

BETWEEN THE “END” AND THE “NEW BEGINNING”: THE OVERCOMING OF METAPHYSICS IN MARTIN HEIDEGGER

ENTRE O “FIM” E O “NOVO COMEÇO”: A SUPERAÇÃO DA METAFÍSICA EM MARTIN HEIDEGGER

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and the *Ereignis* as decisive moments. Finally, it addresses the ambiguity between the “end” of philosophy and the opening of a “new beginning” pointing to the aporetic and meditative nature of this thinking.

Keywords: Heidegger. Metaphysics. Beyng. Ereignis. Overcoming.

Resumo

Este artigo examina a noção heideggeriana de superação da metafísica (*Überwindung der Metaphysik*), entendida como um movimento de transposição e recolhimento, e não de simples negação. Partindo da destruição da ontologia em *Ser e Tempo* até o pensamento meditativo de *Gelassenheit*, analisa-se a trajetória pela qual Heidegger transforma a metafísica em história do Beyng (*Seyn*). A leitura, de cunho hermenêutico e conceitual, acompanha as inflexões teóricas e históricas do percurso heideggeriano, destacando a *Kehre* e o *Ereignis* como momentos decisivos. Por fim, problematiza-se a ambiguidade entre o “fim” da filosofia e a abertura de um “novo começo”, indicando o caráter aporético e meditativo desse pensar.

Palavras-chave: Heidegger. Metafísica. Superação da metafísica. Beyng. Überwindung.

Introduction

This study examines Martin Heidegger's notion of the overcoming of metaphysics (*Überwindung der Metaphysik*), understood not as a negation or refinement of the philosophical tradition but as a radical reorientation of thought that seeks to recover what metaphysics itself has forgotten – the truth of Beyng. The guiding thesis of this work is that Heidegger's project of overcoming metaphysics constitutes both a continuity and rupture within his own path of thought: *continuity*, insofar as it unfolds from the analytic of being in *Being and Time*; *rupture*, insofar as it abandons ontology as such in favor of a historical meditation on the *Ereignis* and on the destiny of Beyng.

Methodologically, the discussion follows a conceptual and hermeneutical path grounded in Heidegger's own texts, tracing the progressive transformation of his vocabulary and the historical contexts that condition it. Rather than applying an external interpretive grid, the analysis proceeds immanently, letting Heidegger's formulations illuminate one another across different periods – from *Being and Time* and *What Is Metaphysics?* to *The Overcoming of Metaphysics*, *Letter on Humanism*, and *Discourse on Thinking*. The objective is not to offer a moral or political judgment but to reconstruct the internal logic of Heidegger's gesture of transposition and its philosophical consequences.

The text unfolds in four moments. In *The "Problems" of Metaphysics*, we outline the Heideggerian diagnosis of the metaphysical tradition as the history of the forgetfulness of Beyng and of its reduction to representation. In *The Overcoming of Metaphysics and its Vicissitudes*, we examine the transition from the destruction of ontology to the claim of a new beginning, emphasizing the historical, political, and theoretical circumstances that accompany this shift. The third section, *On the Meaning of "Overcoming"*, clarifies the conceptual content of *Überwindung* and the role of the *Kehre* in the reappropriation of Beyng. Finally, in *"Die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen": The End of Philosophy and the New Beginning*, we explore the culmination of Heidegger's thought in the notions of meditative thinking and serenity, which signify both the abandonment of philosophy as metaphysics and the preparation for another beginning.

By following this trajectory, the study seeks to illuminate the coherence and the paradoxes of Heidegger's path: the tension between his critique of metaphysics and his dependence on its language, and the ambiguous promise of a thinking that, beyond philosophy, would still be devoted to Beyng itself.

