

Heidegger's Apolitical Conception of the Political ¹

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1. Straight to the pole of the political

How does Heidegger think the political? He thinks it in the only way possible for what he has been called upon to think, namely, from the truth of being. The truth of being is Heidegger's discovery, it is what he unearths as the unthought dimension within which Greek thinking thought in the first beginning. This dimension is called ἀλήθεια, the Greek word for unhiddenness, unencryptedness, the opposite of λήθη, hiddenness, encryptedness. The two belong together as opposite sides of the same coin, as complementary hemispheres of the same sphere. The lectures which Heidegger held in Winter Semester 1942/43 under the title *Parmenides* (GA54) are devoted to thinking through ἀλήθεια and its strifeful opposite, λήθη. Beings only come to show themselves to human beings within the openness of the truth of being, and this self-showing is always impaired by the contentious opposition of hiddenness which leads to things showing themselves not the way they are in truth, that is, distortedly, or that things remain altogether hidden to human beings.

Let us listen to Heidegger himself introducing the question concerning the political:

Was ist die πόλις? Das Wort gibt, wenn wir den alles erhellenden Wesensblick auf das griechisch erfahrene Wesen des Seins und der Wahrheit mitbringen, die gerade Weisung. Πόλις ist der πόλος, der Pol, der Ort, um den sich in eigentümlicher Weise alles dreht, was an Seiendem dem Griechentum erscheint. Der Pol ist der Ort, um den sich alles Seiende wendet, so zwar, daß im Bereich dieses Ortes sich zeigt, welche Wendung und Bewandtnis es mit dem Seienden hat. (GA54:132f)

What is the πόλις? If we bring along with us the essential view of the essencing of being and truth as experienced by the Greeks which throws a light on everything, then the word gives us a straightforward indication. Πόλις is the πόλος, the pole, the point around which everything that appears to the Greeks by way of beings turns in its peculiar way. The pole is the pivotal place around which all beings turn in such a way that in the area around this point it becomes manifest how beings turn up and to what application they can be turned.

There are several issues concerning translation that I will not go into here. But one important point must be mentioned. The word, *Bewandtnis*, which I have rendered as the application to which things can be turned, or their applicability, is the precise word used in *Sein und Zeit* for the being of *Zeug*, that is, practical things, equipment. The applicability of things is what they are good for, what they can be turned to in the applications of everyday, practical life, their usefulness. Things show themselves, i.e. offer themselves openly, to Dasein, in what they are good for.

¹ Paper presented to the 22nd. Heidegger Symposium *History, Historicity and Mystery in Heidegger* 30 October-02 November, 2002 University of North Texas, Denton, TX, USA postponed from 18-20 April, 2002.

Heidegger characterizes the πόλις further in his 1942/43 lectures as “the locality for the historical residing of Greek humankind” (*die Ort-schaft für den geschichtlichen Aufenthalt des griechischen Menschentums*; GA54:133), “the place gathered into itself for the unconcealedness of beings” (*die in sich gesammelte Stätte der Unverborgenheit des Seienden*; GA54:133) and “the place of essencing of an historical people” (*Wesensstätte des geschichtlichen Menschen*; GA54:136). Since unconcealment is always contentious, the πόλις is also the place of gathering in which untruth and what is not truly a being also do their mischief.

Heidegger’s discussion of the πόλις occurs in the context of a discussion of Plato’s far-reaching dialogue on the πόλις, the Πολιτεία, known to us in English as Plato’s *Republic*. The Πολιτεία deals with the constitution of the πόλις, not merely in the sense of working out a reasonable constitution of an historical place around which an historical people’s lives revolve or could ideally revolve, but in the more essential, philosophical sense of thinking through and showing up the structure of the essence of human community. The subtitle to Plato’s *Republic* is ἡ περὶ δικαίου, On Justice. Human community and justice are thus two essentially intertwined phenomena. Heidegger does not translate the Greek subtitle into German with the usual German word, *Gerechtigkeit*, but with the more unusual and more or less obsolete German word *Fug* which is used today only in the collocation *mit Fug und Recht*. *Der Fug* is the state of affairs in which everything is rightly and properly in joint, with each being in its right and proper relation to each other. Things can also be in disorder, which is *Unfug*, a state of disarray in which things are out of joint, ajar. The German word *die Fuge* means, among other things, simply the join or gap, say, between tiles on a floor.

One quickly notices that Heidegger goes straight to the essence of the πόλις in order to show in which open dimension the pole around which everything turns is situated. Heidegger also points out that Plato’s dialogue on the essence of the political contains two myths which treat ἀλήθεια and λήθη, the famous simile of the cave, a place of hiddenness and hiding, at the beginning of the VIIth book, and the myth of λήθη in the final, XIth book, the culmination of the entire dialogue. The μῦθος in Plato’s dialogue is a way of saying incipiently how the totality of beings is justly allocated or *zugefügt* to human beings in its truth and untruth, its unconcealment and concealment. But in aiming straight for the deepest dimension of Plato’s dialogue, Heidegger abstracts from, i.e. looks away from, the obvious considerations of justice and what constitutes a πόλις. For, what constitutes a πόλις and thus the political dimension of human community in the first place is human beings having dealings with one another in forms of practical intercourse. The all-encompassing dimension of the πόλις has to be tied back to the quotidian phenomenal forms of the polity residing in this practical intercourse in order to bring the phenomenal fullness of human *Mitsein* or sociation or the sharing of the openness of being into explicit view. Only in this way can it be shown that the familiar phenomena of human *Mitsein* are indeed phenomena of being, sprung from the truth of being.²

In Plato’s Πολιτεία justice is first treated in considering intercourse among men as that

