

The Question of Ontological Dependency
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Heidegger's manuscript essay "The Argument against Need" (hereafter, "AAN") is concerned with questions that drive Heidegger's work both early and late – questions about the way in which being depends on us, and entities depend on being. Published in the appendix to AAN, amongst the "Preparatory material," is a "Typed Note" of unknown origin. (See AAN, §§, and editors' notes 13 & 14, AAN, §§) AAN appears to be a response to and extended meditation on the Typed Note which, for its part, consists of seven numbered sentences. These sentences contain an argument for idealism. Boiled down to its essentials, the argument of the "Typed Note" looks like this:

1. Entities depend on being.¹
2. Being depends on us.²
- ∴ 3. Entities depend on us.³

Let's call this the "Basic Idealist Argument." In the Basic Idealist Argument, 'x depends on y' means 'y is a necessary condition of x'. To say that entities 'depend on' or 'need' us is to say: "when there are no human beings, no entities are given either" (AAN, §§; 54/116; "gibt es auch kein Seiendes") Understood in this sense, dependence is transitive: if x depends on y, and y depends on z, then it follows that x depends on z. Given the transitivity of dependence, the Basic Idealist Argument is a valid argument.

In AAN, Heidegger imagines a conversation about the Basic Idealist Argument involving two interlocutors: the scientist "A." and the philosophical thinker "B."⁴ A. advances the eponymous "Argument Against Need." The Argument Against Need uses "incontestible references to

¹See the sentence 5 in the "Typed Note": "Entities-in-themselves (*das An-sich-seiende*), mountains for example, could *not* be entities *without* being-in-itself (*An-sich-sein*)." (AAN, §§; 43/105)

²See sentence 6 in the "Typed Note": "To being-in-itself, as to being in general, the human being belongs as a clearing." (AAN, §§; 43/105)

³See sentence 7 in the "Typed Note":

[(1)] If entities-in-themselves are *grounded* in being-in-itself, but [(2)] the latter requires (*bedarf*) the human being, then [(3)] entities-in-themselves, mountains for example, cannot have been there before the arrival of the human being. (AAN, §§; 43/105)

For obvious reasons, the emphasis in the "Typed Note" is not on entities in general, but on a specific kind of entities – "entities-in-themselves," that is, entities that we humans do not play a role in causing or producing. There is nothing particularly interesting in the conclusion that altimeters, telescopes, and electron microscopes depend on us.

⁴"A." stands for *Ansichsein* – being-in-itself, because A. helps herself uncritically to a notion of being-in-itself. "B." stands for *Brauch* – need – because the thinker is the one who inquires into the sense in which being *needs* us. (AAN, §§; 57/119)

proven facts” to show that “entities existed long before there were humans and before the human arrived.” (AAN, \$/\$; 54/116) Thus, we can conclude (\neg 3): “[e]ntities would not require the human in order to be.” (AAN, \$/\$; 54/116)

B. agrees that (\neg 3): there are entities like mountains, planets, and subatomic particles which, “as entities-in-themselves, *in no way* need a being of the sort of living being called ‘human’.” (AAN, \$/\$; 69/131; emphasis supplied) But given the Basic Idealist Argument, concluding that (\neg 3) would entail that we ought to give up either (1)⁵ or (2)⁶ or both – unless, that is, we can disambiguate the concept of dependence. In AAN, Heidegger argues that the dependency of being on the human being “is of a wholly different provenance and kind” than the dependency at stake in the question whether entities depend on human beings. (AAN, \$/\$; 67/219) If that’s true, then one kind of dependence would not necessarily entail another kind of dependence, and so it would be possible consistently to affirm (1), (2), and (\neg 3).

Before exploring Heidegger’s approach to this problem in AAN, it is worth look back to *Being and Time*, as Heidegger there stakes out a position on ontological dependency that presents exactly the same specter of inconsistency. I’m going to argue that Heidegger in AAN approaches the question along a distinctively different path than commentators have taken in dealing with the apparent inconsistency in *Being and Time*.