The “problems” of metaphysics

It is known that, for the German thinker, self-withdrawal is constitutive of the *Ereignis*: “of the *Ereignis* as such”, Heidegger (1972, p. 38) says, “the *Enteignis*, the expropriating non-event, belongs”. The event that expropriates the truth of Beyng is metaphysics: the turning toward the truth of beings to the detriment of the truth of Beyng – once a problem of “traditional metaphysics” – becomes, beginning with the lectures on Nietzsche, a defect of metaphysics as such. Metaphysics, which Heidegger still understands as *philosophy*, asks about the being of beings – but precisely doing so forgets Beyng: according to Heidegger (2002, p. 157), “The history of being begins [...] with the forgetting of being”. This “forgetting” persists throughout the long history of metaphysics and, broadly speaking, translates into the primacy of beings and the casting of Beyng into indeterminacy.

Metaphysics is not the doctrine of this or that philosopher, nor is it the consequence of a human error. It is, for Heidegger (2003, p. 82), something that pertains to Beyng itself: “Metaphysics becomes decisive as an event in the history of Beyng”. At first – and in Heideggerian terms –, the history of Beyng opens as *physis*, as the *emerging from itself*. As for metaphysics, it arises when, upon the differentiation of Beyng and being, Beyng assumes the formulation of *presence*, understood at that moment no longer as *Dasein*, nor as existence, but as being that is present, enduring, and permanent. Hence the idea of a *metaphysics of presence*, which indicates a turning toward the prevailing, continuous, and enduring being, and not toward presencing as such (not toward that which allows the prevailing to prevail, *Beyng*).

The genesis of metaphysics lies in how the ontological difference is conceived – namely, the distinction between essence, *what something is*, and existence, *that it is*. Yet this genesis remains obscure and, ultimately, inaccessible to metaphysics itself, which, by ignoring its own origin, renders it natural and self-evident. In *The End of Philosophy*, Heidegger (2003, pp. 58-59) offers the following reflection:

All events in the history of Beyng that is metaphysics have their beginning and their ground in the fact that metaphysics leaves and must leave the essence of Beyng undetermined, and, in order to save its own essence, remains from the outset indifferent to what is worthy of questioning and, in fact, endures in the indifference of not-knowing.

By surrendering itself to beings, Beyng veils its own truth in a concealment

that is itself concealed. The distinction between Beyng and being remains unthought, and the unthought is the forgetting of the difference, its obscuration. Thus, Heidegger (2003, p. 82), again in *The End of Philosophy*, tells us that metaphysics represents the historical unfolding of Beyng toward beings:

The progression of Beyng toward beings is that history of Beyng – called metaphysics – that remains so essentially remote from the Origin both in its beginning and in its end. Thus metaphysics itself, that is, that thinking of being which had to give itself the name “philosophy,” can never bring the history of Beyng itself – that is, the Origin – into the light of its essence.

Even self-declared Heideggerian exegetes as Caputo (1993, pp. 112-113) recognize that the German existentialist constructed a “gigantic metanarrative about the march of Beyng through History”. In the continuous “destinings” it grants to itself, Beyng releases itself through withdrawal across different epochs and assumes various names (Idea, *cogito*, will to power, substance, etc.). These different epochs obscure one another in such a way as to conceal the destining of Beyng as presence – that is, as something enduring and self-sustaining.

Within Heidegger’s dense, reflexive-conceptual thicket – especially after the Nietzsche lectures – three main traits of metaphysics stand out.

First, the most prominent feature of all metaphysics is its *onto-theological* constitution. Metaphysics concerns itself with the being of beings, whether in general or as a whole – and this means, in Heidegger’s (2002a, pp. 43-44) words, that:

Metaphysics thinks beings with respect to their ground; as it thinks each being as such, it is logic as onto-logic. Metaphysics thinks beings as such as a whole; that is, with respect to the supreme (what is), the being that grounds all beings – it is logic as theo-logic.

In addition to investigating and explaining the being of beings through a “common ground” shared by all beings, metaphysics confers upon this “common ground” the character of a *first cause* – a being above all beings, divine or supreme.

