provide by far the best introduction to Heidegger's work since they extend far beyond the text of Nietzsche and in fact present his most characteristic ideas in a very open and lucid manner, almost entirely free of the etymologism and obscurity which put off so many readers. Far from keeping silent, in a seminar he ran with Erich Wolf in 1934 Heidegger attacked the Nazi philosopher of law Carl Schmitt; in 1939 his seminar on Ernst Jünger was forbidden; in 1944 he was attacking Rosenberg's racist theories in his course on Heraclitus. Shortly afterwards he was drafted to dig trenches along the Rhine, and his teaching was interrupted until 1951 since he was forbidden to lecture by the French army of occupation and refused to submit to being 'de-nazified'. Throughout the Nazi period the university of Freiburg had been regarded as a centre of resistance to the regime and the blame for this, according to the Gestapo, was partly due to the influence of Heidegger. It is typical of his peasant thrawnness that he made no effort to clear his name of the canard that circulates about his record: he was no hero, but he did learn from his error and conducted himself henceforward not altogether without honour, in a situation which few academic philosophers could have confronted with more credit.

What Heidegger began to learn in this period may perhaps be conveyed by a brief study of a strange phrase that occurs in the lecture course he gave in 1935 which is available in an imperfect English version as *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Distinguishing between 'what is peddled around as the philosophy of National Socialism' (he means the writings of the Party hacks), he speaks of 'the inner truth and greatness of the Movement' which is, he says, 'the encounter between globally determined *Technik* and modern man'. At this stage, then, after his formal break with the Party, he was trying to understand what the movement for national renewal and socialist reconstruction *might have been*, and he interprets it, in language borrowed from Ernst Jünger, as an attempt to meet the problems created by the meshing of the will to power of modern man and the possibilities of technological mastery of the planet. 'It is the moment when man is preparing to assume dominion of the earth as a whole. Nietzsche was the first to raise the question: is man, as he has been and still is, ready to assume that dominion? If not, then what must happen to man as he is, so that he can make the earth 'subject' to himself and thus fulfil the word of the Old Testament? In the perspective of his thinking, Nietzsche calls man as he has been until now 'the last man'. That is not to say that the nature of man will cease with the man so named. Rather, the last man is the man who is no longer able to look beyond himself, to rise above himself, for once, up to the level of his task, and undertake that task in a way that is essentially right. Man so far is incapable of it, because he has not yet come into his own full nature' (*Was heisst Denken*, page 24). That is to say, 'man so far', *der bisherige Mensch*, whom Heidegger goes on to speak of as the 'rational animal', has a great deal to learn about his own 'nature' before he can safely make the earth to which he belongs his own. What Heidegger came to think, in the course of the 1930s, was that there could be no prospect of man's realising his 'nature' until the prevailing system had reached such a state of paroxysm that an alternative might begin to force itself into view. It is not a doctrine that commends itself to Fabian socialists. For Heidegger the prevailing system in the West, ideological as well as political, is 'nihilism' and he welcomes anything that accelerates its course. The sooner it is over the sooner another start may be made. And in the meantime there is nothing for a philosopher to do but to prepare for the day when we shall all be compelled to realise that man cannot safely subject the world to himself without himself being subject to 'Being'.

We cannot safely—savingly—subject to ourselves that which is unless we also subject ourselves to that in virtue of which we are. But the absolute sovereignty of the human subject in the metaphysical tradition, according to Heidegger, means that we have long since become accustomed to ignoring that in virtue of which we have our being. Or rather, in the Christianised metaphysical tradition, we

simply identify that to which we owe our being with that which we (sometimes) call 'God'. Our ontology, as Heidegger says, is onto-theological: we cannot speak of our own being without the intrusion of 'God'.

(6) *Retirement*

In 1951 Heidegger was free to lecture again. He continued to do so until he formally retired in 1957 at the age of sixty-eight, but has taken part in many seminars since and given numerous special lectures. His main work, however, has been to prepare some of his manuscripts for publication. The books he has published since his retirement among the mountains of the Black Forest are too rich and varied to be summarised here, but some attempt must now be made to indicate the essentials of his thought and to suggest how dissemination of the one-time neo-scholastic's work might open the way to a post-metaphysical theology.

ESSENCE AND THEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF HEIDEGGER'S THOUGHT

For better or worse, for better *and* worse, Heidegger's work has exercised a great deal of influence upon theologians, Protestant and Catholic, for exactly fifty years. It was in 1924 that he read to the theological faculty at Marburg a paper which was eventually to develop into *Sein und Zeit*. We have noticed his impact upon Bultmann; it would not be difficult to trace his influence upon subsequent writing in the Protestant tradition. Among Catholics he has influenced Karl Rahner and several other theologians less well known abroad, most of whom attended his lectures in the 1930s. But it is perhaps only as the work of assimilating his later publications progresses that the younger generation of Catholic theologians realises how he can help them: *Menschsein als Gottesfrage*, by Walter Strolz, which appeared in 1965, comes to mind here.