² “Only from the originary essencing of truth is what is true determined and thus what beings are and that in such a way that now beings *are* no longer, but that *beyng* springs to ‘beings’. Therefore in the other beginning of thinking, *beyng* is experienced as enpropriation and in such a way that this experience as enspringing transforms all relations to ‘beings’. From now on, humans, i.e. the essential and few of this kind, must build their history out of *Da-sein* and that means beforehand that they effect beings from *beyng* to beings. Not only as previously, that *beyng* is something forgotten but ineluctably only pre-intended, but in such a way that *beyng*, its *truth*, itself bears each relation to beings.” (130. GA65:248)

state of affairs in which each member of the community is allocated what is due to him, i.e. each has 'his own'. (331e, 332c). This definition is modified several times, but leads repeatedly into dead ends or ἀπορίαι, so that Socrates finally proposes that justice be sought not in the individual but in the larger context of an entire πόλις (368e). How a πόλις is set up, its constitution, is its πολιτεία, its polity, its civil order for the intercourse among its citizens in practical everyday life. This polity should be such that it is just, i.e. that beings are allocated to each individual in a fair and equitable manner so that the whole remains in joint. The polity being in joint and just means that a fair and equitable allotment of the goods for living well has been achieved both on the whole and in particular relations. As far as I know, Heidegger nowhere investigates the phenomenon of fair and equitable allotment of goods within the practical sociation of everyday life. His commentary on Plato's Πολιτεία in Volume 54 of the *Gesamtausgabe* does not mention practical social relations, but concentrates on the phenomenon of ἀλήθεια.

In shifting the focus of discussion from the just individual to the just πόλις which is in joint, Socrates first treats its genesis and asks his interlocutor, Adeimantos, whether he sees any other governing point of origin (ἀρχή) of a polis than in the circumstance that "each individual one of us is not self-sufficient, but lacks many things" (ἡμῶν ἕκαστος οὐκ ἀυτάρκης, ἀλλὰ πολλῶν ἐνδεής 369b). This passage is usually interpreted as the argumentation about an historical, temporal beginning and genesis of a human settlement, but there is a deeper meaning embedded in the text if "polis" and "point of origin" are understood in a more essential way. Polis stands for humans living together in some sort of community congregated around a pole as a way of *Mitsein*, of togetherness, constituting an everyday, practical life-world. The point of origin (ἀρχή) is also the principle, which is a point of origin which governs what proceeds from that origin. The principle or determining origin in the case of the πόλις is that each individual is not self-sufficient and strong enough to ward off the help of others (ἀρκεῖν, ἀυτάρκης) but "lacks much", which can only be overcome through some sort of intercourse among humans living in relations of interdependence.

Humans "lacking much" should not be understood simply as humans naturally needing, by virtue of essential somatic constitution, means of subsistence such as food, clothing and shelter — even such needs arise only in an historical context of a way of living together —, but must be rather understood as comprising everything that humans lack upon which they can set their heart's desire where such lack and desire only arise from the usages of an historically shared way of life. What humans lack includes material goods of all kinds, but also the more intangible goods of recognition, esteem, honour, as Aristotle, for instance, explicates in the fifth book of his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Human beings can only unfold their existence in gaining what they lack from others. More than that, human being is in its essence a lack of self-sufficiency, a dependency on others in living together with others in some kind of habitual association practised within the usages of everyday life. The simplest and most rudimentary form of intercourse in which humans gain what they lack is the exchange of goods or trade, which, in its developed form, is mediated by money. Money, exchange and trade are therefore practically constitutive of human society and human intercourse on a very elementary, fundamental level. Trade is the paradigm of human sociation, of the elementary nexus of human community in the realm of practices.

The question of justice also arises very naturally in the context of exchange among human beings, for the question of the just allocation of beings includes in particular and especially the

just and proper allocation of property, especially when goods are traded. Fraud, theft and robbery, for instance, can all be thought as unjust, limiting cases of exchange through which beings, i.e. material goods in this case, are allocated unjustly. There is much that needs to be said about the justness of exchange and the distribution of property, a topic which Aristotle deals with in depth in Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but at the moment only one remark has to be made, and it has to be made with respect to Heidegger. Heidegger never turns his thinking to the being of the exchange relations among humans, nor to the being of money and property, even when he deals in depth with the being of human practices (πρᾶξις, *Besorgen*), say, in his early phenomenological investigations on Aristotle of 1924 (*Gesamtausgabe* Bd. 18 SS 1924) or *Sein und Zeit* (1927). It seems as if Heidegger goes along with the unspoken rule of etiquette among philosophers today that it is impolite to talk about money matters. This is all the more surprising because Aristotle, who is so crucially important for Heidegger's entire thinking, is, along with Marx, the deepest thinker of the being of money, the essence of money, in all of Western philosophy. When Heidegger provides a definition of the essence of the πόλις as the pole "around which all beings turn in such a way that in the area around this pivotal place it becomes manifest how beings turn up and to what application they can be turned" (GA54:132f), the applications and applicability in view for him are those of useful, practical things, πράγματα, but not the money-mediated exchange of such things which represents their second mode of use. The being of money, what it is good for, can only be thought fundamentally in the context of trade among people as a peculiar use sui generis. As we shall see, this neglect on Heidegger's part of the phenomenon of exchange and trade, i.e. human intercourse on an elementary, practical level, has far-reaching ramifications that amount to a truncation of the thinking-through of the way human beings associate in sharing the openness of the truth of being.

2. Being as *Hergestelltsein*

We now turn, or rather leap abruptly, to another, early stage in Heidegger's thinking where it gives itself a cast that is to be maintained throughout all the following decades. I am referring to the famous "primal cell" of *Sein und Zeit*, the missing link from 1922 that was rediscovered by Thomas Sheehan and Theodore Kisiel and published in the Dilthey-Jahrbuch Volume 6 1989 under the title *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle (Indication of the Hermeneutic Situation)*. Treatment here will have to be very brief and entirely fragmentary. This text contains a central thesis that Heidegger never subsequently retracts, namely, that, for the Greeks, or more specifically, for Aristotle, the meaning of being is *Hergestelltsein*: "Sein besagt Hergestelltsein" (MS:26), "Denn der Sinn für Sein ist ursprünglich Hergestelltsein." (MS:50), "For, the sense of being is originally *Hergestelltsein*." The central importance of the meaning of being as *Hergestelltsein* is shown in Heidegger's thinking right up to his late thinking on the essence of technology as the *Ge-Stell*, the set-up.