Secondly, all metaphysics is humanistic, and every form of humanism is metaphysical. Heidegger (1993b, pp. 217-235), in polemic with Sartre, argues in his *Letter on Humanism* – which the Brazilian thinker Coutinho would call a letter *against* humanism – that all humanisms focus solely on beings and do not consider the relation between Beyng and the human being; they thus presuppose only a universal human essence – namely, the human being as a rational animal. In doing so, the role of

human being is overvalued, and Heidegger (1993b, p. 228) judges that “The history of being sustains and determines every *condition et situation humaine*”. What is proper to the human being escapes humanism because the human being is himself cast into existence by Beyng – and this, for Heidegger (1993b, p. 230), is something utterly foreign and distant from metaphysics:

Metaphysics closes itself off to the simple essential insight that man unfolds his being only within his essence insofar as he receives the call of being. Only in the intimacy of this call has he always already found that in which his essence resides. Only through dwelling in this place does he “possess” language as the abode that shelters the *ex-static* for his essence. The standing-in-the-clearing of being is what I call man’s *ex-sistence*. This mode of being belongs only to man.

In 1935, in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger (2000, p. 197) refers for the first time to nihilism: “To busy oneself only with beings – this is nihilism”. Devoted to Nietzschean philosophy, he explores the theme of nihilism under this aspect, linking it to metaphysics and composing the third of the traits referred to here. If the *nothing* of nihilism refers to the disappropriation of Beyng itself and of its truth, then, Heidegger (2000, pp. 197-198) asserts, “Metaphysics is, in its essence, nihilism”. The nihilistic nothing is the nothing that happens with Beyng – that is, Beyng does not come into the light of its own essence, and its truth remains obscure. Yet this occurs through Beyng itself, which withdraws its own truth. In Heidegger’s view, metaphysics is the historical *locus* for the essence and event of nihilism, which, he emphasizes, is a historical movement whose essence lies in metaphysics. Or, in Heidegger’s (2000, p. 239) own words, “Metaphysics is a historical epoch of itself. But in its essence, metaphysics is nihilism”.

Modernity is the realization of Western history – and within it, metaphysics acquires new traits. Truth is converted into *certainty*: certainty of self and certainty of what is known. Certainty is the modern version of truth. Modern metaphysics inquires into what is indubitably certain: as Heidegger (2002b, p. 191) writes “The metaphysics of Modernity begins and has its essence in the fact that it seeks what is unconditionally indubitable, the certain, certainty”. Thus, modern metaphysics concerns itself with the accuracy of representational thought. What ostensibly ensures this shift is the determining position of the subject who represents an objective world. In short, according to the German existentialist, the world is conceived in Modernity as *image* – that is, Beyng is sought in the representation of beings.

The essence of modern metaphysics – and, by extension, of metaphysics as

such – would have moved toward its end through Nietzsche’s thought. If, on the one hand, the neopositivists claim that “end” means *elimination* or *rejection*, Heidegger (2000, pp. 27-36), on the other, maintains that “end” signifies *completion* or *consummation* (*Vollendung*). To consummate is not, in Heideggerian terms, to *perfect* (*Vollkommenheit*), but to realize the essence. Completion occurs through the emergence of the final configuration of a given instance; perfection, by contrast, opens the way to the beginning of a new beginning. In the case of metaphysics, the consummation of its essence lies in the rejection of the truth of Being precisely when it asks about Being – that is, metaphysics essentializes the non-essence of Being. Thus, according to Heidegger (1982-1987, p. 741), there occurs “The insertion of the most extreme non-essence into essence”. The consummation of metaphysics entails the most extreme withdraw of the truth of being.

In Heidegger’s view, Nietzsche translated metaphysics in its consummation: the philosopher of the hammer – so to speak – “inverted” metaphysics. Against the old Plato, Nietzsche privileged the sensible over the supersensible (the world of Ideas, of supreme values, etc.). Nietzsche’s “death of God” manifests this movement in which the supreme values fade and collapse, making way for the creation of new values. Yet for Heidegger, the paths Nietzsche opens lead to no way beyond metaphysics: the will to power as the essence of beings is nothing but the conditioned will that wills itself and guarantees for itself the absolute domination of beings.