In the course of the Vatican Council, scholastic metaphysics, with its interlocking natural theology and philosophical psychology, suddenly seemed to collapse. The intellectual backing for the penny catechism gave way, the elaborate and sophisticated metaphysical system in which Canon Sheehan's Apologetics was ensconced disintegrated, and a hermeneutic vacuum was left in the minds particularly of the clergy. We began to read the Bible, we took to some of the Fathers, we were offered the new catechetics, but we no longer had a non-theological conceptuality in which to relate and interpret the new data. The Catholic view has always been that theology does not generate its own sense, it is not a private language; on the contrary, it draws its significance and relevance from the ways in which it is

interwoven with common human experience. The truth is that it is all very well to know the Bible and the Fathers and the new catechetics, but the desire and the responsibility remain to say what *we* mean by adopting or accepting the stance of faith, and this means that we want to be able to connect what we believe in one area of faith with what we believe in every other area, and we want to find our beliefs bedded down in the context of ordinary human life.

The old system enabled us to relate one doctrine to another and to locate the truth of the Gospel as an answer to certain human questions—by means precisely of the pre-theological language of scholastic ontology. It may well have been partly a falsification of our experience, as Heidegger would certainly say, and it cannot be resuscitated, but some other language must then be found for our faith in Jesus Christ to interlock with our experience of life.

(1) *The metaphysical tradition*

Heidegger reads the main texts in philosophy since Plato as constituting a single tradition (*die Metaphysik*), of which scholastic metaphysics is only a particularly condensed formulation, and he argues that this 'metaphysical' approach to all with which we have to deal defines and confines our minds and leads in time to the belief in our capacity to subdue the earth. The three main features of *die Metaphysik*, as we noticed above, are (i) the supremacy of the human subject as source of will and meaning; (ii) the privileging of intellect; and (iii) the determination to find the explanation for everything. For Heidegger, this may be summed up by saying that we think only of that which is subject to us (*Seiendes*) but seldom or never of that to which we owe our being (*Sein*). Or we too rapidly identify that to which we owe our being with the explanation for everything which we can find by the powers of our intellect—and *that* we then identify with the God of whom Jesus spoke.

Heidegger's life-work, in fact, may be regarded as an effort to get us to take seriously the question of the meaning of 'Being'—perhaps so that proper space may be opened for the approach of the God whom Jesus invoked.

(2) *From 'Being' to 'Play'*

'Metaphysics is the science of being, which is considered by it altogether in the abstract, simply as being. We ascend, as it were, into the stratosphere of knowledge, and breathe an air so rarefied that it could not support mental life unless we were first trained in abstract thinking in the more congenial climates of natural philosophy. As the science of being it is the science of ultimate reality' (Phillips, *Modern Thomistic Philosophy*, volume 2, page 157). It is this metaphysics as science of being that Heidegger reads as *die Metaphysik* dependent rather upon indifference to 'Being', *Seinsvergessenheit*.

For years he struggled with the notion of 'Being', trying to show how it must mean that to which things, including ourselves, owe their being, not just that which is. He claimed that the pre-'metaphysical' understanding of the world as *physis*, in the pre-Socratics, meant precisely this. But suddenly, in a paper written in 1955, and not before time one might think, he lost patience with the word 'Being' and began to cross it out as soon as he wrote it down (*Zur Seinsfrage*, page 30): 'in the first place to repel the almost ineradicable habit of representing 'Being' as something over against man—standing on its own and only occasionally approaching man . . . as if man were excluded from "Being"'. So much, finally, for the hypostatization of Being. He goes on to say, however, that the cross over the word 'Being' not only marks the end of one struggle with the metaphysical tradition, it also inaugurates a new understanding of 'Being' as the convergence of the four essential dimensions of which the interplay constitutes the human world. The cross on 'Being' finally dissolves and disseminates the scholastic notion of Being into the symbol of the human world as the product of the quadrilateral of forces which Heidegger names as earth, sky, death and the gods.