But what does *Hergestelltsein* say? One possible, but potentially misleading translation is "producedness", "having-been-produced" or "having-been-manufactured". Heidegger's thesis would then be: "Being means originally having-been-produced" or "Being means originally having-been-manufactured". Heidegger motivates this positing of a meaning for being by claiming that it is the sense of being that emerges from human existence, that it is the meaning of being "which ultimately characterizes human life". (MS:26)

Das Gegenstandsfeld, das den ursprünglichen Seinssinn hergibt, ist das der hergestellten,

umgänglich in Gebrauch genommenen Gegenstände. (MS:26)

The field of objects which provides the original sense of being is that of the manufactured objects that are put to use in practice.

There can be no doubt that Heidegger is here positing a meaning of being that arises from everyday life, from the daily production and use of useful things within the usages that make up quotidian existence, whilst ignoring the second use of things in exchange. He also explicitly links the German word *Herstellen* with the Greek *ποίησις*, which can well be rendered in English as ‘manufacturing’ or ‘producing’. But Heidegger will not rest content with the everyday meaning of the word *Herstellen*. More on that later.

In the same paragraph in which he introduces *Hergestelltsein* as the original sense of being in Greek experience, Heidegger also makes a connection with one of the prime words of Greek metaphysics, *οὐσία*, which resounds throughout the history of Western philosophy, mainly in its Latin translations of the first Aristotelean category, as *substantia* and *essentia*.³ *Essentia* in Latin is formed according to the model of the Greek word and in English could be rendered as ‘beingness’. Given this more etymological translation of *οὐσία* it could be asked why Heidegger does not focus on it as the leading meaning of being in Greek experience. But Heidegger follows another path. He writes:

Οὐσία hat aber die ursprüngliche, bei Aristoteles selbst noch und auch späterhin wirksame Bedeutung des Hausstandes, Besitzstandes, des umweltlich zu Gebrauch Verfügbaren. Es bedeutet die *Habe*. Was am Seienden als sein Sein in umgangsmäßige Verwahrung kommt, was es als Habe charakterisiert, ist sein *Hergestelltsein*. In der Herstellung kommt der Umgangsgegenstand zu seinem Aussehen. (MS:26f emphasis in original)

Οὐσία however has the original meaning, effective even for Aristotle and also later, of the household, of possessions, of what stands at disposal in the surrounding world ready for use. It means belongings. What comes into disclosing keeping as the being of beings in practical dealings with them, what characterizes them as belongings, is their having-been-produced. In production, the object of practical use comes to its look.

“Aussehen” (look) is Heidegger’s oft-used translation of the fundamental term in Greek metaphysics, *εἶδος*, the ‘look’ or ‘sight’ which beings present of themselves in coming to stand in presence (cf. MS:26), on which more below. The reduction of possessions to things in use in order to distil an unambiguous meaning of being is one of Heidegger’s blatant but productive one-sidednesses. For *οὐσία* has a richer, wider meaning in its original Greek usage. It comprises possessions not only in the sense of useful, manufactured things but also assets and property in general, land and cash assets, that is, it comprises the entirety of an estate. ‘Estate’ in English and *Anwesen* in German are both adequate translations of the everyday meaning of *οὐσία* as a whole of possessions which also have value in exchange. Cash assets are *οὐσία ἀφανής*, that is, those assets which do not show themselves but remain invisible, unnoticed, hidden, private; and landed property is *οὐσία φανερά*, property that shows itself, is visible, public. An original meaning of being in Greek experience which informs also Aristotle’s thinking could thus be taken to be possessions and estate, that is, the entirety of things acquired and owned which stand at one’s disposal in leading one’s life. *Οὐσία* would then be all that lies before one and is at hand. What lies before one ready to

³ Cf. the entry for *Substanz* in Ritter’s *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*.

hand is the Greek ὑποκείμενον, that which under-lies as a substratum. This word, too, finds its way into Aristotle's metaphysics as the substratum that supports the attributes or accidents; it is the substance in which qualities inhere (cf. OED substratum).

An original everyday meaning of being in the Greek life-world which then became theorized in Aristotle's metaphysics in an abstraction from practical life, I suggest, could be found in understanding being as possessions, belongings visible and invisible, German: *Habe*, in the broadest sense, what one *has* (ἔχειν). This scope would then include, in particular, money, that peculiar being which, first and foremost, can be used to acquire other valuable things and mediates the exchange of goods between humans in daily intercourse. This sense of being can be put into relation with another, more literal meaning of the German verb *herstellen*, which is composed of the prefix *her-*, indicating 'from where', 'whence', and *stellen*, meaning 'to place' or 'put into position'. *Herstellen* in this sense signifies bringing into presence and putting in place in a stand. This signification covers also acquiring something as a possession and putting it into place as part of one's estate. Money used as a means of acquiring things brings them into presence and puts them in place at one's disposal within one's world. An estate or *Anwesen* is the totality of what has been brought into presence and stands at one's disposal as one's possessions. But Heidegger treats what has come into presence through acquisition and what has been fabricated and now stands at one's disposal as one and the same thing without distinction and without so much as mentioning the possibility of exchange relations. With reference to the primary meaning of being in Aristotle's thinking he writes in the passage we have been discussing:

Das in Umgangsbewegtheit des Herstellens (ποίησις) Fertiggewordene, zu seinem für eine Gebrauchstendenz verfügbaren Vorhandensein Gekommene, ist das, was *ist*. (MS:26 emphasis in original)

What has become finished in the movement of dealing with things in manufacturing (ποίησις), what has come to hand and is available for and inclined to a use, is that which is.

