Review Articles

Heidegger’s Confrontation with His Own Writings

Martin Heidegger (2018), Zu eigenen Veröffentlichungen, Martin Heidegger
Gesamtausgabe Band 82, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag,
xxvii + 528 pp.

In an appendix to the published edition of Mindfulness [Besinnung], volume 66 of his complete works, Heidegger offers a sort of syllabus for orienting and better understanding the central concept of his middle-period, the event [das Ereignis], and the first of his seven private monographs Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event). Central among the listed texts is the thinker’s magnum opus, Being and Time, but accompanied by several references to essays on Being and Time that remained until now unpublished but have been gathered in a recently published volume. The German language publication of volume 82 of Martin Heidegger’s complete works (Gesamtausgabe) makes available for the first time Heidegger’s self-confrontation and reflections on his own publications. Long anticipated, this volume brings together Heidegger’s own commentary and criticisms of Being and Time (1927) as well as four other well-known texts—“What is Metaphysics?” (1929), “Origin of the Work of Art” (1935–36), the “Letter on Humanism” (1946), and the first of the three Country Path Conversations, Ἀγχιβασίη, also known by its longer title “A Triadic Conversation on a Country Path between a Scientist, a Scholar, and a Guide,” written between 1944 and 1945 and the source of the now famous “Gelassenheit” essay, originally published in 1959. Volume 82 of Heidegger’s Gesamtausgabe would be a treasure trove of material just for the thinker’s own reflections on Being and Time, much less the inclusion of reflections on some of his other very popular and well-known essays. Spanning more than thirty years of Heidegger’s own reflections about his writings, this volume is essential reading for anyone interested in connecting the pieces of Heidegger’s thought throughout his career.
I spend much of this review primarily outlining the sections devoted to *Being and Time*, while also briefly visiting each of the commentaries from the four other essays. There are two main reasons for this. First, Heidegger's own relationship with *Being and Time* is complicated and his approach to that text changes, sometimes significantly, over the thirty years he spends reflecting on it. At times self-confrontational and critical, other times he sees it as having hidden and, as yet, unlocked truths within its pages; Heidegger returns again and again to his *magnum opus*. Further, like his remarks on *Being and Time* in this volume, the other writings collected here have in common the remarks of a thinker who consistently returns to their own work not to reevaluate, redeem, or rewrite it, but to reencounter it and place these works into the broader conversation of a philosophical career. In what follows I try to give an overview of each major section and also briefly show how these notes and remarks display both continuity and transformation in Heidegger’s own path of thinking.

1 Heidegger's Commentary and Confrontation with *Being and Time* (1936–1964)

Most of the volume is, unsurprisingly, dedicated to no less than a dozen different readings of *Being and Time* conducted over thirty years that, all totaled, add up to just over 400 pages of reflections on his first *magnum opus*, equaling nearly the length of the original text itself. These readings of *Being and Time* are especially significant because they either occur at critical junctures of shifts in Heidegger's thinking or are extended commentaries on topics which have long troubled scholars, including temporality [*Zeitlichkeit*] in *Being and Time*, time itself, the question of being [*Seinsfrage*], or the status and role of the transcendental, as well as critiques given by his readers (notably Jaspers) right after *Being and Time*'s publication.

The first two of these encounters, occupying just over 200 pages, merit particular interest. The first, "Running Commentary on *Being and Time*," begun in the summer of 1936, not long after Heidegger had also begun writing his *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, is a chapter by chapter and section by section commentary of the entirety of Part One, Division i of *Being and Time*. This is Heidegger's famous existential analytic of Da-sein and he pains-takingly moves through each section, often addressing criticisms from the text's reception, e.g. how the text is not an “anthropology” or that it is a misunderstanding of his work to characterize it as existential [*Existenzphilosophie*]. While Division ii of *Being and Time* does not receive the same level of section by section attention, Heidegger does nevertheless frequently refer to central