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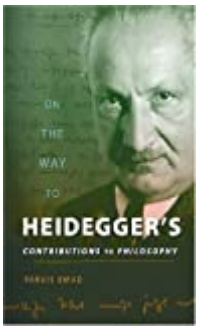
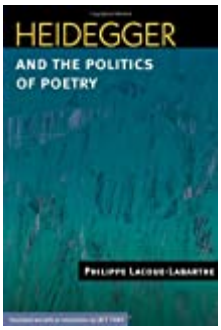
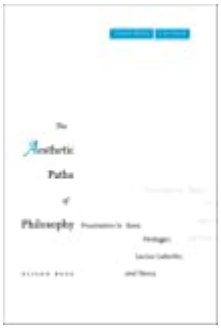


Parvis Emad. *On the Way to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007. 254 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-299-22220-8.



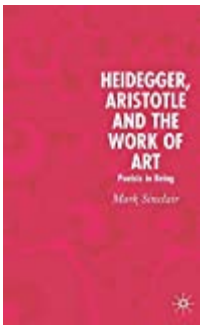
Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. *Heidegger and the Politics of Poetry.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007. 136 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-252-03153-3.

Ian Rory Owen. *Psychotherapy and Phenomenology: On Freud, Husserl and Heidegger.* New York: iUniverse, 2006. xviii + 352 pp. $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-595-41752-0.



Alison Ross. *The Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy: Presentation in Kant, Heidegger, Lacoue-Labarthe, and Nancy.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007. 256 pp. $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8047-5488-0.

Mark Sinclair. *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art: Poeisis in Being.* Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. x + 219 pp. $74.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4039-8978-9.



Reviewed by Thomas O. Haakenson (Department of Liberal Arts, Minneapolis College of Art and Design)

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Heidegger, Still Standing

In assessing five recent volumes that deal with the work of German philosopher Martin Heidegger, it becomes clear that debates over the relevance of Heidegger's thought in light of his relationship to National Socialism are tantamount to blips on the radar screen of this unique thinker's own "war" on philosophy. The significance of these moments, which still occupy historians, philosophers, and others, remains a topic of debate. It is clear that these new contributions to the continued "unpacking" of Heidegger's complex thought are significant, indeed–albeit some more so than others.

Jeff Fort's essay, "The Courage of Thought," sets the stage for his translation of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's *Heidegger and the Politics of Poetry.* Lacoue-Labarthe and Fort both declare that the so-called Heidegger affair of the late 1980s "revealed nothing essentially new" about Heidegger (Lacoue-Labarthe, p. xii). Lacoue-Labarthe's interest in Heidegger is less concerned with salvaging what remains viable from Heidegger's corpus than with demonstrating the profound connection between metaphysics and poetry at the heart of Heidegger's reading of Friedrich HÃ¶lderlin. The latter's "thinking poetry" and the former's efforts to "weigh" poetry down with "a historical 'mission' " provide the foundation for the series of essays by Lacoue-Labarthe that comprise this short yet dense volume (Lacoue-Labarthe, p. ix). What Lacoue-Labarthe finds in poetry, and in Heidegger's engagement with HÃ¶lderlin in particular, is a "task of thinking" that reveals a "strategic and even a 'calculated'" historical inscription (Lacoue-Labarthe, p. xiv).

Seeking to illuminate Heidegger's insights in the context–and against–his affiliations with National Socialism, Lacoue-Labarthe situates the German philosopher's work in light of "one of the final results, and the most terrifying by far, of the metaphysics of the Moderns" (Lacoue-Labarthe, pp. 4-5). Lacoue-Labarthe invokes Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno in situating Heidegger at this particular juncture of myth and the "unthought"; the legacy, Fort notes, has its roots in Romanticism's "mimetic aporias" and its own "longing for, and rivalry with, the grandeur of the Greek beginning" (Lacoue-Labarthe, p. xiii). Extracting HÃ¶lderlin from Heidegger means recognizing that Heidegger "internally colonized" the poet's ideas (Lacoue-Labarthe, p. xiii); Lacoue-Labarthe's efforts to dislodge HÃ¶lderin from Heidegger's grasp is simultaneously an effort to find what is most promising in Heidegger's own work. The endeavor is, at root, a rethinking of the nexus of philosophy and poetry.

