

Khôragraphical Connections
From Being to Event in Heidegger and Whitehead
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Introduction

If the work of the vast majority of great thinkers is any indication—from speculative philosophers to natural theologians to epic poets to theoretical physicists—if their work is indicative of any sort of shared sensibility, it is that the desire to make sense of and give expression to the beauty, meaning, and nature of the cosmos is part of what it means to be human at all. In his most recent book Stephen Hawking boldly proposes that we may have finally discovered the holy grail of modern science, a so-called theory of everything, what he once said would be “the ultimate triumph of human reason,” the answer to the perennial question of why there is anything at all.¹ From the Large Hadron Collider near Geneva to the agora of Athens in ancient Greece, Plato’s *Timaeus* is every bit as audacious, even if its understanding of the world and method of elucidation differs radically from the likes of Hawking’s *Grand Design*. Given the immense breadth and depth, as well as the profundity of insight, contained in *Timaeus* isn’t at all surprising that that dialogue has captured the creative imagination of so many generations of thinkers in such a wide variety of contexts. Indeed, the title of a relatively recent publication of essays written by twenty-two contemporary Plato scholars attempts to capture the sheer audacity of the philosophical masterpiece: *One Book, The Whole Universe*.² Some 2500 years later *Timaeus* still peaks passionate interest and generates rich reflections.³

¹ Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design*, First Edition (Bantam Books, 2010). “If we find the answer to that,” Hawking had stated a couple of decades earlier, “it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason—for then we would know the mind of God.” [*A Brief History of Time*, 175.]

² Richard D. Mohr and Barbara M. Sattler, eds., *One Book, the Whole Universe: Plato’s Timaeus Today* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2010).

³ For example, John Sallis’s exceedingly erudite exposition, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato’s Timaeus*, *Studies in Continental Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

It is thus little wonder that someone like Derrida would say that “Plato and Aristotle . . . are always ahead of him,” that reading “them is always a matter of starting over again, always an infinite task,” and that we “are all children of the Greeks.”⁴ Or, as John Caputo puts it, “Plato is a beginning that we can never get past or behind; we are always beginners with Plato.”⁵ And, of course, as Whitehead so famously stated, “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.”⁶ *Timaeus* is a profound and provocative reflection on the fundamental features of the universe, and not merely the essential nature of the universe itself, but the primordial origin of being and becoming as such. Its limitless scope, however, is only matched by the elusiveness of its most enigmatic and evocative idea: *khôra*. What is the significance of this mysterious *something*—this puzzling *non-thing* that is somehow receptive to and reflective of every particular thing? Why did Plato feel the need to introduce a “third kind” into his fundamental schema, a third element in addition to, on the one hand, “*that which always is and has no becoming, and . . . that which becomes but never is,*”⁷ on the other. The purpose of this essay is *not* to provide an elucidation of *khôra* itself, but rather to explore this mediating manifold as a potentially illuminating space in which two very different thinkers might simultaneously converge into and diverge from one another—Martin Heidegger and Alfred North Whitehead. This is, therefore, a thoroughly experimental reflection.

Anyone even a little familiar with Heidegger and Whitehead is well aware that their philosophical reflections are, in very significant ways, a direct response to early Greek thought. While they each acknowledged their indebtedness to, dependence on, and appreciation for individuals like Plato and

⁴ John D Caputo, “*Khôra: Being Serious With Plato,*” in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 75–6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁶ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 39.

⁷ *Timaeus*, 27d-28a. Unless otherwise specified, all translations will come from Donald J. Zeyl’s translation in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M Cooper and D. S Hutchinson (Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997).

Aristotle, they also leveled an incisive critique of the entire tradition that emerged out of the ancient Athenian milieu. And, even though their rational predilections, conceptual frameworks, and philosophical methodologies dramatically differ from one another, they both located the source of and solution to the weaknesses they identified in that same setting. While Heidegger's deconstruction of Western thought led him to pursue paths beyond the horizon of metaphysical modes of thought, Whitehead's speculative impulse drew him to explore novel forms of metaphysical reflection. Of particular interest here is that they both found inspiration, not just in the Platonic dialogues, but in what I am here calling *khôragraphical thinking*—i.e., a desire for a new beginning and to elucidate an elusive third way.⁸ The purpose of this essay is thus to offer a brief account of Heidegger's movement away from the being of beings and toward a confrontation with Being in general, and compare that with Whitehead's movement away from the being of beings and toward a confrontation with the becoming of things. While Heidegger's very brief consideration of *khôra* may help illuminate what he refers to as '*die Sache selbst*' ('the fundamental thing' or 'matter for thought')—namely, Being in terms of *Ereignis*—Whitehead's extended reflection on *khôra* provides a substantive contribution to his account of the creative unity of the manifold of entities. While each thinker calls us to consider a number of profound insights, and their work displays several unexpected and intriguing moments of resonance, I will ultimately argue that Whitehead's 'width of view' provides an engagement with and elucidation of Being in terms of event that is more compelling.

Heidegger: Questioning Beings and Being

Whatever twists and turns that Heidegger's thinking underwent during his career, it seems to me that there are a few things that remained relatively consistent throughout. The most persistent and

⁸ To the best of my knowledge, this term is a neologism, and it will be explained below.

profound concern, the thought that shaped his entire corpus, was the question of Being. Although there is not universal agreement within the scholarship, and Heidegger pursued a variety of paths to illuminate its significance, the general consensus is that *die Seinsfrage* represents the defining feature of his career. From his reading of Franz Brentano's *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, which is what initially aroused his interest in philosophy,⁹ all the way to his final reflection on his life's work, he maintained what for some might seem like an unhealthy obsession with the question of the meaning and truth of Being *qua* Being. Heidegger's himself eloquently elucidates this sentiment in his 1947 poem "The Thinker as Poet".

When the early morning light quietly
grows above the mountains

The world's darkening never reaches
to the light of Being.

We are too late for the gods and too
early for Being. Beings' poem
just begun, is man.

To head toward a star—this only.

To think is to confine yourself to a
single thought that one day stands
still like a star in the world's sky.¹⁰

Accordingly, Richard Polt affirms what appears to be widespread agreement in the Heideggarian scholarship: "Heidegger was a centripetal thinker: he always sought the center, the gathering power of Being."¹¹ Dermot Moran puts it this way: "His whole life's work was a single-minded attempt to re-examine the question of Being, a question he saw as inaugurated in ancient Greek philosophy, but which

⁹ C.f., David Farrell Krell, "General Introduction: The Question of Being," in *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993) 3; Michael Inwood, *Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 1; Richard Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999) 10.

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, "The Thinker as Poet" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Harper and Row, 1971), 4.

¹¹ Polt, *Heidegger*, 179. C.f., Frede, "The Question of Being," 42; Fried & Polt, "Translator's Introduction" In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, xi.

had rigidified into an arid metaphysics generally neglected in his time.”¹² Otto Pöggeler goes even further by stating that one can only obtain an understanding of Heidegger if his work is seen as a continual movement, a “step toward what is to be thought—as something toward which Heidegger is on the way . . . It is not a way of many thoughts but on the contrary restricts itself to a single thought . . . Heidegger has always understood his thinking as going along a way . . . into the neighborhood of Being.”¹³ And, Dorothea Frede cogently captures the claim with the following: “As his thinking evolved, the meaning of the question changed, but Heidegger to the end of his life remained convinced that the ‘questionability’ of the *Seinsfrage* was the main thrust of his life’s work.”¹⁴ I see little compelling reason to want to disagree with these assessments.

To be sure, the matter not quite so simple. For example, in his “General Introduction: The Question of Being,” David Farrell Krell rightly points out that Heidegger’s thought actually “circles about a double theme: the meaning of Being and the propriative event (*Ereignis*) of disclosure. *Sein* and *alētheia* remain the key words, *Sein* meaning coming to presence, and *alētheia* the disclosedness or unconcealment implied in such presence.”¹⁵ And, as Thomas Sheehan argues, *die Sache selbst*, or the matter with which Heidegger was centrally concerned was not Being per se, but rather “the apriori openedness of the open-that-gives-being,” that is, *Dasein*’s originary openness toward Being.¹⁶ It seems to me that Krell and Sheehan are correct in recognizing that the question of Being cannot be adequately understood or fully appreciated without a consideration of its relation to *Ereignis*. However, on my reading, *Ereignis* is

¹² Dermot Moran, “Martin Heidegger’s Phenomenology” in *Introduction to Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge, 2000) 195.

¹³ Otto Pöggeler, quoted in *Basic Writings*, 31.

¹⁴ Dorothea Frede, “The Question of Being: Heidegger’s Project,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed., Charles B. Guignon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 42.

¹⁵ *Basic Writings*: 32.

¹⁶ Thomas Sheehan, “A paradigm shift in Heidegger research,” *Continental Philosophy Review* (Vol. 34, 2001), 194.

not invoked in order to replace Being but to illuminate it. As will become clear below, his *Contributions to Philosophy*, along with several other late works, show that it does not supplant the question of Being, but instead opens up a new possibility for thinking about what for him is the truth of the essence of Being. It expresses something about the movement of Being, the manner in which Being gives itself as itself to *Dasein*, or the event within which Being is appropriated by *Dasein*. I thus take Heidegger at his word when, shortly before his death in 1976, he described his entire career as an “on-the-way in the field of paths for the changing questioning of the manifold question of Being.”¹⁷ Although he traversed many paths, and ran into a number of *Holzwege* along his journey,¹⁸ *die Seinsfrage* is the central thread that is interwoven throughout the complex patchwork that makes up his thought.