§1. *Ontological Dependency in Being and Time*

One could reasonably infer premise (1) from the central tenet of *Being and Time* – the claim that “being” is “that which determines entities as entities.” (SZ 6)

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger affirms premise (2) by arguing that “being ‘is’ only in the understanding of those entities to whose being something like an understanding of being belongs.” (SZ 183) In fact, this is one of the most enduring commitments of Heidegger’s thought. He labels this feature of being “the truth-character of being.” In saying that being has a “truth-character,” Heidegger means that “truth” or “disclosure” “belongs to the essence of being,” and that there is only disclosure when there is a being such as us.⁷ (GA73.1: 204) Finally, Heidegger also accepts some version of premise (\neg 3) in *Being and Time*, holding that “entities are independent of the experience, awareness, and grasping through which they are disclosed, discovered, and determined” by us. (SZ 183)

Heidegger seems to commit himself to the conjunction of (2) and (\neg 3) with the laconic

⁵“We arrive at the point of saying: entities-in-themselves are – without remaining reliant on being-in-itself.” (74/136)

⁶“[T]herefore, the human can never constitute the necessary condition for the being of [for instance] the earth.” (57/119)

⁷See also GA24: 25: “being is given only if there is disclosure.”

observation that “being, not entities, is dependent on the understanding of being.” (SZ 212) But, as the Basic Idealist Argument and the Argument Against Need each in their own way show, (1), (2), and (\neg 3) apparently form an inconsistent triad. As I suggested above, in making sense of Heidegger’s apparent commitment to all three premises, commentators have proceeded by disambiguating the idea of “dependence” – that is, by drawing a distinction between different types of dependence in order to show that the dependence relationship that obtains between us and being differs in kind from the dependence relationship that obtains between being and entities, and that the former kind of dependence does not entail the latter kind of dependence.

Consider first premise (1). Here are three candidates for specifying the type of dependence that might obtain between being and entities:

1^I. Entities depend on being for their intelligibility.

1^S. Entities depend on being for their subsistence / bare existence.

1^{CP}. Entities depend on being for their causal properties.

Premise (3) can be disambiguated in a similar way. Thus, candidates for the sense in which entities depend on us include:

3^I. Entities depend on us for their intelligibility.

3^S. Entities depend on us for their subsistence / bare existence.

3^{CP}. Entities depend on us for their causal properties.

Consider, for instance, Taylor Carman’s “ontic realist” reading of *Being and Time*. On Carman’s interpretation, being just is “the conditions of the intelligibility of entities as entities.” (Carman, *Heidegger’s Analytic*, 168; see also Carman, *Heidegger’s Analytic*, 15) In other words, Heidegger endorsement of premise (1) is really to be understood as a commitment to premise (1^I). It is important to the coherence of the ontic realist view, however, that being is *not* a condition of the bare subsistence of entities, nor is it a causal condition of the causal properties of entities. Rather, “being is simply what we understand when we understand *what* and *that* things *are*.” (Carman, *Heidegger’s Analytic*, 4) From this, premise (2) follows: being depends on us in the sense that our understanding fixes the framework of structures in terms of which entities are intelligible. But, Carman argues,

Heidegger is very clear that occurrent entities, for example nature, can perfectly well *be* independently of us and our understanding of them and their being. (Carman, *Heidegger’s Analytic*, 158)

Carman, then, sees Heidegger as rejecting premise (1^S) and, by extension, premise (3^S). Carman also notes that, for Heidegger, occurrent entities “have a determinate causal structure independently of the conditions of our interpreting or making sense of them.” (Carman, *Heidegger’s Analytic*, 159) Thus, Heidegger also rejects premise (1^{CP}) and, by extension, premise (3^{CP}).

On the Ontic Realist interpretation of Heidegger, then, when Heidegger endorses premises (1), (2), and (\neg 3), he should be understood as advancing the following claims about ontological dependency relationships:

- 1^I. Entities depend on being for their intelligibility.
2. Being depends on us.⁸
- ¬3^S. It is not the case that entities depend on us for their subsistence / bare existence.
- ¬3^{CP}. It is not the case that entities depend on us for their causal properties.

So the ontic realist is in a position to embrace the Argument Against Need and reject the ontic idealism of the Basic Idealist Argument.

In advancing their “Ontological Idealist” or “Transcendental Idealist” readings of *Being and Time*, William Blattner and Béatrice Han-Pile adopt a similar strategy of distinguishing different kinds of dependence – but with an important qualification. (I’ll focus here on Blattner’s version of the transcendental-idealist interpretation; Han-Pile’s version differs in some important respects.) Heidegger’s various claims about ontological dependency, they argue, need to be understood relative to the methodological standpoint Heidegger adopts in making the claim of dependency. They identify three distinct standpoints employed by Heidegger: the phenomenological (or “epistemological”) standpoint, the empirical standpoint, and the transcendental standpoint.