This formulation shows how Heidegger conflates into one two different meanings of τέχνη, namely τέχνη ποιητική and τέχνη κτητική, the art of making and the art of acquiring, a distinction which Plato makes use of in *The Sophist*. Acquiring and making are two different kinds of motion in the movement of human life, a distinction which is also respected by Aristotle's thinking on life in the πόλις. The action of making something involves humans having dealings with things. The action of acquiring something involves humans having dealings with each other in trade. Heidegger's concept of dealings (*Umgang*) in the primal cell to *Being and Time*, as well as *Being and Time* itself and all the lectures throughout the twenties, works out the fundamental ontological structure of everyday human dealings with useful things and does not concern itself with the ontological structure of everyday acquisitive dealings between human beings in trade and exchange. This is all the more surprising because the *Nicomachean Ethics*, whose VIth Book Heidegger focuses on, is an investigation of human practice in the broadest sense, and not only of production or the use of things, but also, in Book V, of the fairness and justness of exchange. To work out the ontological structure of practical dealings among humans in "factual life" (MS:40) would imply moving on to an explicit ontological analysis of the social and political dimension of practical human co-existence with its elementary cell of trade, something I have undertaken in

another text⁴. Heidegger does not take this route, however, and that not only in the “primal cell” text at hand. His *entire* thinking passes in silence over those parts of Aristotle’s texts that think through the economic, social, sociating dealings of factual, practical intercourse in everyday life in which the political dimension of sociation or *κοινωνία* is elementarily rooted. Instead, he deepens the analysis of the movement of factual human existence by shifting to a closer investigation of Aristotle’s *Physics* (a line of development which he follows also in his 1924 lectures on Aristotle). The motivation for this shift is that practical life is conceived as a living movement, and Aristotle’s ontological examination of moving beings (*ὄν κινούμενον*) is undertaken in his *Physics*. For both early and late Heidegger, Aristotle’s *Physics* remains the “hidden and therefore never adequately thought-through basic book of Western philosophy” (*Grundbuch* 1939 WM:240; 1956 SvG:111).

Heidegger consummately realizes the program announced in the “primal cell” of investigating Aristotle’s *Physics* seventeen years later, in 1939, in his study, ‘Vom Wesen und Begriff der φύσις: Aristoteles, Physik B, 1’⁵. The bare thesis that the original meaning of being from which Aristotle also develops the categories of his metaphysics is *Hergestelltsein* is fleshed out perhaps most fully in this 1939 study (cf. however also the 1924 lectures from Summer Semester published as GA18). This becomes apparent in Heidegger’s translation of Aristotle’s term, μορφή, which is normally rendered by the accepted, run-of-the-mill term, ‘form’. Heidegger translates it instead as *Gestaltung in die Gestalt*, that is, a “gathering which sets into a Gestalt or figure”. The movement of beings which *are* in the mode of φύσις is a gleaning and gathering which sets into a Gestalt, and this Gestalt shows itself as a look for being addressed. Aristotle says as much in the formulation of φύσις as ἡ μορφή καὶ τὸ εἶδος τὸ κατὰ τὸν λόγον (193a31) “the gathering which sets into a Gestalt, and that means the look which shows itself for addressing” (cf. WM:271). The gathering is a setting into a delimited outline (like the surface extremities that define the outline of a solid body) which defines a look for showing. The gathering gleans the amorphous into the definite cast of a Gestalt, a look. This definite cast, outline or Gestalt can be addressed by the λόγος in human understanding and communication (μετάδοσις *Eth. Nic.* V v. 1133a2) and further refined by the λόγος in discourse. It is now important to notice that the everyday sense of *Hergestelltsein* as having-been-manufactured has been radically abstracted from in transporting it into the metaphysical context. *Hergestelltsein* now means: having been gleaned by the gathering of the originary λόγος into the stand of a delimited (περάς) look in which the being shows itself in a well-defined way in the openness of presence. *Hergestelltsein* has now in effect been translated into *ständige Anwesenung*, standing presence, the presence of something standing in a defined, delimited look. The ἀποφάνσις of beings, their showing of themselves to human being in such a way that they can be addressed by the λόγος, is only possible through an originary gathering into the Gestalt of a look. It should also be noted that ‘standing presence’ is simultaneously the metaphysical translation of οὐσία, the ‘estate’ of standing beings that stand in presence at one’s disposal.

I do not want to put into question Heidegger’s thesis that the original sense of being from everyday life that informs the fundamental categories (such as δύναμις, ἐνέργεια,

⁴ Cf. ‘Heidegger’s Restricted Interpretation of the Greek Conception of the Political’ forthcoming in the Heidegger-Jahrbuch.

⁵ Martin Heidegger ‘Vom Wesen und Begriff der φύσις: Aristoteles, Physik B, 1’ (1939) in *Wegmarken* Klostermann, Frankfurt/M. 2nd. ed.1978.

ἐντελέχεια) of Aristotle's, and therefore all, metaphysics is *Hergestelltsein*. On the contrary, we need to hold on to the abstracting translation of *Hergestelltsein* into a 'gathering which sets into a defined look'. But we do need to ask what this means for those pivotal economic, social and political phenomena treated in Aristotle, that is, those phenomena of practical *Mitsein*, which Heidegger passes over in silence. By pivotal I mean those phenomena which show the way into the political, sociating dimension and thus lever it open for an unfolding, an explication. For we cannot rest content with Heidegger's sublimation, or rather condensation, of the political in the broadest sense in determining it essentially from ἀλήθεια as "the place gathered into itself for the unconcealedness of beings" (GA54:133) where beings are thought primarily and almost exclusively as things. Nor, I claim, can Heidegger's thinking on the essence of technology as *Ge-Stell* (which is a direct consequence of his interpretation of Aristotle's metaphysics as being based on the paradigm of ποιησις) be accepted as characterizing *the* sole historical constellation of being holding sway today.