It is in the debate with Alain Badiou that Lacoue-Labarthe's intervention and rethinking become most

fruitful, according to Fort: “there is a ’task of thinking’ proper to poetry, and … this task does involve a strategic and even ’calculated’ historical inscription” (Lacoue-Labarthe, p. xv). The historical inscription Fort speaks of is that imperative in poetry to bear witness to “life” and “world” as an art form that, necessarily and inevitably, reveals the “constitutive failure already legible in the imperative” (Lacoue-Labarthe, p. xv). Adorno’s similar approach to the work of art in *Aesthetic Theory* (1970) rings in harmony with these insights.

While poetry may itself represent one particular manifestation of the work of art, the overall conception of “the work of art” is the focus of Mark Sinclair’s efforts. Like several of the other volumes under review, his *Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Work of Art: Poiesis in Being* explores Heidegger’s orientation toward aesthetics. Summarized in a few words, Sinclair’s intervention might best be described as a return to Aristotle. But the choice of the word “return” here is far from unproblematic, as Sinclair’s close readings make quite clear. Sinclair argues in his dense and detailed investigation that “both a positive appropriation and a critique of Aristotle lie at the very heart of Heidegger’s philosophical enterprise from the early 1920s onwards” (Sinclair, p. 1). Much like “return,” the word “appropriate” appears highly contentious, a point we can best comprehend by examining explicitly the phases of Heidegger’s intellectual development (as outlined by Sinclair) and implicitly by outlining Sinclair’s concerns with misunderstanding Heidegger’s methodology.

Sinclair provides an historical overview of Heidegger’s work, primarily in the 1920s and 1930s, to suggest three key features in Heidegger’s intellectual development. First, Heidegger’s phenomenological thinking is to be understood as inseparable from his early, apparent appropriation of Aristotle, a step Sinclair situates in the early 1920s. The key moment in this first historical trajectory is Heidegger’s efforts to excavate Aristotle’s writings for an analytical of *Dasein*. In the mid-1920s, Heidegger began to abandon his earlier readings. The new–what Sinclair suggests is more critical–movement in Heidegger’s thinking leads to a focus on ecstatic temporality in Heidegger’s work, a temporality “more original than any traditional determination of time as a series of ’nows’ ” (Sinclair, p. 11). The third and final development in Sinclair’s historical accounting of Heidegger’s thought is not understandable, Sinclair explains, as the end of a historical progression but rather as enabling Heidegger’s approach to philosophy to be ”adequately comprehended“ (Sinclair, p. 12). Only in his reflection on the work of art does Heidegger’s radical engagement with metaphysics become clear. In other words, these three phases are to be understood as aids to the reader rather than as a simple historical accounting of Heidegger’s increasing intellectual sophistication.

Much like the historical development of Heidegger’s thought, however, Sinclair argues, the three “different moments or aspects of the ’method’ and ’idea of phenomenology’ ” should not be separated either: ”it is, in the end, impossible to offer a simple formula that would express the ’relation’ of each of these three moments to each other“ (Sinclair, pp. 7-8). If the three key dimensions of Heidegger’s approach to philosophical tradition–reduction, construction, destruction–cannot be separated, the same appears true for Sinclair’s own historical assessment of Heidegger.