The opening words of *Being and Time*, in which Heidegger quotes Plato, are thus extremely telling. “For manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression ‘being’,” says the visitor to Theaetetus in Plato’s *Sophist*, “We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed.”¹⁹ Well over two thousand years later, are we in any better position to respond to the question? “Do we in our time have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word ‘being’?” asks Heidegger. For the next five decades his repeatedly response was “Not at all.”[BT,20/1] *Dasein* may be the one for whom Being is an issue, but the significance of question of Being has been forgotten, covered over, concealed by the layers of traditional ways of engaging in philosophical reflection. In other words, human beings are no longer aware that they remain in oblivion of the question of Being. Now, if his basic assessment is right—and given the number of thinkers involved, and

¹⁷ Quoted in Frede, “The Question of Being,” 42, c.f., footnote 1, 66.

¹⁸ *Holzwege* is the title that Heidegger gave to a set of essays and lectures composed from 1935 to 1946. The translators write, “Heidegger chose a term that carefully balances positive and negative implications. One the one hand, a *Holzweg* is a timber track that leads to a clearing in the forest where timber is cut. One the other, it is a track that used to lead to such a place but is now overgrown and leads nowhere.”[J. Young and K. Haynes, “Translator’s preface,” in *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), ix.

¹⁹ Plato, *Sophist*, 244a.

the massive diversity in the Western tradition, that's certainly a very big *if*—if he's right that we remain in a kind of oblivion to or estrangement from Being, then what is the source of the concealment? What is it that set us on our path and brought us to the place we're at? Heidegger's answer can be expressed in a single word: *metaphysics*.

Just as his obsession with the question of Being was always present in his thinking, his view of the western philosophy also remained relatively consistent throughout his writings. At the risk of oversimplification, Heidegger held that its central concern is with making rational generalizations about beings as a way of representing, ordering, and ultimately controlling them. Even as early as his lecture course on the phenomenology of religion in the fall of 1920, he says that philosophy “has long been moved in [a particular] ontological direction,” namely, pursuing “the task of classifying the whole of Being into regions.”²⁰ Works like Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, for example, maintain that there “are many senses in which a thing may be said ‘to be’, but they are related to one central point, one definite kind of thing.”^[1003a33] According to this approach, Being becomes a kind of shorthand designation for the Being of beings, or the *beingness* of beings, or “that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood, however we may discuss them in detail.”^[BT,25-6/6]

In his lectures on the *Introduction to Metaphysics* in 1935, Heidegger says that traditional philosophy engages in reflection on or about “what is, as such and as a whole, [which is what] the [ancient] Greeks call *phusis*.”^[IM,17/12] *Phusis*, at least according to this interpretation, means “the Being of beings,”^[IM,19/14] and philosophical “questioning about beings as such is *meta ta phusika*; it questions beyond beings, it is metaphysics.”^[IM,18/13] Otherwise stated, “Metaphysics is inquiry beyond or over beings, which aims to

²⁰ Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 1st pbk. ed, Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 41/59–60.

recover them as such and as a whole for our grasp.”²¹ Philosophy is thus metaphysics insofar as it does not ask about this entity or that entity, nor even about every particular entity, but instead seeks to exposit a representation of or articulate a theory about “the whole of what is, or . . . beings as a whole and as such.”^[IM,3/2] Although certainly reductionistic, occasionally over-simplistic, and not always consistent, Heidegger’s critical reading of the tradition is that Being as such has been ubiquitously understood in terms of beings as such. From Socrates to Nietzsche, Being has been inseparably intertwined with various understandings of the nature of the totality of entities, or the essence of existence (existing things) as such. At the heart of his worry is that he thinks the concern with Being *qua* Being has been conflated with and so obscured by the concern with Beings *qua* Beings. The question of the meaning and essence of entities has thus unwittingly concealed the question of the meaning and essence of Being in general, or Being in itself—i.e., Being *not* in terms of, or without explicit reference to, beings.

Now, it’s important not to read more into what Heidegger is saying than he actually says. In *Being and Time*, for example, he spends a great deal of energy talking about things like authenticity and inauthenticity, and it’s easy to come away thinking that he’s trying to provide a prescriptive or normative assessment of those aspects of being-in-the-world—i.e., that we should be actively striving to always live an authentic life. However, he’s not engaging in ethics, but instead providing a phenomenological *descriptive* analysis, which requires a deconstructive moment in order to understand Dasein’s relation to Being. In other words, his existential analytic of Dasein is a first step toward a fundamental ontology. Now, I would argue that the same is true for his rather infamous essay “What is Metaphysics?”. A cursory reading might lead one to think that he’s calling into question the validity of

²¹ Martin Heidegger, “What Is Metaphysics?,” in *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, Rev. and expanded ed (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 106.

scientific discourse and issuing a wholesale condemnation of human rationality, but in fact he's trying to elucidate something about the conditions of the possibility of modern science, and what is always already present before the *second order* discourse of reflective inquiry ever gets off the ground. He's not trying to undermine the legitimacy of scientific inquiry, but rather to understand what it is that makes that kind of thinking possible to begin with. If he's calling for anything, therefore, and I *don't* think he is, it's for those who engage in such practices to be more self-aware of the conditions within which their discoveries about the world have their meaningfulness, their situatedness and historicity, their being-in-the-world. He's thus more interested in a kind of originary or primordial self-awareness.

So it is with his critique of metaphysics. Even though Heidegger is highly critical of the endeavor, partly because of what he feels may be the potentially negative (unintended) consequences, it is important to realize, as Ian Thomson rightly notes, his "deconstruction of Western metaphysics does not destroy or even destructure metaphysics."²² Destruction, says Heidegger fairly late in his career, "must be understood in the strong sense as *de-struere*, 'dis-mantling,' and not as devastation. But what is dismantled? Answer: that which covers over the meaning of being, the structures amassed upon one another that make the meaning of being unrecognizable. Further, destruction strives to free the original meaning of being."²³ Not only is he *not* trying to obliterate metaphysics, but he fully recognizes that that wouldn't be possible even if he wanted to. "Metaphysics grounds an age," he says. It determines the entire history of the Western era, and thus "Western humanity, in all its comportment toward entities, and even toward itself, is in every respect sustained and guided by metaphysics." In other words, "by giving shape to our historical understanding of 'what is,' metaphysics determines the most basic

²² Ian Thomson, "Ontotheology? Understanding Heidegger's Deconstruction of Metaphysics," in *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8, fn 2.

²³ *Four Seminars*, 42.

presuppositions of what anything is, including ourselves.”²⁴ His deconstructive move does not seek to annihilate perspectives but to unearth alternatives. Hence, he says, “The step back from the [derivative] representational thinking of metaphysics does not reject such thinking, but opens the distant to the appeal of the trueness of Being in which the responding always takes place.”²⁵ His critique is aimed at decomposing its sedimented historical layers in order to open up the possibility for thinking beyond it, and decompiling its rigidified structure in order to clear a space for a novel understanding of Being.

Because of the deep and abiding influence of metaphysics, then, he thinks that the question of Being has long since been covered over. Ever since Plato and Aristotle it has ceased to be “*a theme for actual investigation*”^[BT,21/2]—that is, it has not been taken up in a sustained and systematic way. If metaphysics grounds an age, then our age began with Plato, and this is why his 1935 lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics* links up *physis* with the physical universe, or the world of what is objectively present. “If one is asking . . . about the Being of beings, then the discussion of *physis*, ‘physics’ in the ancient sense, is in itself already beyond *ta phusika*, on beyond beings, and is concerned with Being. ‘Physics’ determines the essence and the history of metaphysics from the inception onward.”^[IM,19] From Aquinas’ *actus purus* to Hegel’s absolute concept to Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence and will to power, because of its central preoccupation with entities, Heidegger thinks that “metaphysics steadfastly remains ‘physics.’”^[IM,19] And, as a result, the question of Being as such is merely “a mechanical repetition of the question about beings as such. The question about Being as such is then just another transcendental question, albeit one of a higher order. This misconstrual of the question of Being as such blocks the way to unfolding it in a manner befitting the matter.”^[IM,19] And, because “the metaphysical question about

²⁴ Thomson, “Ontotheology? Understanding Heidegger’s Deconstruction of Metaphysics,” 8.

²⁵ “The Thing,” 183.

beings as such precisely does *not ask* thematically about Being[,] Being remains forgotten.”^[IM,20] The truth of Being itself or Being in general thus remains concealed—hence, the “oblivion of being”^[IM,20].²⁶

Is there any alternative? Is there another way? Is there any possibility for starting over? Heidegger repeatedly talks about “another beginning” in his *Contributions to Philosophy*, and it is there that his *khôragraphical* thinking receives its most sustained treatment, but he does provide a brief glimpse in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Before turning there, however, we need to look at Whitehead’s confrontation with and critique of the tradition.