The *phenomenological standpoint* is a “reflective posture” in which one inquires into the “*a priori* conditions” that ground a phenomenon. (See Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 247) From the phenomenological standpoint, one can say that *x* depends on *y* if, upon reflection, one sees directly that *y* provides the very structures that constitute an *x* as an *x*. In other words, we intuit that *y* is “the framework that allows [*x*’s] to be as they are.” (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 9) Conversely, if one’s phenomenological analysis demonstrates that *y* does not figure in the constitutive conditions of *x*, then one would discover that *x* does not depend on *y*. So, for instance, when it comes to premise (1), Blattner argues that Heidegger’s phenomenological inquiry into being supports a “realistic” reading of being – by which he means that being determines not just the intelligibility, but also the subsistence of entities:

being ... ‘determines’ entities as entities by making up the criterial standards to which entities must conform in order to be entities at all. Being is a framework of items (or aspects of what is) without which entities would not be entities. (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 5)

Thus contrary to the ontic-realist reading, the transcendental idealist sees Heidegger as committed to premise (1^I) and (1^S): entities depend on being for their mere existence, and not just their intelligibility.

Regarding premise (2), Blattner writes:

What does Heidegger mean, when he says that being, the ontological framework, depends on Dasein? When we examine the meaning of the word or concept of being, that is, when we examine what we mean by “being,” we find that the structures that we identify with being depend on Dasein. (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 244-5)

⁸ “[I]t makes no sense to talk about *being* subsisting or obtaining outside or independently of Dasein’s understanding of being.” (Carman, *Heidegger’s Analytic*, 158)

In particular, phenomenological reflection demonstrates that there is a temporal structure or temporal framework that grounds or makes sense of the ontological framework that being is: “[i]f Dasein did not exist, time would not obtain. (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 232 & 246) Thus, “being depends on Dasein.” (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 246)

To this point, the transcendental-idealist interpretation of Heidegger accords with the Basic Idealist Argument – transcendental-idealists argue that (2) being depends on us, and that (1) entities depend on being. But Blattner denies that it follows that (3) entities depend on us – not because they deny premise (3), but because the question “Do entities then depend on Dasein?” is “unanswerable.” (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 242) It is unanswerable because, Blattner argues, there is no standpoint from which it can be meaningfully asked. Let’s bracket for the time being the possibility of asking the question from the phenomenological standpoint, and consider first the other possible standpoints that Blattner identifies.

In the *empirical standpoint*, one proceeds by positing the “ontological framework” (including the temporal conditions) that govern the disclosure of entities. (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 247) At the same time, one “think[s] Dasein away and ask[s] what is or would be the case in its absence.” (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 249) The empirical standpoint, in other words, ignores the dependency of being on us (premise 2) so that it can use the ontological framework to explore the sense in which entities do or do not depend on us for their non-ontological (i.e., ontic) features.

In the *transcendental standpoint* one “think[s] away not just Dasein, but also time.” (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 253) That, in turn “entails thinking away being” (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 246) because being depends on us and time. Thus, in the transcendental standpoint, one (tries to) ask how things would be “regardless of the conditions under which they are disclosed to us.” (Han-Pile, “Heidegger’s Appropriation of Kant”, 81)

Now, when it comes to asking about premise (3) and entities’ dependence on or independence from us, Blattner insists on what we might call “the presupposition principle” – that is, the principle that we can only meaningfully ask about some x by presupposing the framework within which x is intelligible. For example, questions about the president are only meaningful when we presuppose the constitutional and legal framework of the presidency. Thus, “it is senseless to ask Who is the president of England? because there is no presidency of England.... The question gets no grip *on* ... England, because it makes an assumption about England that is false, namely, that it has a presidency.” (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism* 243)

Suppose, then, that we wanted to inquire into the truth or falsity of premise (3^{CP}) and determine whether entities depend on us for their causal properties. To ask such questions meaningfully, we must assume that the framework is in place which makes entities and their causal properties intelligible. It follows that we could not conduct such an inquiry from the transcendental standpoint, because that standpoint “thinks away” the ontological framework that must be

presupposed if we are meaningfully to talk about entities and their ontic properties. We could, however, conduct the inquiry from the empirical standpoint, because the empirical standpoint posits the ontological framework necessary to say meaningfully of natural things that they do or do not have causal properties. From the empirical standpoint, we ‘think ourselves away’ and discover that entities do still have their causal properties. Thus, on the transcendental-idealist interpretation of Heidegger, Heidegger is only justified in rejecting premise (3^{CP}) if he presupposes the empirical standpoint. But this justification is entirely conditional, since the answer is reached on the basis of a hypothetical positing of the ontological framework in our absence. It amounts to saying: “if entities could exist at all without Dasein, then we could conclude that they possess causal properties that do not depend on us.”