As Sinclair makes clear, the key to comprehending both Heidegger’s method and Heidegger’s development lies in a concept–fundamental ontology–and the presupposition that it is impossible to overcome the metaphysical tradition as others would have it (RenÃ© Descartes, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, G. W. F. Hegel, and Immanuel Kant are mentioned explicitly). To the latter point, Sinclair raises a provocative question: “Yet the difference between Heidegger and these modern philosophers resides in the fact that if the former claims to make advances in philosophy, then these advances are made possibly only by a step back, *ein Schritt zurÃ¼ck*, to the more or less hidden sources of the Aristotelian tradition itself. But what, then, is achieved by this step backward?” (Sinclair, p. 9). In contrast to the failed “step backward” of others, then, Heidegger’s contribution lies in his recognition that “overcoming metaphysics is not an act of discarding it, and that one cannot free oneself from the metaphysical tradition as one can free oneself from an opinion” (Sinclair, p. 10). The debt to Aristotle and the metaphysical tradition makes Heidegger’s philosophical intervention a defining moment in the modern age, an intervention that manifests itself most readily in Heidegger’s engagement with the work of art.

According to Sinclair, “fundamental ontology” is the key to understanding Heidegger’s reflection on art. Fundamental ontology is “a leading-back of metaphysics to its own presuppositions” (Sinclair, p. 14); it is “fundamental not only in that it seeks to articulate the question of the meaning of being, but also in that it would seek to make explicit the very foundations of Greek ontology” (Sinclair, p. 193). Art functions as a revelatory moment, for it allows us to realize how potential has al-

ready been transformed from "what is" to "what can be used, dominated and set to human ends" (Sinclair, p. 194). Fundamental ontology thus reveals the presuppositions of metaphysics for Heidegger's thinking, and this thinking becomes most comprehensible in Heidegger's writings that engage the work of art.

In *The Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy*, Alison Ross, too, explores the aesthetic dimensions of Heidegger's thought. Ross jumps into the philosophical foray by focusing on reading Heidegger along with other thinkers, most notably Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, from the perspective of a philosophical tradition both (frequently) honorific and (less often) critical. Ross reads these three thinkers through the lens of Kant's concept of "presentation" and its relationship to Kant's own critical philosophy. Ross writes that presentation in Kant might be "accessible to the common understanding" if it is thought of as "the problem of seeing in existence fundamental or orientating meanings" or "the pattern of dining meaning in sensible forms" (Ross, p. 166). Perhaps even more clearly phrased is Ross's suggestion that aesthetic presentation plays "the role of a type of co-articulation of ideas and sensible forms in Kant's thinking" (Ross, p. 164). Collectively, Ross's clarifications mean one thing: understanding Kant is key to understanding Heidegger.

Kant's use of presentation reveals his efforts to reconcile the individual subject's own dialectical relation to the empirical world in ways that might be understood systematically and universally. Through his use of the aesthetic categories of the beautiful and the sublime in his third critique–the *Critique of Judgment* (1790)–Kant finds an acceptable if ultimately problematic way to acknowledge the individual subject's body in ways that speak to his desire for a transcendental subject available to and for all subjects. Ross describes Kant is similar terms, but with less of an emphasis on embodied, sensory experience: the "aesthetic attitude" is Kant's effort to find "a satisfactory mode of relation between the forms of material nature and human freedom" (Ross, p. 1). For Ross, the problem of presentation in Kant is posed in the disembodied "mode of relation able to reconcile human freedom with the constraints of materiality" (Ross, p. 2).

Ross rightly cautions the English-speaking reader against conflating terms that would appear almost interchangeable without understanding the Kantian dimensions of their use, especially "apperception," "representation," and "presentation": "To simplify, representation, which we might say is reducible to the subject's formal powers of apperception, contrasts with Kant's definition of 'presentation' which explicitly suspends the claims of the subject's power over material forms and inquires instead about the 'favours' that the subject enjoys and that are extended to it by the material forms of nature" (Ross, p. 3). Ross thus gives force to the realm of the empirical world beyond the body of the individual subject here in ways that have proven problematic in aesthetic philosophy. In particular, the dialectical relation Kant seeks to maintain between the empirical world and the individual subject's embodied responses are conflated in attributing to the empirical world–the "material forms of nature"–a type of volition that is decidedly undialectical. Material nature "favors" the individual in a unilateral circuitry that all but abandons the necessary exchange between the empirical object of perception and the perceiving human subject.