Whitehead: Questioning Beings and Becoming

Early on in *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead says that every historical epoch is characterized by some general ideas which include “conceptions of the nature of things . . . the possibilities of human society, [and] the final aim which should guide the conduct of individual[s].”^[AI,12] Each age is marked by “some profound cosmological outlook,”^[AI,12] an overarching horizon within which all forms of human thought and action have their possibility and significance. Like the light that enables us to see or the air that allows us to breathe, “such a form is so translucent, and so pervading, and so seemingly necessary, that [it is] only by extreme effort [we can] become aware of it.”^[AI,12] It is distant from our awareness precisely because it is so intimately present to us. On this point, I think Whitehead would essentially agree with Heidegger’s assessment that ‘metaphysics grounds an age.’ Whitehead’s reservations about the general metaphysical outlook of the Western tradition, however, dramatically diverges from Heidegger’s. Each of them are especially critical of both the content and influence of Aristotelian philosophy, but whereas Heidegger tries to develop a fundamental ontology in *Being and Time*, and then

²⁶ In a future exposition it might be helpful at this point to elaborate on his understanding of the ontological difference, and the way in which the quest for foundations or grounds characterizes metaphysics—i.e., metaphysics as onto-theology.

gives up that project to pursue the history of Being, which marks his *turn* (in the late 1920s and early 1930s), once Whitehead makes his own turn (in the early 1920s) toward speculative philosophical reflection, his interest becomes what, in Heideggerian terms, might be called a fundamental *onticology*.²⁷ If Heidegger thinks that the traditional ways of thinking about beings as such has covered up the truth of the essence of Being as such, then Whitehead thinks that the classical understandings of Being as such have concealed the truth of the essence of becoming as such. In short, Whitehead is more interested in radically reconstructing and revitalizing metaphysics by self-consciously *contributing* to its project rather than deconstructing, overcoming, or transcending it.

At the same time, Whitehead is also seeking the possibility of a new beginning, a novel approach that requires a new language to express a thoroughly dynamic and relational horizon. And, much like Heidegger, Whitehead wants to open up this new space by recovering several long lost Hellenistic insights, unfolding ancient possibilities that were insufficiently elucidated by thinkers like Heraclitus and Plato, and were eventually foreclosed once the influence of Aristotelian thinking held sway. What was it, then, that Whitehead meant with his bold assertion about the Platonic influence on Western philosophy? That nobody's ever really gotten beyond Plato? That nobody has explored or articulated genuinely new vistas of thought? Whitehead indicates that he has several things in mind with that claim. For example, there is a wealth of profound general ideas that are scattered throughout Plato's writings, an "inexhaustible mine of suggestion."^[PR,39] By saying that his train of thought is Platonic, Whitehead is also expressing the hope is that his own reflections are not out of place but fall appropriately within the European tradition. I take it as a humble acknowledgment that that he stands upon the shoulders of a philosophical giant. However, he means even more than that, something absolutely basic to his entire

²⁷ Trading on the term *ontic* in Heidegger, I use *onticology* to indicate the central role that actual entities or occasions play in Whitehead's thought.

system. Whitehead makes the unexpected claim that “if we had to render Plato’s general point of view with the least changes made necessary by the intervening two thousand years of human experience in social organization, in aesthetic attainments, in science, and in religion, we should have to set about the construction of a philosophy of organism.”^[PR,39] We would need a philosophy suitable to a world that is teaming with (inter)activity from the atomic level of things all the way to the cosmic. He then goes on to specify how all of the major elements of his scheme are shot through with a Platonic sensibility, and that this is because Platonism, when read through a certain lens, contains the seeds of an understanding of Being or reality or existence as such that is fundamentally dynamic and relational.

Before turning to what Whitehead sought to recover, however, we must ask what went wrong. Where did things go awry? How was it that Plato’s thought never developed in the direction Whitehead thought it could have naturally led? What was it that subsequent thinking so unwittingly stultified? In *Process and Reality* the bulk of Whitehead’s interlocutors are modern thinkers, and it’s because he both critiques and wants to move beyond some of their shared sensibilities that I think it’s right to say, as individuals like John Cobb and David Griffin do, that his own work represents a kind of *constructive* postmodern endeavor.²⁸ In stark contrast to those, like Heidegger, who expend much more energy pursuing a kind of *deconstructive* postmodern project, Whitehead’s speculative philosophy attempts “to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted.”^[PR,3] Without a doubt, the importance of human reason is certainly present in this famous statement, hence it isn’t an abandonment of modernity, but what must never be overlooked is that the reason he’s engaged in this kind of systematic thinking to begin with is to work out something along the lines of a *comprehensive hermeneutical framework*, or a holistic lens though

²⁸ David Ray Griffin, *Whitehead’s Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy: An Argument for Its Contemporary Relevance*, SUNY Series in Philosophy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

which to interpret our multifaceted experience of the world. Deconstructive work necessarily precedes any constructive endeavor, however, and it is here that one can see most clearly the ways in which his project fails to line up with modernity. He thus spends a lot of time explaining where and how and why the entire tradition has gotten off track.

Although Descartes's dualistic substance metaphysics is one of his primary targets, he thinks the roots of the ontological affirmation of *res extensa* and *res cogitans* go all the way back to ancient Greece. As Elizabeth Kraus cogently argues, "Process philosophy is an answer to the being vs. becoming, permanence vs. change problematic which has been central to metaphysical speculation since the time of the Greeks." I would also suggest that it proposes an answer the problem of the one vs. the many, or individuality vs. totality problematic, and I say that because the notions of both process and relationality are equally central to Whitehead's thinking. Kraus rightly notes, however, that most "attempted solutions resolve the antitheses either by denying the reality of one or the other of the paired alternatives or by making it in some sense less real than, dependent upon, or derivative from the other." Despite the implications of the title of his magnum opus, Whitehead does not grant priority to one side over the other, but instead affirms that "being and becoming, permanence and change," as well as the one and the many, and individuality and totality, "must claim coequal footing in any metaphysical interpretation of the real, because both are equally insistent aspects of experience."²⁹ The two are sides of the same empirical coin, and so are mutually constitutive of and dependent on one another.

Whitehead thus asserts:

In the inescapable flux, there is something that abides; in the overwhelming permanence, there is an element that escapes into flux. Permanence can be snatched only out of flux; and

²⁹ Elizabeth M Kraus, *The Metaphysics of Experience: A Companion to Whitehead's Process and Reality*, 2nd ed, American Philosophy Series no. 9 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 1.

the passing moment can find its adequate intensity only by its submission to permanence.

Those who would disjoin the two elements can find no interpretation of patent facts.^[PR,338]

Being and becoming are equally basic, and on his diagnosis the problem that has plagued Western thought lies primarily in its various accounts of, or ways of granting priority to, that enduring or unchanging element of experience. In a word, the primary problem is *substance*. A nuanced view is required here, because Whitehead did not utterly reject the notion of substance, and his own notion of actual entities/occasions is not completely foreign to substance-centered thinking. What he did reject, however, are certain formulations, such as that of Descartes, who defined a substance as a “thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence,”³⁰ or that which requires nothing but itself in order to exist. More than any other, it is this understanding of substance as ontologically independent and externally related to the world of changing things, the idea of an “individual self with no necessary relevance to any other particular,”^[PR,50] that Whitehead thinks is fundamentally flawed.

Even so, Whitehead’s critique of the Western tradition traverses the long and complex history of substance-based ontologies, which goes all the way back to the Pre-Socratics and receives its fullest and most enduring expression in Aristotle. As he says, “The modern outlook arises from the slow influence of Aristotle’s *Logic*, during a period of two thousand years.” In his essay analyzing the notion of substance in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Howard Robinson notes that there are at least eight possible “overlapping ideas that contribute to the philosophical concept of substance.”³¹ The details of those diverse ideas are not important for the purposes of this essay, but it must be noted that Whitehead is primarily responding the position articulated in Aristotle’s *Categories*, which divides substance into two

³⁰ René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: Volume I*, vol. 1 (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 210 (I.51).

³¹ Howard Robinson, “Substance,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2009, 2009, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2009/entries/substance/>.

main types: primary and secondary.³² Primary substances are defined there as individual things which are always subjects that “can be contrasted with everything else . . . because they are not predicable of or attributable to anything else.”³³ Put differently, a “substance is always a subject and can never become a predicate in the sense of inhering in another subject.”³⁴ So, while the general category of dog, man, and horse are secondary substances, this particular dog Rover, and that particular man Socrates, and this particular horse Secretariat are primary substances, because they are not the sorts of things that can be predicable of anything else.³⁵ The formulation is thus based on a basic categorial distinction between substances on the one hand, which remain self-identical and endure through time, and accidental qualities on the other, which inhere in or characterize substances. Put differently, on this conception substance is “a logical and/or linguistic category.”³⁶

This is why Whitehead later observes that “Aristotle’s logic is founded upon an analysis of the simplest form of a verbal sentence.”^[AI, 132] For example, ‘This water is hot.’ or ‘That flower is red.’ or ‘This cat is hairless.’ The qualities of ‘being hot’ or ‘being red’ or ‘being hairless’, are, of course, abstractions, so if one seeks to give a complete account of some “particular thing in the physical world, the . . . answer is expressed in terms of a set of . . . abstract characteristics, which are united into an individualized togetherness which is the real things in question.”^[AI,132] To borrow Whitehead’s famous phrase, the Aristotelian view suggests that the final real things of which the world is made up are

³² Aristotle’s position is more complex than Whitehead’s critique suggests. For example, Aristotle’s position in the *Categories* is further developed in the *Metaphysics* where he analyzes substances in terms of *form* and *matter*. There is disagreement among scholars of Aristotle as to just how significant this modification is—e.g., does this represent an entirely different view of substance?