My thesis is that the thinking of the technological setting-up of all that is has to be supplemented by and interwoven with the thinking of the movement of gain, the *Gewinnst*, which mobilizes the totality of beings in the movement of things we call capitalism.⁶ If the paradigm of *production* lies at the heart of how Heidegger thinks an historical constellation of being holding sway today in technological thinking, it is the paradigm of *trade*, i.e. of acquisition through exchange dealings, that lies at the heart of how the totality of beings is mobilized today. What now follows in the time available can only provide the barest of bare sketches which will not be able to show fully, but only hint at what I mean by the need to widen and shift the focus from those phenomena upon which Heidegger almost exclusively fixed his gaze to other genuinely social phenomena beyond humans merely speaking with each other. For, when Heidegger does turn to consider human being as being-together, he considers the λόγος as the primary way in which human beings share the world (cf. e.g. GA18).

3. Thesis: The elementary cell of sociation is exchange

Despite his early thesis that the original meaning of being is having-been-produced, Heidegger focuses his interpretation of the being of everyday things in their everyday context not on their production, but on their practical use. The being of things, πράγματα, resides in their being practically useful, in what they are good-for or their *Wozu*, in their *Bewandtnis* or applicability for certain uses within the usages of daily life. Everyday things show themselves of themselves to and are Da for Dasein; they present a definite look which human existence understands as their usefulness in given practices.

One could say that the precondition of things showing themselves to Dasein, of disclosing themselves to human being in their usefulness, is that they have been produced, manufactured. This is an ontic precondition, not an ontological one. But one could just as well say that an ontic precondition of things being available for disclosing themselves in their usefulness as ready-to-hand is that they have been acquired. In fact, that is, in the facticity of quotidian life, daily practice is involved just as much with acquiring things through exchange purchases as it is with using them. The practical business of life involves having to acquire what one needs

⁶ Cf. my 'Capital and Technology: Marx and Heidegger' in: *Left Curve* No. 24 May 2000, Oakland, California USA ISSN:0160-1857 pp. 95-128. German: *Kapital und Technik: Marx und Heidegger* Verlag J.H. Röhl, Dettelbach 2000 117 pp. ISBN 3-89754-171-8. Also available in German and English at URL: <http://www.webcom.com/artefact>. Chinese translation in preparation.

and desires to live well (εὖ ζῆν). This aspect is not neglected by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* nor in his *Politics*, nor by Plato in his *Republic*⁷ (*Rep.* 369b). In fact, in both Plato and Aristotle, the social nexus of human beings practically having dealings (κοινωνία) with each other is thought at first and germinally as trade. Trade is the paradigmatic germinal practice within the social dimension of human being at the culmination of ancient Greek thought.

The acquisition of things or trade is a phenomenon that requires looking at the practical mundane intercourse or dealings among people, a genuine phenomenon of *Mitsein*. Things are for the most part acquired by purchasing them with money. This possibility of acquisition through trade is understood by human being. Things do not just show themselves in what they are good for in use, but they also show themselves off in their ἀποφάνσις as being for sale, say, in a display window. That things put themselves on display in a look of valuableness is the *ontological* precondition for them being put practically on display in a shop window. In showing themselves off, things disclose not only that they are good for this or that use but also that they are worth such-and-such. The value of things resides not only in their concrete usefulness, but also simultaneously, and abstractly, in their quantitative monetary value. Their being is thus doubled into use-value and exchange-value, i.e. their concrete value in use and their necessarily abstract value in exchange for other things, abstract because widely diverse, different things are put into relation with one another and equated in exchange. The look in which things show themselves off discloses whether they are worth much or little. The look comprises, i.e. gleans and gathers, all the aspects that indicate the value of something in its self-showing. These various aspects are understood by human being, which is able to appreciate and estimate the value of a thing, even abstracted from its concrete usefulness and set abstractly equivalent to other useful things. The *Seinsverständnis* of human being reaches beyond the usefulness of what they are good for in practical life to encompass also the assessment of what they are worth abstractly in monetary terms.

Under generalized commodity exchange relations, which practically constitute sociated, social life on a rudimentary level, things having the most diverse uses are set practically equivalent to each other in the dimension of quantitative monetary value. If the uses were not different, there would be no point to the practice of exchange, as Aristotle points out in *Eth. Nic.* V v. However, even though one thing may be worth much and another very little in monetary terms, they are nevertheless practically equated in the same abstract dimension of monetary value. Their difference in value is only quantitative. The abstract value of things as expressed in amounts of money is a fathomless mystery. Wherein lies the essence or nature of abstract exchange-value which shows itself off to human understanding just as much as the use-value or usefulness of things does? Aristotle provides an answer in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, Chapter 5. Aristotle uses the example of the exchange of a physician's services for a farmer's products which, he points out, "have to be equalized" (δεῖ ἴσασθῆναι 1133a18). He writes, "Thus everything must be comparable in some way if exchange is to be." (διὸ πάντα συμβλητὰ δεῖ πως εἶναι, ὧν ἔστιν ἀλλαγὴ. 1133a19) And how is this comparability achieved? Aristotle continues, "Money has arisen from this and becomes a kind

⁷ Γίνεται τοίνυν, ἣν δ' ἐγώ, πόλις, ὡς ἐγώμαι, ἐπειδὴ τυγχάνει ἡμῶν ἕκαστος οὐκ αὐτάρκης, ἀλλὰ πολλῶν ἐνδεής· ἢ τίς οἶει ἀρχὴν πόλιν οἰκίζειν; (*Rep.* 369b) which is standardly translated something like: "A city arises therefore, I said, it seems to me, because it happens that each individual one of us is not self-sufficient, but lacks much; or do you think that a city is established from some other beginning/governing point of origin?"