The dialectical possibilities of the Kantian aesthetic experience are not lost on Ross. She acknowledges other critical thinkers who have "used the features identified by Kant as elements of the aesthetic field for projects of social criticism" in ways that foreground the dialectical aspects of his philosophy: Adorno and JÃ¼rgen Habermas, to name only two of the several thinkers Ross mentions in passing (Ross, pp. 6-7). But Heidegger, Lacoue-Labarthe, and Nancy occupy the bulk of Ross's study.

As opposed to what Ross later describes as Kant's use of presentation as a "technically posed problem of orientative coordination of the intelligible and sensible" Heidegger, Lacoue-Labarthe, and Nancy map alternative trajectories for the concept by focusing on aesthetic experience as burdened with the "task of articulating the ground (or, as Heidegger puts it, the 'giving') of the experience of meaning within the horizon of a more or less rigorous immanence, without being reductive" (Ross, p. 165). In short, these three twentieth-century philosophers isolate an aspect of the Kantian system–the aesthetic experience–and use that aspect as the foundation for an entirely new metaphysics, a metaphysics Ross's study reveals is sometimes at (productive) odds with Kant's own use of "presentation."

Heidegger, Lacoue-Labarthe, and Nancy all differ, of course, in their use of Kant's concept of presentation, and Ross goes to impressive lengths to make their differences (productively) clear. In Heidegger, Ross notes, presentation becomes the "core problem for thinking" and is historicized in a decidedly undialectical fashion: "In Heidegger's thought, presentation is taken to precede the problem of the representation of the 'absolute,' which is itself corroded by the concomitant historicisation of the rela-

tions of presentation" (Ross, p. 8). As opposed to Heidegger's ahistorical understanding of the absolute, Ross suggests that both Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy "recall that Kant's approach to this problem was developed in the context of his aesthetics" (Ross, p. 9). Exposing the limits of Heidegger's philosophy through her focus on these two thinkers, Ross suggests that while in Lacoue-Labarthe's work " 'man' is the product of, rather than the term behind, 'literary' forms of presentation," Nancy's "ontological project" presents "the genesis of meaning as a 'coming-to-presence' rather than as a relation to a 'present thing' " (Ross, p. 10). Thus, while Heidegger appears to take Kant's concept of "presentation" out of its aesthetic context and to dehistoricize that to which the concept might refer, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy both emphasize, albeit in various ways, the function of the aesthetic experience in creating a particular kind of experience or in speaking to a (historically specific) kind of existence.

While Ross's work might be read in conjunction with Fort's excellent translation, it also has implications for understanding comparatively the excellent contribution Parvis Emad makes to scholarship on Heidegger. Given his eloquent translation efforts, Emad's name should be familiar already to readers interested in Heidegger's works. Emad's *On the Way to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy* is more than a companion to his work in representing Heidegger to English-language audiences. The volume is also a clarification for anyone seek to "project-open the thinking of being" (Emad, p. xii). To this end, Emad provides something of an explanation of the German thinker as well as something of a correction to those–the deconstructionists, the analysts, the biographers, and others who simply seek to invent "a 'genesis' for the thinking of being" (Emad, p. xiii)–whose focus on and supposed clarifications of Heidegger's unique philosophical project have demonstrated only their respective methods' "fundamental inability" to explicate the project's innovative philosophical aim (p. xiii).