³³ Robinson, “Substance.”

³⁴ Kraus, *The Metaphysics of Experience*, 2.

³⁵ I’m aware that Aristotle’s view of substance is both complex and controversial, and that his most mature expression is given in the *Metaphysics*, but a careful and nuanced presentation of his position is neither possible nor necessary here.

³⁶ Kraus, *The Metaphysics of Experience*, 2. What I mean by this will be clarified shortly.

independent and enduring primary substances, which only undergo change to the extent that they are externally modified by secondary substances. Whitehead says that this way of understanding “is beautifully simple,”^[AI,132] because the notion “of an enduring substance sustaining persistent qualities, either essentially or accidentally, expresses a useful abstract for many purposes of life.”^[PR,79]

However, as intuitive and helpful as it may be in many situations, “whenever we try to use it as a fundamental statement of the nature of things, it proves itself mistaken. It arose from a mistake and has never succeeded in any of its applications. But it has had one success: it has entrenched itself in language, in Aristotelian logic, and in metaphysics.”^[PR,79] In other words, the idea is based on the naïve and misguided assumption that the structure of language reflects the structure of reality—i.e., language corresponds to or shares an identity with reality. (Notice here again that Whitehead shares a similar concern as Heidegger on this point.) More fundamentally, however, Whitehead asserts that “it entirely leaves out of account the interconnections between real things.”^[AI,132]

Each substantial thing is thus conceived as complete in itself, without any reference to any other substantial thing. Such an account of the ultimate atoms, or of the ultimate monads, or of the ultimate subjects enjoying experience, renders an interconnected world of real individuals unintelligible. The universe is shivered into a multitude of disconnected substantial things, each thing in its own way exemplifying its private bundle of abstract characters which have found a common home in its own substantial individuality.^[AI,132-33]

A substantial thing essentially independent, and so cannot be internally related to or genuinely affected by, another substantial thing. “In this way, Aristotle’s doctrines of Predication and of Primary Substance have issued into a doctrine of the *conjunction of attributes* and of the *disjunction of primary substances*.”^[AI,133; emphasis added]

To be sure, there is something remarkably intuitive about the traditional perspective. This “way of thinking has an obvious consonance with common-sense observation. There are chairs, tables, bits of rock, oceans, animal bodies, vegetable bodies, planets, and suns,” each with its own enduring self-

identity.^[MT,128] This intuitive quality of the directly-observable world is why it served as one of the basic presuppositions of pre-twentieth-century mechanistic understandings of the universe—i.e., nature as the great complex machine, operating like clockwork, and faithfully adhering to immutable natural laws. All appearances and experiences to the contrary, on this view, nature is “composed of permanent things, namely bits of matter, moving about in space which otherwise is empty.”^[MT,128] Bits of matter are thus conceived as passive facts, individual realities which are “the same at an instant, or throughout a second, an hour, or a year,” and the real substratum of nature “supports its various qualifications such as shape, locomotion, colour, or smell, etc. The occurrences of nature consist in the changes in these qualifications, and more particularly in the changes of motion. The connection between such bits of matter consists purely of spatial relations.”^[MT,128] Furthermore, objects are encountered as moving within space, and events appear to flow along the arrow of time, and thus space and time have been conceived as independently existing substrates that are metaphysically real *some things*, “unchanging from eternity to eternity, and . . . homogeneous from infinity to infinity.”^[MT,129] With this substance-based ontology, along with the conceptions of absolute space, absolute time, and inert unchanging matter, one can “compose a straight-forward characterization of nature, which is consonant to common sense, and can be verified at each moment of our existence. We sit for hours in the same chair, in the same house, with the same animal body.”^[MT,129] There are various sights, sounds, scents, and textures that partly abide and partly change, but in spite of all appearances to the contrary, permanence and independence of substances, and the self-sufficiency of nature itself are taken as the ultimate matters of fact about the nature of the universe.

According to Kraus, Whitehead thinks there are at least two insurmountable difficulties with this world-picture. First, by exalting the categories of quality and quantity over the category of relationality, the Aristotelian doctrine fails to realize the ways in which those categories are themselves relational

insofar as “they express the ways in which substances *are for* other substances, and not attributes of isolated substances.” Second, and even more fundamentally, the classical view creates “an unwarranted dichotomy between a substance and its predicates, attributing permanence to the former and changeability to the latter,” and in doing so “renders substance *qua* substance transexperiential and unknowable . . . graspable only in and through its accidental modifications.” In other words, the categorial distinction denies both the changeability and relationality of substances, thus ignoring the reality of alterations in and connections between things. Whitehead maintains that this rejection of the essential relatedness of things leads inexorably in one of two directions: “either to a Leibnizian rationalism of windowless monads or to a billiard ball universe of blindly interacting, qualityless particles.”³⁷ The Aristotelian logic has thus contributed to a fundamental misunderstanding of nature and of life, and has precluded any attempt to combine the special sciences into a philosophical cosmology that might contribute to a genuinely viable comprehensive understanding of the universe. All such attempts, Whitehead bemoans, “are vitiated by the unconscious relapse into these Aristotelian forms as the sole mode of expression. *The disease of philosophy* is its itch to express itself in the forms, ‘Some S is P,’ or ‘All S is P.’”^[MT, 142; emphasis added] For all of its value, the language of logic has covered over the truth of becoming in general.

In this way, Whitehead faces a dilemma not entirely unlike Heidegger’s. On the one hand, this ‘*disease*’ is not restricted to philosophical modes of thought, for it has become an epidemic, infecting virtually all modern forms of thinking about and being in the world. The Aristotelian-Cartesian-Newtonian world-picture constitutes the pre-philosophical backdrop or implicit presupposition for most human beings in the modern world. On the other hand, the developments in contemporary science (especially quantum mechanics) have thoroughly demonstrated the inadequacy of every single feature

³⁷ Ibid.

of the traditional common-sense substance-based view of reality. “Nothing whatever remains of it,” says Whitehead, “considered as expressing the primary features in terms of which the universe is to be interpreted. The obvious common-sense notion has been entirely destroyed, so far as concerns its function as the basis for all interpretation.”^[MT,131] However, even though contemporary developments in science and philosophy have cogently demonstrated that “the grand doctrine of nature as a self-sufficient, meaningless complex of facts” is no longer credible, “the general conclusions from the doctrine . . . are tenaciously retained. The result is a complete muddle in scientific thought, in philosophic cosmology, and in epistemology. But any doctrine which does not implicitly presuppose this point of view is assailed as unintelligible.”^[MT,132] Is there a cure? Is there another way? Is there any possibility to open up a new space, to seek another beginning? If so, it will only be found in *khôragraphical* kinds of thinking.

Heidegger: Khôra and Ereignis

Recall that in his attempt to give a comprehensive account of the nature and origins of the universe in *Timaeus*, Plato (through the voice of Timeaus) postulates that there are two regions: the region of the upper realm of intelligible forms, “the sphere of invisible and unchanging being in the sun of the Good that shines over all,” and the “sensible likenesses of the forms in the changing, visible world of becoming.”³⁸ There is the region that always is and undergoes no becoming, and the region which comes to be and passes away, but never really is—the latter being an imperfect imitation of immutable perfection, and what we encounter as the material world. Timeaus comes to the realization, however, that these two realms alone were inadequate, and hence in the middle of his speech he feels it necessary to stop and start over—another beginning was required. Without a third kind, the realms of

³⁸ Caputo, “Khôra: Being Serious With Plato,” 83–4.

pure being and pure becoming could not account for their mode of interaction, or the relation between the two. Initially referred to as “a *receptacle* of all becoming,” and subsequently as a formless *matrix* that is receptive to and “available for anything to make its impression upon,” or that in which things come to be, it is finally designated as ‘*khôra*,’ a kind of space which “provides a fixed state for all things that come to be.”³⁹ Caputo describes it this way: “*Khôra* is the immense and indeterminate spatial receptacle *in which* the sensible likenesses of the eternal paradigms are ‘engendered,’ in which they are inscribed by the Demiurge, thereby providing a ‘home’ for all things. *Khôra* is neither an intelligible form nor one more sensible thing, but, rather, that *in which (in quo)* sensible things are inscribed, a *tabula rasa* on which the Demiurge writes.”⁴⁰ Neither intelligible being nor sensible becoming, neither eternal form nor temporal model, neither thing nor nothing, but an enigmatic space, an abyssal locale that is always already there, an aporetic void within which or from which sensible things emerge.

The intuition of such an originary topography or primordial place is what I am here referring to as *khôragraphical* thinking. Obviously much more could be said, but my basic contention here is that even if the trajectories of their thought run in radically different directions, both Heidegger and Whitehead came to a similar kind of realization—namely, that some sort of new beginning or third ‘kind’ was necessary. Now, to the best of my knowledge, Heidegger only directly commented on Plato’s *khôra* twice. Each was somewhat incidental to the main issues that he was addressing, and neither, it seems to me, offers a particularly illuminating reading of *Timaeus*.⁴¹ It is thus not Heidegger’s explicit elucidation or appropriation of the Platonic idea that is of interest to me here, but the way in which that *form of thinking* is present in his brief observations and appears throughout his later work. What I’m suggesting,

³⁹ Plato, *Complete Works*, 1251, 49a; 1253, 50b–c; 1255, 52b.