Can we discharge the hypothetical? Can we determine that entities do not depend on us for their intelligibility as entities, or for their bare existence? As we have seen, Blattner argues that Heidegger is committed to premises (1^I) and (1^S): being is not merely concerned with intelligibility, but also with the mere subsistence of entities.⁹ It follows, Blattner argues, that the question whether entities depend on Dasein for their intelligibility and mere existence is an “unanswerable question.” (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 242) Why unanswerable? Because by the “presupposition principle,” talking meaningfully about entities at all requires our presupposing the framework within which entities are intelligible – the ontological framework. That means (as in the previous case) we cannot speak meaningfully about entities from the transcendental standpoint, because that standpoint thinks away the ontological framework that lets us meaningfully talk about entities at all. But nor can we ask the question from the empirical standpoint because the empirical standpoint posits the very thing that is being asked about. It assumes that the ontological framework – the structure that allows entities to exist and be intelligible – is in place without us. It thus assumes that we can meaningfully talk about entities without us. So to answer the question from the empirical standpoint is simply to beg the question. If the question is to be meaningfully asked, it has to be asked from a standpoint where being is not assumed. But such a standpoint is one in which we can’t talk about entities at all. So we cannot be in a position to say either that entities would, or would not, subsist or be intelligible as entities without us. This means that Heidegger should neither accept nor reject premises (3^I) and (3^S). And since we can’t really discharge the hypothetical, the commitment to (¬3^{CP}) has to remain conditional.

The transcendental idealist account, then, reconciles Heidegger’s apparent commitment to (1), (2), and (¬3) in the following way. From the phenomenological standpoint, we can say:

- 1^I. Entities depend on being for their intelligibility.
- 1^S. Entities depend on being for their subsistence / bare existence.
2. Being depends on us.

From the empirical standpoint, we can say:

⁹Blattner refers to the idea that being is merely involved in making entities intelligible to us as the “Dasein-related conception of being,” and argues against it at some length. See the introduction to Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*.

$\neg 3^{\text{CP}}$. It is not the case that entities depend on us for their causal properties. But the question whether entities depend on us for their subsistence or intelligibility is an unanswerable question. We can say neither that (3^{I}) or that $(\neg 3^{\text{I}})$; neither that (3^{S}) nor that $(\neg 3^{\text{S}})$. It is because it suspends the commitment to (3) that the transcendental idealist reading of Heidegger disagrees with the Basic Idealist Argument.

But one might ask at this point: how are questions about premise (2) any more answerable than questions about premise (3)? Perhaps one might argue that the dependence of being on Dasein can be demonstrated from the phenomenological standpoint, while the dependence or independence of entities on Dasein cannot. But this is, first of all, a matter of dispute: for the ontic realist, premise (2) and premise $(\neg 3)$ are both demonstrable phenomenologically. (See Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic*, 171) Indeed, Blattner himself argues that Heidegger demonstrates phenomenologically the independence of occurrent entities from Dasein:

[T]he occurrent is precisely what does not depend upon Dasein or its practices. The 'does not depend' must clearly be spoken from the empirical standpoint, although the analysis that results in this cashing-out of occurrentness proceeds from the phenomenological standpoint. (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 251)

Second, Blattner's argument to show that the question regarding premise (3) is unanswerable paradoxically depends on having shown phenomenologically that entities are dependent on being which is dependent on us. After all, the "presupposition principle" only applies here *because* entities presuppose being which presupposes Dasein. Those presuppositions were grounded in Heidegger's phenomenological analysis.