of middle term, for it measures everything and so also too much and too little and how many shoes are equal to a house or food.” (ἐφ’ ὃ τὸ νόμισμα ἑλήλυθε, καὶ γίνεται πως μέσον· πάντα γὰρ μετρεῖ, ὥστε καὶ τὴν ὑπεροχὴν καὶ τὴν ἔλλειψιν, πόσα ἄττα δὴ ὑποδήματ’ ἴσον οἰκία ἢ τροφῇ. 1133a20) Money is the solution in practical human life for how different things which are suitable for very different uses can be compared and measured, thus forming the basis for a just exchange of everything in which a value is exchanged for an equal value. Even though everything differs from each other in their respective uses and thus their use-values, everything is comparable as being useful in abstracto. “So it is necessary for everything to be measured by some unity” (δεῖ ἄρα ἐνὶ τινὶ πάντα μετρεῖσθαι 1133a26) and this unity is “in truth, use, which holds everything together” (τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶ τῇ μὲν ἀληθείᾳ ἢ χρείᾳ, ἢ πάντα συνέχει 1133a28), for exchange is carried on in order to acquire the useful things which one lacks. Money as the medium of exchange is the glue of society, for society is sociated by human action, by human practice in living with one another, this practice on an elementary level is exchange. Monetary value is abstract usefulness which is understood by human understanding within the practice of trading, i.e. commodity exchange, and thus “holds everything together” in an association (κοινωνία).

If Heidegger can claim that Aristotle’s *Physics* is the “hidden and therefore never adequately thought-through basic book of Western philosophy” (WM:240), then with equal justification one can claim that Aristotle’s insights into the essence of money and its connection with the practical constitution of society as such through the exchange of goods have to the present day not been fathomed, least of all in the social science of economics.

The exchange of useful things in trade, such as a doctor’s services for a farmer’s grain, motivated by what each lacks, is the rudimentary germ or cell sociating one human with another practically and thus constituting the governing point of origin or ἀρχή for society. The exchange relation, however, is an abstract social relation mediated by a thing: money. When buyer and seller meet on the market, this is an abstract social relation. The abstractness of the relation lies not only in the circumstance that the goods offered for sale show themselves in the abstract dimension of monetary value, but also in that both buyer and seller present themselves merely as the bearers of money and goods, respectively. In that the social relation is mediated by money and goods, it is a *reified* social relation, i.e. a social relation mediated by things (res).

On entering the rudimentary dimension of *Mitsein*, which must be taken as the basis for any thinking through of the socio-political dimension, it must be taken into account that the gamut of phenomena that show themselves becomes richer, for it is no longer only *things* that show themselves in a definite look to human understanding, but now also *humans themselves* show themselves off in a definite look as who they are *to each other*. It must be noticed and duly pondered that the Greek verb ἀποφαίνεσθαι in the middle voice means not only ‘to demonstrate’ but also ‘to show oneself off with one’s abilities’. This middle voice indicates a fundamental shift of ontological-phenomenological perspective, for it is no longer things showing themselves in their outline of being to human understanding, so to speak in the *third* person, but human beings showing themselves off to each other, so to speak in the *second* person, and also experiencing *themselves*, so to speak in the first person. A human being is not a something or a somewhat, but a somewho, so that the self-showing of human beings as such is a showing-off of who one is.⁸ Ontological-existential thinking must accordingly focus

⁸ Cf. my *Phänomenologie der Männlichkeit: kaum ständig noch* Verlag Dr. Josef H. Röhl, Dettelbach, 266

specifically on the phenomenon of *whoness* if the phenomena are to come to their truth.

With the encounter between human being and human being, most rudimentarily and abstractly in the practical phenomenon of trade, the access to the being of beings is dispersed into one of its manifold folds. Human being in its openness to the being of beings is originally dispersed into the folds of being with beings that are not in the way of human being, being with other human beings and a self-reflective being with self, so to speak being in the *first* person, which is experienced not in a state of mental reflection, but in the moods in which one continually finds oneself. Being my self is in the first place how I feel. Heidegger calls the originary dispersal into the folds of being *Streuung* and *Zerstreuung*, scattering and dispersion (GA27:333). Being with others is thought in the thinking of Plato and Aristotle at the culmination of the Greek beginning not just in phenomena involving speaking with one another such as rhetoric, but in phenomena such as manliness (ἀνδρεία), the striving for money (φιλοχρημοσύνη) and the striving for esteem and honour (φιλοτιμία).

Manliness is a phenomenon of self-being in which the self takes a stand in its own existence and stands ground against the dangers which confront it, these dangers having their source for the most part in others and their actions (cf. *Rhet.* B 5 1382a). It is a phenomenon which can only be thought adequately as a *phenomenon of being* against the background of the implicit Greek fundamental understanding of being as standing presence. The lack of courage to take a stand and *be* a man is called cowardice (δειλία). Manliness as a phenomenon of being includes within the compass of its dimension also the negative phenomenon of failing to take a stand, or cowardice. A man who is genuinely a man (ὄντως ὄν) takes heart and brings himself to a stand in standing presence and also shows himself off to others in this steadfast stance. The coward, on the other hand, fearfully relinquishes his stand and flees from his self. The Greek word for cowardly and fearful, δειλός, is related to the verb, δῖω ‘to flee’. The flight of the man who flees is in the first place always a fleeing from himself, where the self has to be thought from standing presence as delimiting the self in a stand in which understanding has control over the passions and governs what action to take despite the momentary fluctuations of how I feel (angry, fearful, etc.).

Philotimy (φιλοτιμία), i.e. the striving for esteem and honour, is the striving to show oneself off in an imposing look and thus to stand in high esteem and regard with others. As such it is a social phenomenon par excellence which can come to light only if the second-person dimension of whoness is uncovered as a dimension of being sui generis, again against the background of the Greek understanding of being as standing presence in the sense that in esteem humans beings come to stand in a self-presentation to each other in each other’s regard. As a concern (*Besorgen*) with being held in high regard by others, φιλοτιμία reveals a constitutive dependency on others’ opinions and thus the declination from a firm, independent stand in one’s own self. Human existence brings itself to a stand not only for itself in self-understanding and a manly self-stance, but also for others in their understanding, their regard. The abstractly sociating relation of trade allows the phenomenon of striving for esteem and honour to recede into and conceal itself in a neutral background. Trading relations in their practical abstractness have to be only polite and cordial, a kind of abstract regard for each other. Mutual recognition as who is itself a kind of exchange which assumes many diverse and subtle forms apart from any trading relation. The exchange of glances, of greetings, of letters or of opinions is also a social relation in which a mutual recognition in the dimension of

whoness takes place. Negative exchanges such as snubbing, ignoring or insulting likewise are situated in the dimension of whoness as forms of refusal to pay regard to each other.