⁴⁰ Caputo, “*Khôra*: Being Serious With Plato,” 84.

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 69–70/50–51; Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray and Fred D. Wieck, 1st ed., *Religious Perspectives* v. 21 (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 227, Lecture X.

in other words, is that Heidegger's thought, particularly after the mid-1930s, is thoroughly *khôrographical*, even if he doesn't offer an in-depth treatment of the notion or make explicit use of it.

If Heidegger's lack of engagement with the notion seems a bit odd given the topic of this essay, I'm partly following the lead of Derrida, who said in an 1990 interview that he was currently "working on the notion of *chora* in Plato, the idea of place," and wanted to link this up with a "reading of the *chora* through Heidegger." He was then asked, "There is a kind of *chora* in Heidegger too, isn't there?" To which he replied, "The last writings of Heidegger are in effect a topology of being, so there's a conception of place, not of place in being, but of the place of being."⁴² Derrida thinks that Heidegger's reading of Plato is somewhat deficient, but the question of the place of Being, the topology of Being, or the space in which Being gives itself as itself is precisely what Heidegger is wrestling with in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* lecture course. In his chapter on the grammar and etymology of the word 'Being,' he continues to elucidate the ancient Greek understanding of Being in terms of *phusis*, and traces out its connection with *ousia*. Here, he interprets *phusis* as coming to presence, and *ousia* as abiding in presence. *Phusis*, in other words, points toward "the emergent self-upraising, the self-unfolding that abides in itself"^[IM,64/47], or the arising and standing forth of beings, for that which appears or "that which comes to presence essentially unfolds as beings."^[IM,64/47] *Ousia*, on the other hand, points toward the enduring element of that which comes to presence, or the abiding quality of present-at-hand entities. Heidegger thus says, "Something comes to presence. It stands in itself and thus puts itself forth.

⁴² Raoul Mortley, ed., *French Philosophers In Conversation: Levinas, Schneider, Serres, Irigaray, Le Doeuff, Derrida* (London: Routledge, 1991), 107, http://epublications.bond.edu.au/french_philosophers/. Derrida's extended reflection was eventually published as Jacques Derrida, "Khōra," in *On The Name* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 89–127.

It is. For the Greeks, 'Being' fundamentally means presence."^[IM,64/46] In short, Being in terms of *phusis* and *ousia* means the emerging and abiding of beings, or, in a word, Being means "constancy."⁴³

The problem for Heidegger, as already noted above, is that "Greek philosophy never returned to this ground of Being, to what it contains."^[IM,64/46] It remained centrally concerned with that which comes to presence, namely beings as enduring entities, hence Being as the beingness of beings, and so was not able to fully focus on their originary ontological source; and this has remained the case throughout the history of Western philosophy. It is in this context that he comments on the *khôra*.

Plato distinguishes three things, 1) *to gignomenon*, that which becomes; 2) *to en hōi gignetai*, that within which it becomes, the medium in which something builds itself up while it is becoming and from which it then stands forth once it has become; 3) *to hōthen aphomoioiomenon*, the source from which what becomes takes the standard of resemblance; for everything that becomes something, takes what it becomes in advance as prototype.^[IM,69/50]

Heidegger's interprets the second as "space," which he puts quotation marks, because he says that the Greeks have no word for space in the modern sense. This is because "they do not experience the spatial according to *extension* but instead according to place (*topos*) as *chōra*, which means neither place nor space but what is taken up and occupied by what stands there. The place belongs to the thing itself."^[IM,69/50] This locale is devoid of all modes of appearance or forms, for, as Plato says, "if it resembled any of the things that enter it, it could not successfully copy . . . things of a totally different nature whenever it were to receive them."⁴⁴

He then makes a very important parenthetical insertion, indicating that the relevant passage from *Timaeus* not only clarifies the idea of Being as appearing or coming-to-presence, but also intimates that the Platonic notions of *topos* and *khôra* prepared the way for understanding "space" in terms of

⁴³ The traditional formulation would be that being means *substance*, but Heidegger explicitly avoided interpreting *ousia* as substance because he felt that it "misses its sense entirely."^[IM,64/46]

⁴⁴ Plato, *Complete Works*, 1253, 50e.

extension.⁴⁵ To which Heidegger poses the following provocative question: “Might not *chōra* mean: that which separates itself from every particular, that which withdraws, and in this way admits and ‘makes room’ precisely for something else?”^[IM,70/51] That which withdraws and makes room for something else? When he makes his second explicit comment on *khōra* in his 1951-52 lectures, *What Is Called Thinking?*, he offers a subtle hint that Plato’s notion may bear some resemblance to his notion of the *ontological difference*. “Plato means to say: beings and Being are in different places. Particular beings and Being are differently located. Thus when Plato gives thought to the different location of beings and Being, he is asking for the totally different place of Being, as against the place of beings.” Furthermore, in order for the difference in placement to be possible, “the distinction [between Being and beings] . . . must be given beforehand.”⁴⁶ Prior to Being and beings is the originary difference that allows them to give themselves as themselves at all. In this way, Plato’s *khōra* may provide an opening for what Heidegger refers to in “The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics” as the “step back”—namely, the step back out of metaphysics, or the movement beyond onto-theological thinking into the horizon of the difference *qua* difference. The ontological difference refers to at least two concepts: (1) the (relatively straightforward) difference between Being and beings; (2) difference in itself and as such. On my reading, Heidegger’s ‘step back’ primarily involves thinking the latter.

Not unlike Whitehead in *Modes of Thought*, “The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics” concludes by raising the question of whether the nature of Western language is such that it forecloses the possibility of making any linguistic movements that transcend the boundaries of metaphysics. As mentioned above, ever since his turn toward the history of Being Heidegger pursued multiple paths to see if clearing such a space might be possible. However, in his “Letter on ‘Humanism’” he hints at what is

⁴⁵ Plato actually differentiates between *topos* and *khōra*, so I question the way in which Heidegger connects them.

⁴⁶ Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, 227.

probably the most significant approach when he says that *Ereignis* “has been the guiding word of my thinking since 1936.”⁴⁷ 1936 was the year that he began writing *Contributions to Philosophy: Of the Event*, and, in my judgment, the *Contributions* represents his boldest attempt to make move to break free from the traditional categories of thought. Accordingly, no single work is more emblematic of his *khôragraphical* thinking. It is here that he explicitly calls for a new beginning and proposes new language for thinking of and speaking about a kind of third type.

As an attempt to step beyond the horizon of metaphysics, *Contributions* is more like an experimentation of thought than a rationally coherent book that develops a clearly defined topic. The text is given in the form of a preliminary exercise, or the initial unfolding of a set of vague premonitions or emerging intimations. He himself admits that it is “a framework but not a structure,” and is thus very much a preparatory and provisional work.^[GA 69, 5] It is also extraordinarily difficult and exceedingly esoteric. It is, as Richard Polt rightly observes, “forbiddingly strange,” filled with language that “is hypnotically repetitive and dense, consisting of formula after formula in which Heidegger tries to say everything unsayable all at once.”⁴⁸ (I can’t help but wonder if this is what an extended mediation on *khôra* would look like if Plato tried to more fully develop the notion.) Though unyieldingly unnerving and entirely enigmatic, what we find, as Charles Scott says, is “an extremely intense, utterly determined process of thinking that is moved . . . by ‘something’ that Heidegger finds he cannot make or control,

⁴⁷ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 241, fn b.

⁴⁸ Richard Polt, *The Emergency of Being: On Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), 2.

‘something’ that is not a thing in any sense, ‘something’ that is neither human nor god, that ungrounds grounds while enabling them.”⁴⁹ In a word, it is thoroughly *khôragraphical*.

Only a few sentences into the *Contributions* Heidegger informs the reader that the text is written “in the age of transition from metaphysics to the thinking of being in its historicity.”^{[CP, preface]⁵⁰}

The era of erecting great systems has past, and the “that would elaborate the essential form of beings from out of the truth of being has not yet come.”^[CP, §1] Although the implication that his career marks a transition from one age to another, an era that began over twenty-five hundred years ago in ancient Greece, certainly contains a healthy dose of audacity and hubris, he does suggest that what’s he’s providing can be no more than an “*attempt* at a thinking which would arise out of a more originary basic position within the question of the truth of being.”^[CP, preface] Something very unusual is happening here, because philosophical reflection in this context is not performed in order to produce a systematic work but instead to *participate in something*. Thinking in and with and about the *Contributions* is to enter “a *course* of thought, on which the hitherto altogether concealed realm of the essential occurrence of being is traversed and so is first cleared and attained in its most proper character as an event [*Ereignis*]. The issue is no longer to be ‘about’ something, to present something objective, but to be appropriated over to the appropriating event.”^[CP, preface] To be appropriated over to the event is to recognize one’s essential place in relation to being; it is to fully appreciate one’s situatedness in one’s world; it is to see how one always already belongs to and so is determined by being. Given this intertwined condition, one cannot step beyond being to rationally deduce the truth of its nature, or conceptually control being through the construction of logical categories. Rather, one participates with or is *enowned* by being. The

⁴⁹ Charles E. Scott, “Introduction: Approaching Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy and Its Companion*,” in *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. Charles E. Scott et al., Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 2.