In some ways, Emad's book makes an implicit challenge to those volumes discussed above, especially Ross's and Sinclair's works, in that he refuses to situate the meaning of Heidegger solely in historical context or in philosophical relation. Rather, somewhat like Lacoue-Labarthe's text, Emad's original and exciting contribution to the scholarship on Heidegger is that he seeks to "project-open ... being-historical thinking," a task that amounts to showing that Heidegger's thinking "comes into its own only when it is enacted and not when it is treated unquestioningly as a specific variety of theory" (Emad, p. xii). In often altered forms of previously published chapters, Emad does just that. He walks us through the various parts of Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936-38), then explores some of Heidegger's connections to Nietzsche and Christianity, among others. The volume in its entirety provides both an invaluable aid for a close reading of *Contributions to Philosophy*, as well as the means by which to extrapolate Heidegger's thought in relation to others.

The question of others, of the "other," is indeed a question for those interested in situating Heidegger: historically, philosophically, psychologically, personally. Emad claims that "people cannot live by [Heidegger's] thinking because it does not *immediately* offer any means for dealing with and resolving the problems people face in concrete situations in life" (Emad, p. xiii; emphasis in original). Yet, Ian Rory Owen's efforts to find connections among Heidegger, Sigmund Freud ,and Edmund Husserl, and to utilize the thought of all three in a project devoted to mental health might, well, strike us as ironic, given the mental gymnastics that Heidegger's complex thought can weave together and that the above four books have sought in various ways to unravel. It is thus not without a slight bit of irony that I have saved the last few paragraphs of this review for a text devoted to therapy–or, more precisely, "psychotherapy": "individual talking and action therapies" (Owen, p. xviii).

Indeed, Owen does not appear to recognize exactly how ambitious–perhaps impossible?–his goals are: "After some research there appears to be no scholarly book-length appraisal of Husserl and Heidegger [in relation to Freud's talking therapy].... This text focuses on the mind of others and oneself. It aims to understand consciousness" (Owen, p. xv). Yet, while Owen's goals are ambitious, he is clear in the very useful orientation of his text: "This book is not directly about practice but about theory for it" (Owen, p. xv). Readers who find the four books discussed above compelling may find Owen's treatment–no pun intended–of Heidegger less satisfying. Owen seeks to situate Heidegger as a figure whose ideas, like those of Freud and Husserl, have practical application for those seeking to help others–or, indeed, help themselves–while on the therapist's couch.

Given that Owen's targeted audience is presumably comprised of therapists capable of grasping the complexity of thought of the three figures he invokes–Freud, Husserl, and Heidegger–and that they will be able to translate the text's own insights into practice, the book appears to be directed at too limited an audience and too

narrow an application to make it broadly significant. In no way do I seek to give short shrift to Owen's provocative claims. For example, the suggestion that his text is an argument "for the appreciation of the intellectual, affective and social processes that combine to make psychological sense" itself makes much common sense to me (Owen, p. xv). Owen indicates, as well, the interesting idea that his book satisfies a need, a need "to understand how phenomenology can play a major role in making theory refer to conscious mental phenomena" (Owen, p. xvi).

And, yet, while Owen should be commended for seeking to bring Heidegger, Husserl, and Freud into play with one another for those therapists interested and able to engage these thinkers, non-therapists may find the work less helpful. Despite its awkward phrases and obviously less-than-perfectly-edited passages, Owen's text does contribute something new to the debates about Heidegger and his utility. Although Owen's text is riddled with errors and incomplete sentences–sometimes making the author sound like Yoda from Star Wars: "However, difficult it is to specify what these things are" (Owen, p. xvii)–several moments in the work bring Heidegger's work into close relation to Husserl's and Freud's in provocative, productive ways.

In concluding this expansive assessment of these five volumes on, toward, about, and in light of Heidegger, it might be safe to say that they all share one fundamental belief: Heidegger continues to be relevant, despite–perhaps sometimes because of–his politics. Therapy might not necessarily have saved Heidegger from his problematic identifications. Yet, as Lacoue-Labarthe, Sinclair, Ross, Emad, and Owen suggest, identifying the "real" Heidegger may prove the wonderfully difficult challenge that will keep us occupied even if we refuse the therapist's couch and, instead, opt for a comfortable–but sometimes as disconcerting–reader's chair.