There are two main consequences of this process. First, Nietzsche carries forward a total humanization of Being, Heidegger (2003, pp. 49-52) notes. In Nietzsche’s philosophy, the modern metaphysics of subjectivity is consummated. With modern metaphysics, all metaphysics approaches its consummation and becomes increasingly anthropocentric; and, in the twilight of metaphysics, philosophy becomes anthropology. Nietzsche, in Heidegger’s view, represents the completion of metaphysics – but not its perfection – because, ultimately, he intensifies nihilism: bound to metaphysics, Nietzsche does not move toward its overcoming.

The consummation of modern metaphysics prepares the “ontological ground” for the dominion of technology. Modern technology elevates the notion of a powerful human being capable of mastering the entire globe. Technology is, for Heidegger, the realization of metaphysics in Modernity: it is metaphysics consummated, because it elaborates the essence of the modern world and determines how beings appear in this epoch. The consummation of metaphysics reveals the realization of its own truth, which, according to Heidegger, delivers itself over to cold calculation, mechanization, and cybernetics. That is, Heidegger, while disregarding economic and scientific factors, maintains that technology – which, like a Cthulhu, spreads over the world

and threatens it – rests upon metaphysical foundations. Modern technology is a product of the history of Beyng: “As a form of truth, technology is grounded in the history of Metaphysics”, Heidegger (1993, p. 251) writes in his *Letter on Humanism*.

Nietzsche, who sought to overcome metaphysics, in fact composed a “Metaphysics of metaphysics”, which is its consummation – its persistence in the forgetting of Beyng. The most striking feature of this reflection is an impasse that, prior to his engagement with Nietzsche’s philosophy, the German existentialist had never mentioned: metaphysics, the radiant core of philosophical activity, does not comprehend itself. Thus, the subject who attempts to understand it does not occupy a “less metaphysical” position, for, as Heidegger (1982-1987, pp. 732-733) states:

If metaphysics as such is nihilism itself, and yet nihilism cannot think its own essence according to its essence, how could Metaphysics itself ever touch its own essence? The representations of Metaphysics necessarily remain behind this essence. The metaphysics of Metaphysics never attains its essence.

Whereas earlier Heidegger had set metaphysics and science in opposition, now metaphysics, like science itself, turns only toward the truth of beings; as Heidegger (1982-1987, p. 718) writes, “‘Science’, as the support of metaphysics created by metaphysics itself (the kind of questioning that begins from beings and return to them)”. Metaphysics as metaphysics cannot grasp the ontological difference – and therefore, if one wishes to comprehend metaphysics, one must stand outside its circle. It is well known that, at first, Heidegger intended to re-found metaphysics; here, however, that emphasis is abandoned, and what is sought is to transcend it.

We can see here, one might say, a genuine turning in Heidegger’s philosophy. If, in 1929 – specifically, in the lecture *What is Metaphysics?* – Heidegger (1993a, p. 94) regarded philosophy as “setting metaphysics into motion, in which philosophy becomes conscious of itself and secures its expressed themes”, this emphasis now fades and loses meaning. In the course of his studies and lectures on Nietzsche, metaphysics (that is, *philosophy*) becomes an objective science which, by focusing on beings, determines Beyng solely in terms of presence *tout court* and ignores the epochal conjunctures in which beings present themselves.

The proclaimed end of metaphysics is the element upon which the overcoming of metaphysics is staked. It is, one might say, general consensus: studying Heidegger is a – shall we say – *costly* task, one that yields more questions and doubts than conclusions. Thus, in our reflection, precisely at this point, we are faced with these questions: if metaphysics is an event of Beyng, why speak of overcoming of meta-

physics? Is this a change in the history of Beyng? Or, conversely – and opening the door to controversy –, is it a lapse on the part of the rigorous philosopher, a possible adherence to the so-called “metaphysics of subjectivity”? If, in principle, self-concealment is constitutive of the *Ereignis*, how and why speak of overcoming metaphysics? Would this not, in the final analysis, entail the de-characterization of the *Ereignis* as both revealing and withdrawing?

These are exegetical questions referring to a more general problem. It is known that, until 1935, Heidegger intended to work within the fields of ontology and metaphysics against tendencies that he considered scientific and gnoseological – namely, those of positivist tradition. His own writings tell us that, already in the following year, the German philosopher, performing what we may call the *turn*, began to employ the idea of the *overcoming of metaphysics*, a notion freely used by his neopositivist opponent Carnap. But what were his reasons for doing so?