⁵⁰ This unusual spelling of ‘being’ is discussed below.

endeavor to give expression to the appropriating event [*Ereignis*] is thus itself an expression of the occurrence, the happening, the continual movement of *beyng*. *Ereignis* is thus intended to capture something of the *evental* quality of Being itself.

Heidegger then says that this appropriative occurrence “is equivalent to an essential transformation of the human being: from ‘rational animal’ (*animal rationale*) to Da-sein.”^[CP, preface] With a transition in the meaning of *beyng* (away from the Being of beings) comes a radical change in what it means to be human, and hence a modification of one’s own being-in-the-world. As one commentator puts it, “the transition into be-ing-historical thinking involves a change from taking the basic meaning of human being to be something metaphysical, something along the lines of ‘rational animal,’ to orienting our thinking according to da-sein in its temporal, disclosive character.”⁵¹ Since at least the time of Aristotle, human beings in the Western world have commonly understood themselves as a unique kind of being among other beings, distinguished from all others by an enduring essence or lasting substance that is most commonly understood in terms of our linguistic and rational capacities. As individuals with reason, we can comprehend the world by giving a theoretical account of the world. The consequences of adhering to this kind of interpretation have been extremely far-reaching, because it impacts all of the ways that human beings have thought about and comported themselves to other beings in the world.

However, taking the step back out of metaphysics to think *beyng* in its historicity involves what Polt calls a “*reinterpretive event*,” an event that completely reorients one in his or her surroundings and reconfigures one’s way of acting with understanding. “Such an event alters the agent’s own being as well as the agent’s interpretation of the world,” and constitutes a critical juncture “in the emergence of the appearing of entities,” because it can “open and close our ways of being-in-the-world, and hence our

⁵¹ Susan M. Schoenbohm, “Reading Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy: An Orientation,” in *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. Charles E. Scott et al., Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 19.

ways of access to beings as a whole.”⁵² What Heidegger seems to be suggesting, then, is that thinking the truth of the essence of being can expose the inadequacies of the metaphysical modes of thought that have so profoundly shaped our presuppositions about ourselves. We have tended to think of ourselves as independent rational subjects who stand over and against a universe filled with independent objects that are similarly constituted by enduring qualities that always maintain their own unique underlying identity, and are grounded by, or have their ultimate foundation in, Being itself. Heidegger thinks we can no longer take for granted “either that ‘we’ are as or what we have thought ourselves to be or that things are as we have thought: we can no longer assume that whatever we have thought ‘world’ to mean is its meaning.”⁵³

In the aftermath of such a transition, “neither da-sein nor be-ing itself are to be thought metaphysically. Rather, both are to be thought in their temporal, revealing/concealing, appearing/withdrawing character.” And, rather than considering Dasein and Being “in general terms or as instances of a species,” they are to be thought “as singular and unprecedented.”⁵⁴ For this reason a new language is required to talk about Being itself, and is why Heidegger deliberately uses an older spelling of the German *Sein*—*Seyn*. He wants to indicate as clearly as possible that he’s asking the question of the truth of the essence of being—an old English way of spelling Being—in a way that it is not grounded in any previous notion of being, or subsumed under a most common, transcendent, timeless, or highest being. Simply stated, thinking being in its historicity means peering, if possible, beyond the horizon of beings as such into the groundless abyss of being as such. As a result, he cannot develop a systematic account that follows a traditional trajectory of logical reasoning. Instead, the “contributions” are an attempt to *enact* a certain kind of questioning that proceeds along a pathway

⁵² Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, 78.

⁵³ Schoenbohm, “Reading Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy: An Orientation,” 19.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

“which is first paved by the transition to *the other beginning*, the one Western thought is now entering.”^[CP, §1] Put differently, thinking the essence of being is only possible by seeking a new starting point, by tracing out another beginning, by allowing a third *kind* to show itself as itself. And, allowing being to show itself as itself requires a kind of *inceptual* thinking. It is precisely this inceptual quality and the eventual quality of being that constitutes the *khôragraphical* character of Heidegger’s thought.

The central thought of the *Contributions* is essential this: being essentially happens in the event of appropriation [*das Ereignis*]. And, my central contention here is that *Ereignis* fills a similar role as that of *khôra* in *Timeaus*. I’m not at all suggesting that they are the same, but that within their distinct horizons they are utilized in a similar ways. As such, Heidegger’s third kind is *Ereignis*.⁵⁵ But just what does the term *Ereignis* mean? In everyday conversation, it signifies the common notion of an event, incident, happening, or occurrence. However, as is the case with *Dasein*, which most commonly means existence, Heidegger’s usage both includes and greatly expands upon its basic meaning. There is no single English word which has the capacity to adequately capture the multivalence contained in Heidegger’s technical use of the term. There are, therefore, a wide variety of possible translations, the most common of which are *event*, *appropriation*, *event of appropriation*, and *enownment*. There is thus substantial disagreement amongst Heidegger scholars on both the meaning and the importance of the term.⁵⁶ Because an extended consideration of *Ereignis* lies beyond the scope of this essay, I’ll simply provide a

⁵⁵ As noted above, Heidegger himself may be hinting in this direction when he speculates whether *khôra* might indicate “that which separates itself from every particular, that which withdraws, and in this way admits and ‘makes room’ precisely for something else.”[IM, 70/51]

⁵⁶ Richard Polt, “The Event of Entinking the Event,” in *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. Charles E Scott et al., Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 81–104; Polt, *The Emergency of Being*; Thomas Sheehan, “Kehre and Ereignis: A Prolegomenon to Introduction to Metaphysics,” in *A Companion to Heidegger’s Introduction to Metaphysics*, ed. Richard Polt and Gregory Fried (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 3–16; Richard Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger*, New Studies in Phenomenology and Hermeneutics (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

cursory glance of one position that I find particularly persuasive, while recognizing that the matter is far from settled.

I think Richard Polt offers a compelling case that *Ereignis* should be understood as “an ultimate interpretive event.”⁵⁷ In response to the question of why, in the pursuit of *inceptual* thinking or in the quest for a new beginning, a meditation on the history of the first beginning is required, Heidegger says:

It is because only the greatest occurrence, the most intimate event [*Ereignis*], can still save us from lostness in the bustle of mere incidents and machinations. What must eventuate [*Ereignen*] is what opens being to us and places us back into being and in that way brings us to ourselves and face to face with work and sacrifice.^[CP, §23]

Ereignis is thus a kind of movement that brings us into an originary relation to being—opens it to us and places us within its horizon. Therefore, whatever else might be said, appropriation is something that *happens*, and this happening is not an independent a priori structure or a continuous activity within which particular events take place, but occurs instead as the most intimate kind of event. Indeed, it is a singular sort of occurrence, so it does not refer to the numerous events that make up our everyday lives—e.g., eating breakfast, running errands, visiting the doctor, etc. In other words, *Ereignis* is not something that can “be chronicled by physicists, historians, or journalists.” Thus, while it is like other events in that it is a temporal happening, it is utterly unique in that “it inaugurates an epoch.”⁵⁸ Polt’s contention is that, as an ultimate and originary interpretive occasion, *Ereignis* is “an event that makes possible interpretation and meaning themselves, that allows the hermeneutic ‘as’ to come forth, not just for an individual but for a community and for an age.” It determines the way that all things give themselves *as* just these sorts of things and not as others. It thus belongs “to an order higher than that

⁵⁷ Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, 78.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

of ordinary reinterpreted events,” insofar as it constitutes the “establishing of time, space, and unconcealment themselves for this people and this epoch.”⁵⁹

Polt thinks that there are at least three reasons why the notion of a “radical interpretive event” is a good candidate for *Ereignis*. First, “it is not a mere entity, because it concerns the appearing of beings as beings.” Second, “it cannot be understood in terms of any other event, because it itself is the origin of all intelligibility.” Third, “such an event would elude the categories of traditional metaphysics, which describe beings in their being but does not recognize the originary giving of the being of beings.”⁶⁰ *Ereignis* opens up being to us and places us back into being, because being occurs only as an inceptual moment—only in the emergence of a new relation to being, only in the unpredictable bursting forth of another beginning. It inaugurates an epoch by providing the originary hermeneutical framework for understanding any happening whatsoever. In other words, appropriation “is the event in which being literally *takes place* . . . A site is staked out where interpreting can happen, where being-there [Dasein] can take root. . . . Such a site can be grounded only in an inception—an origin that founds an open realm. From the inceptive event of appropriation springs an order of unconcealment—a world in which the givenness of beings can be cultivated by a people.”⁶¹ *Ereignis* is thus the groundless origin from which, or primordial horizon within which, all interpretative possibilities comes forth.

Whitehead: Khôra and Creativity

In contrast to Heidegger’s very brief comments on *khôra*, Whitehead spends a relatively significant amount of time exploring and even appropriating the idea within his own speculative philosophy. He summarizes the insoluble dilemma of trying to simultaneously maintain a commitment to substance-

⁵⁹ Richard Polt, *The Emergency of Being: On Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 79.