The justification Blattner proffers for treating premises (2) and (3) differently is this: premise (3) "concern[s] whether *entities* are." Thus, suspending the ontological framework keeps us from saying anything intelligible at all about *entities*. By contrast, Blattner argues,

this does not prevent us from assessing whether *being* obtains, for being is not an entity, and thus our ability to assess whether it obtains is not impugned by suspending the ontological framework. (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 253; emphasis supplied)

I find puzzling the reasoning here since there is no obvious reason why the "presupposition principle" wouldn't apply equally to any situation where an essential presupposition is lacking – it shouldn't matter whether what is missing is a necessary condition of entities existing, or whether it is a necessary condition of frameworks obtaining. According to Blattner's temporal idealism, the temporal framework is a necessary condition of being. (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 246) If Dasein is "thought away" in the transcendental standpoint, we must suspend the temporal framework: "there 'is' *then* no time." (Blattner, *Temporal Idealism*, 249) By the "presupposition principle," that means that we are no longer in a position to say intelligibly either that being obtains or that being does not obtain. If we hold to the "presupposition principle" and to temporal idealism, then we cannot meaningfully say either that being depends on Dasein or that it does not.

§2. *Unanswerable Questions*

Let's return, now, to Heidegger's treatment of the dependency problem in AAN. The question at the center of that essay is the question that Blattner dubbed "the unanswerable question": do entities depend on us for their subsistence / bare existence, or can they exist without us? The thinker B. "in no way denies the correctness of [the scientist] A.'s argumentation." He accepts the realist position that both the scientific and the everyday understanding of the independence of entities from us are "fully justified." (AAN, §§; 66/128) Where B. differs from A. is in their respective willingness to ask about the implications this independence has for thinking about ontological dependence:

For the sciences, there appear to be entities-in-themselves without a being-in-itself.... The question may be posed once again: What then does it mean for entities to 'be-in-themselves'? Science answers: we are not concerned with what this means; it is enough for us that 'entities-in-themselves' are in themselves. (AAN, §§; 74/136)

For A., the independent existence of occurrent entities renders superfluous the questions that B. finds most pressing – questions about dependence itself: in what sense are entities independent of us? Does the fact that entities are independent of us mean that they are also independent of being? Does it mean that being is independent of us? What could it mean to say that there are entities without being? (See AAN, §§; 67/129) Such questions are lost on A., who "finds it completely useless to listen even for a moment to a question" about the meaning of being and its relation to entities. (AAN, §§; 72/134) The idea that being "needs" us "necessarily remains unthinkable for A." (AAN, §§; 60/122)

By contrast, B. "asks, permits itself ... questions" about being. (AAN, §§; 57/119) Indeed, the question-worthiness of being and of ontological-dependency claims is the constant refrain of AAN: "the question remains" (AAN, §§; 54/116), "the question arises" (AAN, §§; 67/129), "the question may be posed once again" (AAN, §§; 74/136), "the question returns" (AAN, §§; 53/115), "the counter-question must be allowed" (AAN, §§; 58/120), "one must accept the question" (AAN, §§; 61/123). B.'s stance – the stance of the later Heidegger – is one of persisting in "the thinking which sets about questioning the sense and essential provenance of being." (AAN, §§; 66/128) Such thinking succeeds not by answering the questions, but by keeping them alive as questions – it aims "to keep open the question-worthiness of being." (GA36/37: 270)

The danger of the transcendental-idealist approach to these questions is that, by declaring the questions unanswerable, it short-circuits our philosophical engagement with entities-in-themselves. The Kantian approach is "too hasty" because it "interprets [empirical realism] in terms of ... transcendental idealism." (AAN, §§; 70/132) Rather than restricting scientific discoveries of entities-in-themselves to the empirical standpoint, rather than bracketing the causal independence of entities as something that is only hypothetically assertable, Heidegger argues that it "could be fruitful to listen impartially *to* the argumentation and position of the other and, as an experiment, to try to come to terms with – and that means to explain – *everything* on

the basis of *its* mode of representation.” (AAN, §§; 60/122)

So what happens if we accept the scientific approach to entities-in-themselves? This involves accepting that it is “possible and necessary” for the sciences to proceed without regard for being. (AAN, §§; 74/136) Why is this *necessary*? Perhaps because, as Dreyfus argues, modern sciences work by developing “access practices” (See Dreyfus, *Background Practices*, 95 & 119) for encountering occurrent entities as they are individuated through their causal relations with other (non-human) entities. (AAN, §§; 67/129) The individuation of entities-in-themselves, in other words, does not rely on the kind of intelligibility-relations that we humans require to make sense of them. (Wrathall, “Background Practices”, 13). That the sciences *necessarily* must proceed in this way, Heidegger argues, gives us a reason to accept ($\neg I^S$): “we arrive at the point of saying: entities-in-themselves are – without remaining reliant on being-in-itself.” (AAN, §§; 74/136)