The original, 'natural', implicit Greek sense of being as standing presence (*ständige Anwesenung*) is thus not restricted to the stand which non-human beings or things take in the looks (ἰδέαι) they offer of themselves to human understanding, and it extends not only to the stand which an individual adopts toward him or herself in their manly self-understanding and self-control (ἀνδρεία), but it covers also the stands and postures which humans adopt in showing themselves off to each other to make an impression on each others' understanding and enjoy their regard (φιλοτιμία). Human showing-off in the second person depends essentially on the regard shown by the second person, which may be taken as the germ of social interdependence in the shared openness of being.

In the exchange relation between buyer and seller, the phenomenon of philotimy is not pronounced since the relation is mediated by things, namely, money and goods, which abstract from the individuals' particularity. For the buyer, the goods are bought to remedy a lack and it matters little from whom they are purchased. Once acquired, the goods are at hand to be used and are incorporated into the cast which the individual has cast for its own existence. They may be used to project a certain look of their owner, thus enhancing their stand and prestige and regard in the eyes of others. The acquisition of goods is a component part of the management of the individual's household, or economics in the original meaning of the Greek word οἰκονομική.

For the seller, the goods are sold to acquire money which is then at the seller's disposal. This money may then, in turn, be used as a means of purchase for other goods for use. But the doubling of things' usefulness into use-value and exchange-value which comes about with the advent of the practice of commodity exchange and money opens up a further existential possibility for human existence, namely, the acquisition of wealth as an end in itself. Aristotle takes account of this phenomenon in Book I, Chapter 3 of his *Politics* in distinguishing the striving to endlessly acquire money (χρηματιστική 1256a12 cf. Plato τὸ φιλοχρήματον, the striving for money *Rep.* 436a) from the acquisition and use of money to manage the household of one's own existence (οἰκονομική). Plato already saw the phenomenon of the endless lack in human existence, its endless desire and its endless striving to have more and named it πλεονεξία (*Rep.* 359c). Such wanting-to-have-more plays a role throughout Plato's discussion of justice in his *Politeia*. Money is a prime vehicle for the striving to have more. As the embodiment of abstract value it is differentiated only quantitatively within itself and thus lends itself also to quantitative augmentation and accumulation.

Two millennia after Aristotle formulated the distinction between chrematistics and economics, Karl Marx uses it to in turn make the distinction between money as a means of circulation and payment, on the one hand, and money as capital, on the other. Capital is the endless movement of augmentation of money, the limitless movement of the accumulation of abstract value. The limitless desire of human existence to have more gains a reified reflection in the endless movement of accumulation of money as capital. In the modern era, which could be called the consummation of Greek metaphysics, the totality of beings is mobilized by the movement of money as capital and not just by the cybernetic drive to bring the totality of beings into the grasp of calculative and precalculative knowing. Human being belongs to being in such a way that the totality of beings shows itself to human being as an abundance of opportunities for gain. Within this constellation of being, which I call the gathering of the

gainable (*Gewinnst*), human existence is cast historically in its futural striving as a striving for gain of all kinds. The gathering of all that is gainable as a constellation of being is the gathering of all the incalculable and risky possibilities of gaining in relations with each other. This gathering attracts human desire in how humans cast their lives forward into the temporal dimension of the future and thus directs their daily strivings. In essential contrast to the calculability and precalculability inherent in modern technology, the social nexus among humans constituted by trade and economic endeavour and situated in the disclosive dimension of the value of things, is incalculable and subject to unpredictable fluctuations. The unpredictability and non-precalculability arise from the circumstance that in exchange relations, as opposed to production, there are “at least four” (ἐν τέτταρσιν ἐλαχίστοις *Eth. Nic. V v. 1131a19, 32, 1131b10*) terms involved, the exchangers and their respective goods, which vitiates any recurrence to a single ἀρχή, as can be done with the paradigm of ποίησις. The trade nexus is also the germ of the practical sociation of human beings in everyday life, and this phenomenon does not conform with the understanding of being as *Hergestelltsein*. This claim cannot be followed up further here. As far as I know, Heidegger never engaged expressly as a thinker with the phenomenon of trade, the practical germ of sociation, or other economic phenomena, although of course references to such phenomena are not entire missing *en passant* in his texts. There is no analysis of the ontological structure of exchange to be found in Heidegger’s thinking. After providing a rough sketch in this third section of my talk, one could say that I still have not dealt with phenomena that are political in the usual sense. That’s true. The political dimension has been understood here as the all-encompassing shared openness of being which Heidegger terms *Mitsein* and Aristotle calls κοινωνία, including its practical constitution in the practices of quotidian life, and not so much in the sense of a polity, i.e. “an organized society or community” (OED). The political is today usually associated with phenomena such as justice, government and power. Nevertheless, I propose that in order to even approach such familiar political phenomena which are the domain of modern political science, the route in thinking must start with the practical germ of human association in exchange, and trade in particular, and pass through these very elementary, ‘horizontal’ phenomena of relations between people, showing how they are situated within the open truth of being. For the political is in the first place the dimension of human association, and the phenomenon of justice, a prime phenomenon of social-political life, can be thought, starting from Aristotle, as the fair allotment of goods in the broadest sense on the paradigm of the fair and equitable exchange of commodity goods and services.