⁶⁰ Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, 79.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

centered thinking and the idea that things are really related to one another by saying that one is either forced to admit that interconnectedness is a “mysterious reality in the background, intrinsically unknowable,”^[AI,133] in which case what you will have is a universe of blindly interacting particles, or one must affirm something along the lines of Leibniz’s world of monads, which are open to God but not to each other. Neither alternative provides a cogent explanation of the interrelatedness of entities, and both “spell death of the metaphysics of experience, which for Whitehead must be a metaphysic of the patterned intertwining of all things: a philosophy of organism.”⁶² He thus wonders if there might be any resources within the ancient cosmologies that allow one to evade the difficulty. Is there a third way?

He observes that the ancient writers themselves actually provided a potential solution.

But in the ancient cosmologies, including Aristotle’s own doctrine of matter, another train of thought can be found, which is in fact an emphatic doctrine of real communication. Plato’s doctrine of the real Receptacle [υποδοχη and χωρα], and Epicurus’ doctrine of the real Void [το κενον], differ in some details. But both doctrines are emphatic assertions of a real communication between ultimate realities. This communication is not accidental. It is part of the essential nature of each physical actuality that it is itself an element qualifying the Receptacle, and that the qualifications of the Receptacle enter into its own nature.^[AI,134]

In itself, the Receptacle has no forms, or rather, the eternal forms do not participate in the Receptacle, but it is somehow the foster mother or ‘midwife of all becoming.’ It is an intermediary *screen* of Being and becoming, a field of force, or manifold for all things that “receives its forms by reason of its inclusion of actualities.”^[AI,134] On Whitehead’s reading, this is the way that Plato conceived of objects in the world entering into, becoming part of, or really relating to other objects. He thus refers to *khôra* as “Plato’s doctrine of the medium of intercommunication.”^[AI,134]

In my mind, this return to Plato is one of the most distinctive, important, and underappreciated features *Adventures of Ideas*. He repeatedly says that all the central notions in Plato’s philosophy—

⁶² Kraus, *The Metaphysics of Experience*, 2.

namely, “The Ideas, The Physical Elements, The Psyche, The Eros, The Harmony, The Mathematical Relations, The Receptacle”—all these notions “are as important for us now, as they were then at the dawn of the modern world, when civilizations of the old type were dying.”^[AI,147] Just as Heidegger does, then, Whitehead sees the work of the ancient philosopher as marking off a new era in human history. On Whitehead’s reading, Plato saw the *khôra* as “a necessary notion without which our analysis of Nature would be defective.”^[AI,150] In fact, it is quite clear that he thinks his own analysis would be just as defective without something similar, which is why he goes on to say that it “is dangerous to neglect Plato’s intuitions.”^[AI,150] Explicitly and implicitly, then, *Adventures of Ideas* represents a kind of beginning again with Plato, and *khôra* plays an pivotal role.

Another reason that Whitehead directs our attention to Plato’s doctrine of the Receptacle is that “at the present moment, physical science is nearer to it than at any period since Plato’s death.”^[AI,150] How so? Again, he interprets the Receptacle as that which “imposes a common relationship on all that happens, but does not impose what that relationship shall be.”^[AI,150] Put differently, it is “the necessary community within which the course of history is set, in abstraction from all the particular historical facts.”^[AI,150] In 1905, Einstein published several important discoveries, one of which was his theory of special relativity. This is an oversimplification, but the theory of special relativity is based on two basic principles. First, the laws of physics operate the same in all inertial reference frames—i.e., they are the same for all non-accelerating observers. Second, the speed of light in free space is constant in all reference frames. The not-so-obvious conclusion that follows from these two principles is that space and time are not independent and absolute entities, as Newtonian physics had affirmed, but are united in a singular *spacetime continuum*. I mention Einstein’s theory because what Whitehead suggests is that that which imposes a common relationship on everything that occurs, and constitutes the comprehensive field among which history emerges, and thus what accounts for the interrelationality of

nature, is the phenomenon of spacetime. Space and time, and matter and energy, are inseparably intertwined in a complex manifold—space-time and matter-energy—, and what Whitehead asserts is that the “space-time of modern mathematical physics . . . is almost exactly Plato’s Receptacle.”^[AI,150]⁶³

Still, there is an even more fundamental connection between Whitehead’s philosophy and *khôra*—a conception of *khôra* that seems to me absolutely essential to his entire metaphysical scheme. We’ve already seen that *khôra* for him constitutes “the general interconnectedness of things,” which means, in part, that it “transforms that many into the unity of the one.”^[AI,150] I take it that the converse would also be true, namely, that the fundamental interrelational element of *khôra* also transforms the unity of the one into the manifold of the many. “We speak in the singular of *The Universe*, of Nature, of φύσις [*phusis*] which can be translated as Process.”^[AI,150] Thus, whereas Heidegger translates *phusis* in terms of the Being of beings, or the presence of beings, Whitehead might translate it as the concrescence of becomings, which is what he means by process. “This community of the world,” he continues, “which is the matrix for all begetting, and whose essence is process with retention of connectedness,—this community is what Plato terms The Receptacle [υποδοχη].”^[AI,150] Perhaps we do live in a matrix after all, then, one that is ontologically horizontal, emergent, dynamic, and interrelational.

With this as the basic backdrop, note the following statement from *Process and Reality*:

In all philosophic theory there is an ultimate which is actual in virtue of its accidents. It is only then capable of characterization through its accidental embodiments, and apart from these accidents is devoid of actuality. In the philosophy of organism this ultimate is termed ‘creativity’, and God is its primordial, non-temporal accident.^[PR,7]

Creativity is the category of the ultimate in Whitehead’s speculative philosophy, and thus, in itself, it is not actual—i.e., it is devoid of any independent form, and lacks any qualities. Like *khôra*, it is not a thing,

⁶³ He qualifies this slightly later in the text when he says, “The notion of Space-Time represents a compromise between Plato’s basic Receptacle, imposing no forms, and the Actual World imposing its own variety of forms.”^[AI,188]

for it is, quite literally, *no-thing*. It only occurs, or only *is*, inasmuch as it is in and with and through the emergence of occasions of experience. It is that without which occasions would neither arise nor enjoy their relation to other occasions. As such, it is the “the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact.” It is *the principle of unity* whereby “the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively.” Conversely, it is *the principle of novelty*, whereby individual occasions introduce “novelty into the content of the many, which are the universe disjunctively.” In short, creativity is that whereby “the many become one and are increased by one.”^[PR,21] There is some disagreement among Whitehead scholars as to whether the category of the ultimate in *Process and Reality* still plays the same role or has the same meaning in *Adventures of Ideas*, but I think there is some continuity between the two, because in the later work he says that creativity “is the actualization of potentiality, and the process of actualization is an occasion of experiencing. Thus viewed in abstraction objects are passive, but viewed in conjunction they carry the creativity which drives the world. The process of creation is the form of unity of the Universe.”^[AI,179]⁶⁴

On my reading, then, creativity is Whitehead’s reformulated, and much more robust, notion of Plato’s *khôra*.⁶⁵ To further establish this point, one only need to recognize that at a certain point he goes so far as to offer a summary or paraphrase of the *Timaeus*.

In addition to the notions of the welter of events and of the forms which they illustrate, we require a third term, personal unity. It is a perplexed and obscure concept. We must conceive it the receptacle, the foster-mother as I might say, of the becoming of our occasions of experience. This personal identity is the thing which receives all occasions of the man’s existence. It is there as a natural matrix for all transitions of life, and is changed and variously figured by the things that enter it; so that it differs in its character at different times. Since it receives all manner of experiences into its own unity, it must itself be bare of all forms. We shall not be far wrong if we describe it as invisible, formless, and all-receptive.

⁶⁴ One might thus say that creativity is the formless fabric that contemporary physics refers to as spacetime.

⁶⁵ That Whitehead provided a notion that is richer and more adequate to experience has a lot to do with the fact that, as he puts it, Plato was “the greatest metaphysician, [but] the poorest systematic thinker.”^[AI,166]

It is a locus which persists, and provides an emplacement for all the occasions of experience. That which happens in it is conditioned by the compulsion of its own past, and by the persuasion of its immanent ideals.^[AI,187]

If it wasn't clear already, the connection should now be obvious. Just as is the case with creativity, the sole function of the Receptacle "is the imposition of unity upon the events of Nature."^[AI,187] Whitehead thus wants to simultaneously affirm the central insight of *khôra* while transfusing his doctrine of creativity within it. Whether he provides the most trenchant reading of Plato, Whitehead can still coherently claim that the events which emerge from the womb of this singular invisible, formless, contentless all-receptive *kind* "are together by reason of their community of locus, and they obtain their actuality by reason of emplacement within this community."^[AI,187] Which seems to me another way of expressing the creative advance into novelty, whereby the many become one and are increased by one.