The overcoming of metaphysics and its vicissitudes

One can say that Heidegger’s effort to associate the idea of overcoming metaphysics with the project he inaugurates in *Being and Time* – namely, the destruction of ontology – is evident. In the Heideggerian texts dating from the late 1920s, such as *Being and Time* itself and the lecture *What is Metaphysics?*, this perspective of overcoming can already be identified.

The argument is fully developed in *The Overcoming of Metaphysics*, a compilation of notes that Heidegger wrote between 1938 and 1939. In these, Heidegger notes that, if he were to aim at the construction of a new ontology, *Being and Time* would amount to nothing more than an appendix to metaphysics – or to a “more ordinary” metaphysics. Yet, the monumental *Being and Time* is, according to its author, a new beginning for thought, instated by the essentialization of Beyng. Thus, the ontology destruction that is advocated is a return to that which metaphysics has forgotten. The – let us say – “challenge” of restoring the question of Beyng is precisely to ask what has never been questioned throughout the history of metaphysics; it is, therefore, a decisive step in establishing the necessity of a new beginning. And this, for Heidegger, requires the experience of overcoming metaphysics.

The effort to tie the overcoming of metaphysics to the texts from the late 1920s extends into the 1940s. In 1941, the German philosopher makes clear that metaphysics obscures the primordial essence of Beyng and raises a mist of distortions which it itself does not know how to recognize. Hence, evidently, the need to *destroy*

those distortions, as was already signaled in *Being and Time*. However, the task is not conceived in *Being and Time* in terms of a history of Beyng (cf. Heidegger, 2003, pp. 88-102). Almost two decades later, Heidegger (1972, pp. 15-16; 2002b, pp. 157-199) reiterates that to think this task from the history of Beyng is to conceive it as an act of undoing the concealments of the destining epochs of Beyng as presence. For this, Heidegger (1972, p. 16) demands “to think being without beings, that is: to think being without taking metaphysics into account”.

In the 1943 postface he attaches to *What Is Metaphysics?*, Heidegger (1993a, pp. 104-110) says something that was not originally heard/read in the 1929 lecture: metaphysics becomes the history of the truth about beings. The fulcrum of metaphysics is so groundless and so concealed from metaphysics itself that, in posing the question *what is metaphysics*, one already moves beyond it. For, as Heidegger (1993a, p. 104) notes, it “is born from a thinking that has already penetrated into the overcoming of metaphysics” – that is, toward essential thinking. The transient nature of this new thinking makes it necessary to face the reversals involved in the use of a language which, in the limit, is intended to be overcome (precisely *metaphysical language*).

About six years ahead, in his *Letter on Humanism*, the German existentialist paradoxically shows concern in withdrawing the title *ontological project* from the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*. In Heidegger’s (1993b, p. 220) assessment, fundamental ontology aimed at “thinking into the truth of being”, and thus its point of departure was not the “ontology of metaphysics”. However, everything intensifies – and, in our view, becomes more abstruse – if one argues/asks the following: how can one speak of the “ontology of metaphysics” and, consequently, conceive a non-metaphysical ontology when Heidegger, in his *Letter*, maintains that ontology always thinks beings in their being and casts into oblivion the truth of Beyng? Not only does such talk make “ontology of metaphysics” a tautology – it also renders “non-metaphysical ontology” a contradiction in terms.

Later, in the 1949 introduction to *What is Metaphysics?*, Heidegger reaffirms the idea of associating the task of overcoming metaphysics with the reflection of his texts from the late 1920s. Through a bucolic analogy (Cartesian, originally) according to which philosophy is a tree whose roots are metaphysics, the trunk is physics, and the other sciences are branches, the German philosopher asserts that the ground from which metaphysics draws its nourishment remains unexamined and concealed. “Philosophy”, says Heidegger (1993a, p. 94), “does not gather itself into its ground. It continuously abandons it and does so through metaphysics”. Philosophical reflection that seeks the ground of metaphysics has already itself gone

beyond metaphysics – and with that tone, Heidegger (1993a, pp. 94-95) continues the reflection:

A thinking that thinks in the truth of being is certainly not content with more metaphysics; such a thinking also does not think against metaphysics. To return to the earlier image, it does not pull up philosophy's root. It digs the ground beneath it and tills the soil. Metaphysics remains the first instance of philosophy. It does not, however, attain to philosophy's first instance of thought. In the thinking of the truth of being metaphysics is overcome.