Far from abandoning the thinking of being or rejecting Heidegger’s thesis that the original sense of being is *Hergestelltsein*, what I propose is that phenomenological thinking today has to venture to twist the thinking of being toward the folds of being which Heidegger himself left unfolded, unexplicated. Heidegger’s thinking from start to finish is in large part an unfolding of the thesis that the first beginning of Western history is based on an understanding of being as *Hergestelltsein*, where *Herstellung* is interpreted suitably broadly as a bringing-to-stand in the presence of a presented, defined look as a kind of movement.

But the first beginning is also based on an understanding of human being as social being, also a kind of movement. Heidegger restricts his interpretation of social being, i.e. *Mitsein*, *Miteinandersein*, to human being having the λόγος, i.e. τὸ ζῶον λόγον ἔχον, and neglects an ontological investigation of practical social relations, starting with the exchange of goods, in favour of considering the phenomenon of *Miteinandersprechen*, i.e. the exchange of words (cf.

GA18:103ff). As indicated above, social relations on the everyday level of exchange can be thought as a kind of *Herstellung* sui generis, in the sense of bringing-to-presence through a change of place, but this *Herstellung* no longer conforms in its ontological structure with the simple paradigm of production. Exchange is a kind of movement that needs to be analyzed ontologically in its own phenomenal right, as sketched above. Heidegger himself and above all Heidegger's phenomenological interpretations of Aristotle offer valuable starting points for thinking through the movement of social life in exchange. Even a motto can be extracted from Heidegger's writings which serves very well as a characterization of the reciprocal structure of exchange as it permeates the movement of social life:

Das in Bewegung Seiende ist als Seiendes da im Mitdasein mit anderem, das Mitda bestimmt durch Bezug des einen auf das andere, des anderen auf das eine. (GA18:392)

Beings in movement are present as beings in being present together with others; co-presence is defined by a relation of one to the other and vice versa.

A certain small amount of hermeneutic violence has to be done to this passage to obtain the required motto insofar as in these early lectures, Heidegger does not yet restrict the meaning of Mitdasein to human togetherness, but applies the terms Dasein and Mitdasein to beings in general.

To put it in other words and by way of conclusion: If, as Heidegger claims, ποιησις is the paradigm in Greek metaphysics for thinking the knowing relationship of human being to beings as such, stretching all the way up 'vertically' to theological knowledge (ἐπιστήμη θεολογική), ἀλλαγή or exchange — which is also μεταβολή — is the paradigm in Greek thinking for thinking through 'horizontal' human association or κοινωνία,⁹ i.e. the socio-political dimension of human living. The phenomenological task today is to bring the phenomena of human association to light as phenomena situated within the folds of the manifold openness of the truth of being, a 'horizontal' task towards which Heidegger's thinking did not turn. I regard this venture as a philosophical aspect of what Thomas Sheehan calls "the task of the endless humanization of the world"¹⁰.

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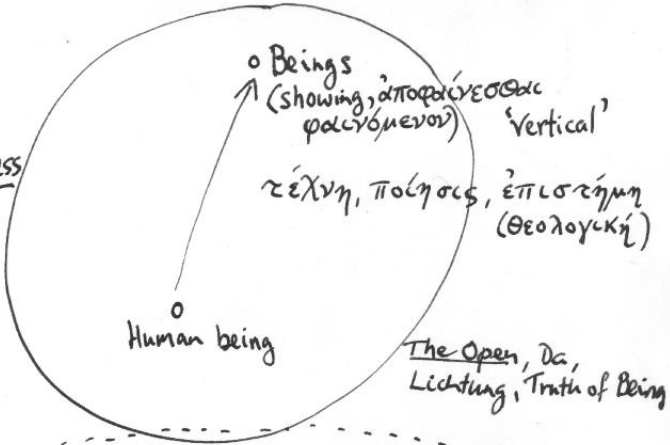
Paper presented to the 22nd. Heidegger Symposium History, Historicity and Mystery in Heidegger 30 October-02 November, 2002 University of North Texas, Denton, TX, USA

⁹ Without just proportions "there would be no exchange and no association" (οὐκ ἔσται ἀλλαγή οὐδὲ κοινωνία *Nic. Eth.* V v. 1133a24)

¹⁰ Thomas Sheehan 'Nihilism and its Discontents' in David Pettigrew and Francois Raffoul (eds.) *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy* SUNY Press, New York 2002 pp. 225-300

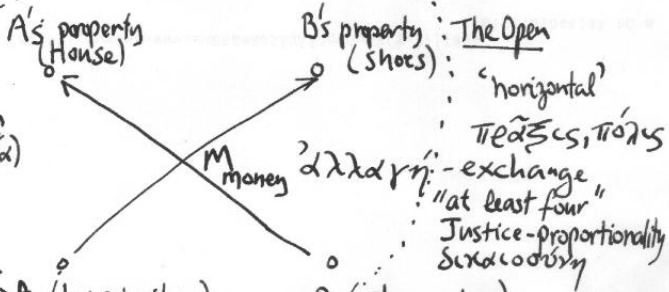
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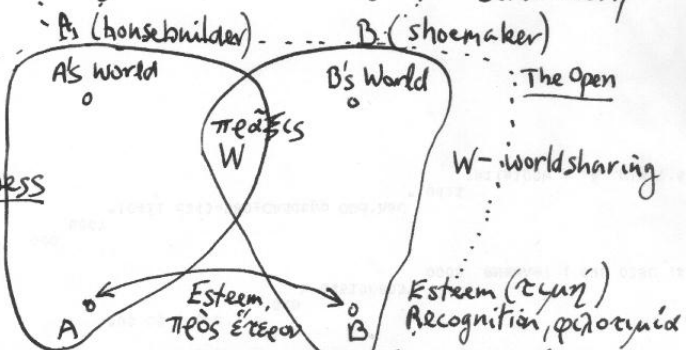
II

Sociation (κοινωνία)



III

Whoness



A showing off ἀποφαίνεσθαι B showing off 11/03/10/02