"Of course," as Whitehead says, "it is most unscholarly to identify our modern notions with these archaic thoughts of Plato."^[AI,159] As such, neither I nor Whitehead would want to naively suggest that they are one and the same notion. There is, to be sure, not just a subtle difference between them, but there are substantial differences, beginning with Whitehead's rejection of Plato's dualistic cosmology and affirmation of a flattened or horizontal ontology wherein the final real things are all occasions of experience. The real for Whitehead is precisely what is unreal for Plato.⁶⁶ "But for all these differences," he says, "human thought is now endeavouring to express analogous elements in the composition of nature. It only dimly discerns, it misdescribes, and it wrongly associates."^[AI,159] As Plato repeatedly reminds his readers, no matter how penetrating one's imagination might be, or how illuminating one's insights are, one will never be able to provide anything more than a more or less 'likely account.' And yet, in spite of the fact that our concepts will always and necessarily be provisional, there always

⁶⁶ Admittedly, there is the difficult question of why Whitehead himself wasn't more explicit about drawing out the connection that I'm making. This an issue that will require further consideration.

“remain the same beacons that lure.”^[AI,159] Systems of thought rise and fall, scientific and philosophical revolutions come and go, and what once dominated thought and practice will always be superseded. Such is the nature of what it means to live among the *khôragraphical* fabric of creativity.

In order to give an adequate account of the universe, Plato realized that he needed another kind or type. In addition to that which is and never becomes, and that which becomes and never really is, he needed that from or among which becoming arises. He needed the formless abyssal void which is only actual in virtue of its accidents. He needed Being, Becoming, and *Khôra*. Similarly, but from within a radically different historical, cultural, and scientific horizon, for Whitehead to give an adequate account of the cosmos, he too needed several ultimates: God, World, and Creativity. His work demonstrates a movement in process, an imaginative insight and a creative advance that is never complete. Whitehead is thus surely correct to say that the “transitions to new fruitfulness of understanding are achieved by recurrence to the utmost depths of intuition for the refreshment of imagination. In the end—though there is no end—what is being achieved, is *width of view*, issuing in greater opportunities.”^[AI,159] Accordingly, as one dilemma achieves resolution, there will inevitably be another that arises.

Conclusions

For Heidegger, understanding Being in terms of presence or constancy of beings has concealed the truth of the essence of Being itself. Being is always an enactment; it is always temporal; it is an event of appropriation. Being and time thus correspond with one another inasmuch as they co-respond to one another. The enactment of Being as *Ereignis* illuminates this novel, even if immensely challenging and enigmatic, moment of *khôragraphical* thinking. *Ereignis* unconceals Being while remaining fully aware that unconcealment is always accompanied by concealment. It is the appropriating event of Being, and thus coincides or is *co-incident* with Being. Like Plato’s third kind, it is that which cannot be thought or

said, because it is not a thing, but which one must think and say, precisely because it is that which enables thinking and saying as such. It is, in short, the ultimate interpretive event. For Whitehead, on the other hand, Plato's *khôra* points in a different direction, a direction that is decidedly metaphysical, but a kind of metaphysics that does not adhere to the Heideggerian conception. The central insight of Whitehead's speculative philosophy centers in and around the creative advance into novelty. It systematically affirms both being and becoming, both the unity of the many and the multiplicity of the one, both order and novelty, both relationality and individuality. The Whiteheadian reformulation of *khôra* is a renewed affirmation of the manifold or matrix or field of creativity that is the ultimate receptive foster-mother of all becoming. It could thus be said that he too, albeit in his own distinct way, affirms that Being is always an enactment.

I want to close with some questions that may provide some potential points for further clarification and exploration. First, why doesn't Whitehead himself make the connection between *khôra* and creativity more explicit? I think I've cogently demonstrated that it's at least reasonable to see Whitehead's reformulation of the Receptacle and his category of the ultimate as one and the same, but it is curious that he doesn't actually say so himself in an unambiguous way. While he does state explicitly that he thinks the space-time of modern physics "is almost exactly Plato's Receptacle,"^[AI,150] in his only discussion that deals specifically with creativity in *Adventures of Ideas*, he doesn't draw out the same connection. I think that one can validly infer from several statements in that short section that there is a conceptual link between them, but for some reason Whitehead himself doesn't say that "creativity is almost exactly Plato's *khôra*." That he doesn't make such a statement is curious, and potentially problematic for one of my main arguments.

Second, is Whitehead's speculative philosophy able to avoid the potential difficulties laid out in Heidegger's critique of metaphysics? I'm quite confident that it can withstand the critique, but would

need to explore the question in a more careful, nuanced, and sustained way in order to offer a strong defense of that position. Heidegger says that “all metaphysics is at bottom, and from the ground up, what grounds, what gives account of the ground, what is called to account by the ground, and finally what calls the ground to account.”⁶⁷ It seems to me that Whitehead’s process-relational metaphysics of experience, which is itself ultimately a comprehensive hermeneutical framework, avoids this charge of *foundationalism*. Despite the fact that Whitehead says that God is the ground of both order and novelty, neither Being nor God nor some combination of the two constitute the ultimate foundation of beings in the sense that Heidegger uses the term. Indeed, Whitehead actually rejects the notion beings as Heidegger uses the term, because the ultimate matter of fact is the concrescence of becomings—i.e., the finally real things of which the world is made up are actual occasions or drops of experience or experiencing events. Furthermore, Heidegger suggests that as a project to produce totalizing systems of thought metaphysics presupposes an aim toward the domination of the beings of which it seeks to give an account. Its desire to give an account of the nature of beings as such implicitly includes the desire to control, manipulate, and dominate them. It would be exceedingly difficult, indeed I think impossible, to locate such an impulse in Whitehead’s work. Whitehead’s systematic reflections are nothing if not always open, and never immune to revision. For him, the effort always involves producing tentative hypotheses, and participating in an experimental adventure in which “the merest hint of dogmatic certainty as to finality of statement is an exhibition in folly.”^{[PR,8,9,xiv]⁶⁸}

Third, are there any fruitful constructive connections to be made between *Ereignis* and creativity? I think there are, but hesitant to push them very far given that they belong to such different conceptual horizons. I have more question than answers at this point. For example, if one is willing to take seriously

⁶⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 53.

⁶⁸ Cf. Griffin, *Whitehead’s Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, 5ff.

Heidegger's claims surrounding the significance of the question of Being, and of the importance of allowing Being to give itself as itself, that is, not in relation to entities, is there any way out the dilemma he raises? In other words, is it actually possible to ever overcome the oblivion of Being itself? Is it a real possibility that one could arrive at a positive answer to Heidegger's question, "Do we have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word 'being'"? I'm not sure whether it ultimately makes sense to talk about Being without reference to beings. Furthermore, what would it look like to come out on the other side? In other words, let's presume that a novel way of thinking can provide adequate resources for fully confronting the question of Being. If we ever arrive at something like the truth of essence of Being itself, or somehow catch a glimpse of Being in general, or allow ourselves to be appropriated by Being, then what? Would it mean a new way of comporting ourselves to that which is other than Being itself? Heidegger seems to think that this would occur, but it isn't clear how or why.

Fourth, and finally, on the other side of Being itself, what kind of resources can Heidegger provide for thinking about that which is *other than* Being—i.e., thinking about beings? If Being is truly *evental* in its essence, is there any chance that his thinking might lead to an affirmation of the temporality of all particular temporalities? If we turn away from the metaphysical Being of beings and toward Being itself as *Ereignis*, or Being in its essential historicity, might we ultimately come to something like the Becoming of becomings? *Is it possible, in other words, that the Heideggerian question of Being might in fact lead to the Whiteheadian question of Becoming?* And, if it did, what resources are there in Heidegger for responding to the realization that the horizon of Becoming extends beyond the life-world of Dasein and into the realm of becomings that encounter their *unworlds* in ways utterly unrecognizable to Dasein?⁶⁹ Further, what if, in our engagement with Becoming as such, we come to the realization that

⁶⁹ I'm self-consciously trading on Heideggerian terminology here to pose a few provocative questions. Indeed, as a number Whiteheadian thinkers have shown, his work includes a fundamental affirmation of the intrinsic value of both human and non-human beings in the world. As such, he provides the resources for an ethic of genuinely universal care.

experience is universal, that there are no becomings for which Becoming is not an issue, even if it is only an implicit (non-conscious) issue for non-human becomings? Put differently, is there anything in Heidegger's work that would allow us to make sense of a fully event-based object-oriented ontology? Could it be done without reshaping his work beyond recognition? Graham Harman certainly thinks so, but I'm not yet convinced.⁷⁰ Hence, my basic concern is that there seems to be very few places to turn within the late-Heideggarian corpus for dealing with that which lay beyond the horizon of the one becoming for whom Becoming is an explicit concern—namely, those becomings with fully conscious understanding and awareness (i.e., human beings). This difficulty is why I think Whitehead's speculative generalizations provide a more penetrating mode of analysis, a more fruitful ground for the cultivation of creative thinking, and a more far-reaching and compelling width of view.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Harman's, *Heidegger Explained*, *Guerilla Metaphysics*, and *Tool-Being*.

List of Abbreviations

Heidegger

English page numbers are followed by the page numbers in the German edition.

BT *Being and Time*, J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, trans., (New York: Harper & Row, 2008).

CP *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*: R. Rojcewicz and D. Vallega-Neu, trans.
(Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012). *Only the section numbers are provided, because I am using a pre-published draft of a forthcoming translation.*

IM *Introduction to Metaphysics*, G. Fried and R. Polt, trans., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

Whitehead

AI *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1961).

MT *Modes of Thought* (New York: The Free Press, 1966).

PR *Process and Reality: An Essay In Cosmology* (New York: The Free Press, 1978).