Heidegger thus urges us to come to terms with the idea that entities-in-themselves are beingless. (AAN, §§; 74/136) “The beingless” (*das Seinlose*) is one of the locutions he coins for referring to entities as they are without us. The beingless, he emphasizes, is not at all the same as a non-being (*das Nicht-Seiende*) or a non-entity (*das Unseiende*). (AAN, §§; 74/136; see also GA71: 122) A “non-being” or a “non-entity” is something that simply doesn’t exist – the king of France, for instance, or a centaur. A *beingless* entity, by contrast, subsists or is individuated by relational structures that don’t require being or us humans. In other works, Heidegger employs the convention of bracketing the word “entity” to indicate entities prior to their entry into being: for instance, “[‘entities’] can [be] without being.” (AAN, §§; GA70: 79, brackets in original; see also GA70: 123). Heidegger ends AAN by posing to the scientist the question: what does it mean that entities-in-themselves are beingless? (AAN, §§; 74/136) At least three other times in his extant works, Heidegger poses the same question:

* “what would an entity be without being?” (GA49: 58; GA82: 313)

* “what ‘is’ the beingless?” (GA71: 197)

In each case, Heidegger leaves this question hanging without hazarding an answer. But what is the question even asking? The transcendental idealist is right to note that such a question seems to deprive itself of the framework we would ordinarily use to answer it. Should we then dismiss the question as ill-formed, as a pseudo-question to be dismissed or dissolved?

“The [entity] as the beingless must be thought,” Heidegger insists, even though it “in its essence repels thinkability and ... does not permit a thinking as something that is.” (GA70: 123; brackets in original) What is the point of thinking about a question that cannot be even thought, let alone answered?

In AAN and elsewhere, Heidegger suggests we are reoriented to being by our recognition that questions of ontological dependency do not readily admit of an answer. The point is neither to answer nor to dismiss this unanswerable question, but to persist in it until it reorients us to the philosophical problematic of being:

Here – in ‘beinglessness’ and in the ‘beingless’ – there is an imposition before which no metaphysical thinking can cope, but where the courage of beyng-historical thinking can be attuned.... From the vantage point of the beingless, therefore, a sharpened view into the essencing of being and of the beginning is granted. (GA70: 121-2)

The fundamental stance that Heidegger is trying to nurture in AAN, then, is “the readiness, not so much to answer the questions brought forward, as to examine them in their respective question-worthiness and implications.” (AAN, §§; 59/121)

So what happens if we take the rejection of premise (3) as fundamental – if our inquiry starts from the insight that beinglessness is “the ownmost of entities,” that “the beingless does not require being and ‘is’ nevertheless not the naught”? (GA70: 123) AAN gives us a few pointers. Let me briefly list four possible directions in which the inquiry might go.

1. Taking seriously the idea of beingless entities-in-themselves forces us to rethink the priority of being over entities. For the transcendental idealists, “the conditions of [ontological] determination are definable in isolation and in anticipation of what they determine.” (Han-Pile “Heidegger’s Appropriation of Kant”, 81) In his later manuscripts, however, Heidegger argues that “as long as the being of entities is thought as the *a priori*, that determination itself prevents any reflection on being as being.” (GA6.2: 312) “Which is older and which younger,” Heidegger asks in AAN, “entities-in-themselves or being-in-itself?” (AAN, §§; 63/125) He doesn’t provide an answer there, but elsewhere he argues that “the entity is the ‘*a priori*’ to being.” He explains: because being arrives in the midst of the beingless, and begins as the beginning of entities, for this reason is the entity – namely as the beingless that subsequently is in being – in a certain way ‘earlier’ and older than being. (GA70: 121; see also GA70: 79: “beyng is later than [‘entities’]”; it “invades [entities]”)

To say that [entities] have a priority over being means that they have a texture or character of their own: “Without being ... all entities would remain in beinglessness. But even this beinglessness is again not a null nothing.” (GA9: 306)

