Language, Logic, and Time


The study of Heidegger’s “early writings”—i.e., the works of the pre-*Being and Time* period—is most rewarding for understanding Heidegger’s later development and is all the more urgent in view of Heidegger’s own recurrent characterization of his work as a “path of thought” and of his remark in this regard that “one’s beginning remains always one’s future.”¹ Perhaps this publication of these long out-of-print works will help to compensate for the almost total neglect that Heidegger’s earliest writings have received in the literature. It is a surprising Heidegger that is encountered in these pages: one who refers to himself as an “unhistorical mathematician” in whom a love of history needed to be awakened (3),² who cites the writings of Planck and Einstein, who devotes his philosophical energies to the problems of logic and of the foundations of logic and mathematics. It would be an eye-opening experience for analytic philosophers, who are accustomed to think of Heidegger as the high-priest of “continental irrationalism,” to see how deeply Heidegger once shared their interests. We can, for simplicity’s sake, group Heidegger’s main concerns at this time around three problems, which are the themes of the three major

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² Unless otherwise noted all page numbers in parentheses will refer to Martin Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972). There is a brief Foreword to this volume by Heidegger which is mainly given over to his short inaugural address to the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and which is translated in *Man and World* 3 (February, 1970), 3-4. There is also a helpful index of topics and another of persons at the end of the volume, prepared by F.-W. von Hermann.
works of his youth collected together in this volume: logic, the subject of his doctoral dissertation (1914); language, the topic of the Habilitationschrift (1916); and time, the theme of the trial-lecture at Freiburg (1915).

We shall examine each work in turn and try in the process to show the relevance of each for understanding Heidegger's mature thought.

Die Lehre vom Urteil im Psychologismus (1914) is concerned with rooting out the "unphilosophy" (147) of "psychologism" insofar as it has affected our understanding of the meaning and function of the "judgment" in logic. Although the spell of psychologism as a general theory has been broken by the work of Husserl (5-6), still one must keep a constant guard to see that this mistaken view does not infiltrate the treatment of specific problems in logic, and especially the problem of the judgment, the all important "basic element" (Urelement) (7) of logic. Heidegger's program in the dissertation, therefore, will be to make consecutive studies of four "psychologistic" theories of judgment (Wilhelm Wundt, Heinrich Meier, Franz Brentano and Theodor Lipps), each of which Heidegger first presents and then criticizes. In the fifth section Heidegger defends his own "purely logical" interpretation of the judgment.

We can get some idea of the character of this study by looking briefly at Heidegger's treatment of the last of these figures, Theodor Lipps (66-101). Lipps is particularly interesting because his view develops from an undisguised psychologistic posture to a position which he himself describes as "objective idealism," in which he nearly—but not fully, according to Heidegger—extricates himself from psychologism. According to Lipp's view, the laws of thought are the laws of our psychical nature. Logic for him is the "physics of thinking" (70). A judgment is assigned objective validity when it combines representations in a "necessary" way, but this necessity is interpreted by Lipps in a physicalistic sense. It is a psychic compulsion which forces us to combine ideas in one way (positive judgments) and prevents us from combining them in another way (negative judgments). The necessity is, as in Hume, a "feeling" of necessity (69-83). In Lipp's later thought two decisive improvements on his theory are introduced. In the first place, he distinguishes between the "content" of the judgment, which he identifies as psychic events (perceptions, images, etc.), and the "object" of the judgments, which is what is "meant" or "thought" in the judgment, and he insists that judgment has to do with the latter. We do not judge about our images, but about objects. Secondly, he argues that the "necessity" which belongs to objectively valid judg-