
Reviewed by Frank Schalow, University of New Orleans, author of *The Incarnality of Being: The Earth, Animals, and the Body in Heidegger’s Thought*.

Of all the volumes that comprise Heidegger’s Complete Works (*Gesamtausgabe*), probably none is more challenging than *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, a manuscript from 1936–38 which was originally published in 1989. A decade after its publication, Parvis Emad (in collaboration with Kenneth Maly) translated this volume as *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*. In *On the Way to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, Parvis Emad brings to fruition his unique insights into the synergy between Heidegger’s thinking and his language, the challenge of giving new expression to the most perennial of all philosophical questions, the question of the “meaning” of being. Just as Emad tackles a heraclean task with his translation of *Contributions to Philosophy*, he rises to the occasion once again in providing us with an illuminating interpretation of this exacting and decisive text.

The difficulties surrounding *Contributions to Philosophy* stem from the ground-breaking character of its language, the uniqueness of its composition, and the magnitude of the task that Heidegger undertakes in transposing his inquiry into being into the widest historical orbit. He characterizes this task as “being-historical thinking,” which brings his twofold critique and appropriation of the philosophical tradition into the forefront of the inquiry into being. In undertaking this task, Heidegger does not denounce the hermeneutic-phenomenological path he forged in *Being and Time*, but, on the contrary, both broadens and deepens it by locating its place within the greater historical expanse of being’s possibility for manifestation. The manner in which being, through its dynamic of manifestation, yields itself to thought determines the development, transformation, and, ultimately, the unity of Heidegger’s method. As Emad states in his “Introduction”:

> The “dialogue” within the thinking of being is shaped by the thrust of hermeneutic phenomenology, that is, by the self-transforming onefold of “what shows itself in itself,” the “manifest,” and “interpretation.” Accordingly, one of the premises of these essays is that the transcendental-horizontal thinking of *Being and Time* as well as the being-historical thinking of *Contributions to Philosophy*, each in its own way, originates from within this self-transforming onefold. (p. 3)

By adhering to the singularity of the question of being, Emad avoids the misbegotten attempt either to bifurcate Heidegger’s thought into “early” and “later” phases or to fragment it into different chronological periods.
Being-historical thinking reveals that what is most question-worthy comes to light by addressing the historical culmination of the philosophical tradition's neglect of being, namely, the onslaught of "machination." In Contributions, Heidegger considers the dynamic of being's manifestation equally in terms of its tendency toward concealment, shifting attention to what becomes manifest in a one-dimensional way or beings themselves, that is, in terms of their instrumental uses. What Heidegger calls "machination" prefigures what he describes a decade later as the global force unleashed at the end of the modern age or technology. Because technology arises from the Western tradition's tendency to subordinate being to beings, an historical confrontation with its metaphysical roots transforms the question of being into the "question of technology." By the same token, being-historical thinking addresses the double-edged character of technology as embodying both the culmination of modernity and as harboring an alternative possibility for being to manifest itself in a way that exposes technology as the global danger it is. The metaphysical tradition "is totally ensnared by and sucked into the coercive power dominating the clearing [of being] that occurs as machination....we [thereby] understand why, on the one hand, the talk of an annihilating coercive force brings to mind familiar historical and sociological realities of the turbulent twentieth century and why, on the other hand, the clearing within which this force unfolds is withdrawn from those realities" (p. 171).

According to Emad, the keynote of Contributions is that being-historical thinking comes into its own by confronting the prevalence of the opposite, the concealment of being, and hence even more basic than the unconcealment of being is what yields this possibility or "enowning" (Ereignis). As he emphasizes, the translation of the term Ereignis as "enowning" implicates what is to be thought by it, and vice versa, insofar as the nuances of language prepare the way for the disclosure of being itself. By the same token, in Contributions Heidegger employs the old German word "Seyn" instead of "Sein") to distinguish it from the reified concepts of metaphysics, the nuance of which Emad captures by interposing a hyphen in the English cognate, i.e., "be-ing." Because "language is the house of being," the nuances of words have their own phenomenological import, that is, by providing an avenue for being's self-manifestation.

Not surprisingly, Emad devotes an entire chapter to exploring the intricacies of translation as it bears directly on the task of thinking. Indeed, translation is a venture of thinking, insofar as Heidegger's own thought yields the interpretive guidelines to "translate the keywords of Contributions to Philosophy" (p. 22). Translation is first and foremost an exercise in safeguarding the word through which being becomes manifest. Hence translation depends upon heeding the power of the word, yielding to its disclosive potential. Because translation is a way of responding to the word, Emad characterizes the task of translating as a mode of "hermeneutic