In the six years since Heidegger's death there has been an increasing tendency among philosophers to regard his written word as somehow sacrosanct, and as a result people enter into lengthy debates over which writer is more or less "true" in his interpretation to what Heidegger has said. While all this is useful enough from a pedagogical point of view, we are in danger of losing sight of die Sache with which Heidegger's thought was continually grappling. We are in danger of allowing Heidegger's thought simply to congeal into the latest in a long history of metaphysical systems or doctrines. This danger is perhaps most apparent in the attitude we take towards Heidegger's texts now that there is no possibility of his writing "new" things to stimulate us. Are we to devote all of our time to endlessly debating this or that nuance in Heidegger's printed texts, thereby losing sight of his thought (at least potentially) in our concern with "correct" scholarship? Or are we instead to address the matter itself, die Sache, of Heidegger's thought?

In a sense this is the old distinction between "mere scholarship" and "doing Philosophy," and yet in dealing with Heidegger the old distinction seems to take on a new force. What we are particularly in need of now, six years after Heidegger's death, is a way of reading Heidegger's texts which is, to be sure, not irresponsible with respect to its scholarship, but which does not simply stop at scholarly responsibility. What we need today is a sophisticated reading which keeps alive the radicality of Heidegger's thought, not allowing that radicality to dissipate for the sake of pedantic squabbling over matters of "Heidegger Scholarship."
seems to this reviewer that any new anthology concerned with Heidegger’s thought which appears today must be judged against the need for such a reading, and it is in terms of this need that the present review of Thomas Sheehan’s new book will be conducted.

Professor Sheehan’s book represents one of the more interesting anthologies devoted to Heidegger to have appeared in recent years. The book is a collection of twenty-four articles, including five short pieces by Heidegger himself, and two bibliographies. Ten of these articles appeared together in 1977 in the journal Listening 12(3), which was a memorial issue dedicated to Heidegger and edited by Professor Sheehan. The new book adds to those ten pieces fourteen new ones, many of which are either original contributions or are appearing for the first time in English. The resulting compendium is quite impressive at first glance, offering as it does the work of many first-rate writers on several of the most important issues in Heidegger’s thought.

In reviewing this anthology, I will be guided by Sheehan’s organization of the book into six sections, each of which deals with a separate theme or group of themes. I will examine the book section by section, and in so doing will contrast two or three of the articles found in each according to how they contribute to or inhibit the attempt to carry out a radical reading of Heidegger. Obviously I will be unable to mention all twenty-four pieces in the book, and indeed a review which did so would be profoundly uninteresting. Instead my efforts will be aimed entirely at showing where Sheehan’s book succeeds in providing us with the sort of readings we need and where it fails.

Part I is entitled “Glimpses of the Philosopher’s Life.” It is the largest section of the book, both in terms of pages (72) and number of essays (8). In his Preface Professor Sheehan states that the goal of this section is to trace the “span” of Heidegger’s career from his early works through his Nazi involvement and culminating with his death in May, 1976. In fact, all of the pieces in this section speak to one of the following themes: (1) Heidegger’s early development and the genesis of Being and Time; (2) the Nazi involvement and its repercussions; and (3) the growth and significance of Heidegger’s thoughts about technology.

Of the articles in this section, I will deal with three in particular. The first is a lengthy piece by Professor Sheehan entitled “Heidegger’s Early Years: Fragments for a Philosophical Biography,” and is part of a larger project concerned with the genesis of Being and Time. The essay reflects a great deal of careful scholarship and contains a wealth of details about Heidegger’s early development. Indeed, most of the essay deals with Heidegger’s career prior to his leaving for Marburg in 1923.