The playsomeness of the quaternity seems a very 'poetic' way of talking, and it is certainly largely from Hölderlin that the idea comes, but it is also a very ordinary and everyday experience. This richly imaginative and mythopoetic language is precisely what is required to liberate us from the spell of the airless and abstract thinking of the metaphysical tradition in order to allow us to see our everyday world as it in fact is. What is 'ultimate', what 'defines' our world, is the constellation of these four dimensions, none of which is a matter of our choice or invention, all of which thrust themselves upon us. Death looms: we have already seen how mortality seems to Heidegger to force itself upon us and specify man, i.e. define at least one dimension of the 'nature' (*species, eidos*) of 'man'. Secondly, his studies of Hölderlin's conception of 'Nature' brought Heidegger to realise how elemental and irreducible it is that we are beings who stand upon the earth and look up at the sky. The earth has always been regarded as that from which we come; it remains that with which we have to struggle, from which we get our food, and so on. But our relationship to the sky is as defining of our 'nature' as our dependence on the earth: the sky, for Heidegger, means air and sun and rain, it means 'heaven', it means the horizon, it means that which keeps summoning us beyond and above any complacent 'earthiness'. In the most ordinary physical ways we depend upon earth and sky; in the metaphors which make us what we are, so Heidegger thinks, we are held in tension between being 'down to earth' and reaching 'sky-high'. Thirdly and finally, perhaps remembering Rudolf Otto's idea of the numinous, certainly recalling Rilke's angels and Hölderlin's gods, Heidegger argues that there is a fourth, equally ineluctable dimension that thrusts itself upon us, de-

fining the 'space' of our world, and that is how things and events are always opportune or lucky or fatal or in some way or another our 'lot' (however we may then deal with them, including refusing to believe in such stuff).

So if the poets have helped Heidegger to adumbrate this conception of the human world as the domain of significant life sustained by the interplay and intersection of the four dimensions symbolised by the quadrilateral death/earth/sky/the gods, it can scarcely be denied that it is a conception wholly familiar not only to the Swabian peasant but also to the man in the street.

(3) *Metaphysics overcome*

The human world would thus be the creation of the lines of force exerted by the quaternity. As we know from *Sein und Zeit*, being human is 'being-in-the-world'. Being human, *Dasein*, is being the locus (*Da*) for the 'truth' of Being (*Sein*). Restated in the later Heidegger's post-metaphysical language that becomes the insight that being human is being the focus, the gathering-point, of the quaternity. The 'essence' of man, to adapt Marx's phrase, is the ensemble of relations in the constellation death/earth/sky/the gods. So the human subject as originator of meaning yields to the one created in coping with the force of the quaternity, and coping is the word because this will be a matter more of response by practical action than by exercise of intellect. Finally, as one learns to take part as a mortal in the continuing world-game, one's metaphysical determination to have a rational explanation for it dissolves into a wise and wondering acceptance of the game itself. So at least Heidegger seems to believe. The reason of the world's being is in the game itself.

(4) *Room for God?*

Clearly, Heidegger's operation on the metaphysical tradition leaves us with something very like Nietzsche's determinedly atheist belief that the ultimate meaning is simply in the affirmation of life itself. He has always insisted, however, that what he is saying leaves the question of God entirely open. He would think that he has destroyed the God whom the metaphysical tradition identified with 'Being' in the sense of the cause that explains everything. But in transposing the metaphysical notion of Being into the imaginative symbol of the playfulness of the Quaternity, he has perhaps only taken 'the God' out of the world to allow the world to display its own significance and thus at last become the appropriate hermeneutic space for some new move on the part of the One whom Jesus addressed as 'God'. If we could learn to live with death, keeping our place between earth and sky, not unaware of a destiny offered us, then (on Heidegger's view)

we should have done no more than begin to live *humanly*—having come into our own true nature; but who would guess what might happen then? After all, do we not believe, some of us, that the mystery lies with a man whose destiny was a death hanging between earth and sky?

Teach yourself Tongue-speaking

by Antony Archer, O.P.

Glossolalia can be produced with great ease—hence the title of this consideration of it. The interesting question is why people choose to engage in this form of pseudo-language, and this can at least be partially answered by describing its essential features, how people become glossolalists, and some of the conditions that favour it.

Anomalous speech is not so uncommon as is often supposed. Speech ingredients are used in ways ranging from the rudimentary to the highly sophisticated in both secular and religious contexts. The pseudo-languages of spells, incantations, games, nursery rhymes, and scat-singing for instance; those attributed to spirits and Martians; and those sometimes invented by children and adults can be located on such a continuum. What they have in common is that, unlike language, their meaning is not found in the conventions either of their internal organisation or of their relationship with the perceived world. Tongue-speaking in religious contexts is an improvised language of the same kind. Samarin¹, who makes these points and who has analysed glossolalia from a linguistic viewpoint, finds that it always takes the same form—the stringing together of syllables made up of sounds derived from a language known to the speaker. Its fluency is accounted for by the limited number of sounds employed by any particular speaker and the frequency with which the speaker tends to use the same sounds and sequences; its superficial resemblance to language is accounted for by elements such as rhythm, breathing pauses, intonation (sometimes varied for e.g. praise or intercession) and accenting. Its production improves with practice, and various garnishing can be added.

¹William J. Samarin: *Tongues of Men and Angels*, 1972; Macmillan, New York.