2. If entities-in-themselves can be without being, and are prior to and (in some sense) determinative of being, then being must be understood as playing a disclosive rather than productive or constitutive role.¹⁰ What’s more, this disclosure is something that happens or has an event-like character: “B. thinks being as beyng¹¹ from out of the event.” (AAN, §§; 57/119) As Heidegger puts it elsewhere, beyng is “a clearing track” that “shoots through [entities].” (GA95: 46) In other words, being lays out paths through [entities] that we can follow to come to grips with the world around us, and thus “liberates” the “beingless [entity]” for human

¹⁰See GA70: 79: “This in-cursion of being into entities changes precisely nothing in the entities, but rather first and only lets the entities be, which being was before the intervention the concealed of being, precisely of concealment.”

¹¹“Beyng” (*Seyn*) is Heidegger’s convention for designating being as something that comes about, as opposed to the metaphysical conception of being as something static and timeless.

comportment – “for knowing, acting, making, grounding and building, for giving and disengaging.” (GA71: 162)

3. The priority of the beingless [entity] over being suggests, then, a relationship of mutual dependency between [entities] and being. A particular style for laying out sense-making paths, enters into a kind of dialogue with [entities] as they settle into a state of mutual fittingness or adaptation. (See Wrathall, “Adaptation”) But just as there need not be one pathway through a rocky terrain, there need not be one unique style of sense-making (i.e., of being). In AAN, Heidegger emphasizes that the scientific disclosure of entities-in-themselves is “one very specific interpretation of entities and of the human as an occurrent living entity” amongst many other legitimate interpretations. (AAN, §§; 55/117) It would be an error to “tak[e] what is granted here and henceforth as what sets the measure everywhere.” (AAN, §§; 44/106)

4. Finally, this points to a different way of thinking about being’s dependence on us. If being can draw its structures from the texture of [entities] themselves, then it doesn’t necessarily depend on us to transcendently determine those structures. But it does need us to stabilize the particular pathways of sense-making that it opens up. Being, as a path-making incursion into [entities], “is dependent on the human being, insofar as the human ... safeguards this clearing.” (AAN, §§; 67/129) As we become habituated in a particular way of making sense of entities, we shelter, preserve, and maintain the “openness” within which entities can manifest themselves.¹² (See AAN, §§; 67/129 to AAN, §§; 68/130)

¹²See (68-69/130-1). Compare GA70: 14, where Heidegger explains that the human being is the persistent one (*der Inständige*) who “catches” and “preserves” an understanding of being, thus opening up the possibility of a world coming to “fit” itself into a coherent understanding.

ABBREVIATION KEY

- AAN Martin Heidegger, “The Argument against Need (for the Being-in-Itself of Entities)”, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* x, no. y (2021): \$-\$. doi: xxxxx. Page Numbers after the first slash refer to the German original published online with the translation: “Das Argument gegen den Brauch (für das Ansichsein des Seienden)”, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* x, no. y (2021): \$-\$. doi: xxxxx. The set of numbers after the semicolon refer to page numbers of the first edition of the German text and to the document numbers of the manuscript material, respectively. The first edition was prepared for the *Jahresgabe der Martin Heidegger-Gesellschaft 2013/14* [Gift booklet of the Martin-Heidegger-Society 2013/2014], printed in Stuttgart, Germany. The document numbers refer to a slipcase entitled “Brauch” (Sign. A: Heidegger 1, Inv.-Nr.: 2006.21) in the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach*. The *Jahresgabe*-edition contains facsimilies of these documents. For more information, see the notes to the English translation and the editors’ introduction (Keiling, Tobias, and Ian Moore. “Heidegger on Deep Time and Being-in-Itself: Introducing ‘The Argument against Need’”, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* x, no. y (2021): \$-\$. doi: xxxxx).
- GA6.2 Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche. Zweiter Band*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1997.
- GA 9 Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976.

- GA36/37 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Wahrheit*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2001.
- GA49 Martin Heidegger, *Die Metaphysik des deutschen Idealismus*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1991.
- GA 70 Martin Heidegger, *Über den Anfang (1941)*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2005.
- GA71 Martin Heidegger, *Das Ereignis (1941/42)*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2009.
- GA73.2 Martin Heidegger, *Zum Ereignis-Denken*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2013.
- GA95 Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen VII-XI (Schwarze Hefte 1938/39)*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2014.
- SZ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967.

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