Heidegger (1993a, pp. 94-96), according to himself, already in *Being and Time* set in motion the march out of the circle of metaphysics: it is in *Being and Time* that the process begins of going into the relation of Beyng with the essence of the human being, which “attempts the return to the ground of metaphysics”. One could say that it is precisely for this reason that Heidegger renews the sentence that fundamental ontology asks after the metaphysics-obscured element. The German philosopher recognizes, however – even in that introduction –, the ambivalence of this expression and, for that very reason, seeks to clear the fog of confusions that he himself has blown. For Heidegger, even the term *fundamental ontology* obscures the paths for seeking out the truth of Beyng – paths which were tried to be opened in *Being and Time* – and seems to conduce to a continuation of ontology, when in fact what was initially intended was the abandonment of *all* ontology. Heidegger (1991a, p. 95) reminds us that ontology has from its earlier steps turned toward the truth of beings: “Since its first steps, the thinking of the truth of being, as a return to the ground of metaphysics, abandoned the domain of all ontology”. This – let us say – “ambivalence” of *Being and Time* is by no means acknowledged as a confusion or misunderstanding. Monument that prepares the overcoming of metaphysics, *Being and Time* carries with it signs of a transitoriness which is recognizably its own – and, in the same way, it inherits the forgetting of Beyng, specially insofar as it concerns the use of metaphysical language. Incidentally, Heidegger (1993a, pp. 97) asserts: “It is for this reason that there are, in relation to that book, not misunderstandings, but an abandonment by being”.

In this undertaking, which demands from him excessive tone and reflective effort, Heidegger more often generates confusions and, one might say, tries too little to resolve them. He, perhaps to disguise this, confers upon the history of Beyng the transitoriness that justifies the ambivalence of his early texts, which, in principle, already indicate the thinking that prepares for the overcoming of metaphysics. (We will argue later that there is a proximity of meaning between the overcoming of

metaphysics and the project of destroying the history of traditional ontology. What we leave for now recorded is that, in spite of this possible proximity, there is, between that and this moment in Heideggerian reflection, a remarkable change in connotation of metaphysics, and what the German philosopher says to explain this are attempts to mitigate the turn that he has undertaken.)

From the end of the 1920s until 1935, Heidegger kept clear in view the task of constructing new foundations for metaphysics. Until then, no post-metaphysical horizon was announced or foreseen. One might say that even the project of destroying traditional ontology made it sufficiently clear: to strip the original and positive possibilities of the ontological tradition of distortions regarding the question of being. For Heidegger (1962, p. 56), the ruin of the history of ontology was “only possible within that history”. Far from clarifying the genesis and evolution of his proposal of the overcoming of metaphysics, Heidegger obscured the *turn* his thought, in this matter, took from the courses on Nietzschean philosophy.

Although to a greater or lesser degree it is agreed that Heidegger’s connotation for metaphysics changed, it is all the less consensual among his commentators to fix possible reasons for that variation (cf. Caputo, 1978; Vattimo, 1998; Inwood, 1999). To the extent that they accept Heidegger’s thinking and take it to heart, these commentators perhaps attributed to Beyng itself that destining which Heidegger would attempt to correspond to. That is to say, they explain while leaving nothing explained.

And even the critics do not escape the gaps. The Brazilians Coutinho (1972) and Netto (1978), Marxists, suggest that the overcoming of metaphysics is due to the influence Heidegger received from Dilthey, who diagnosed the collapse of philosophy as metaphysics and was followed by Herman Nohl. This, however much it may find correspondence in reality, still troubles us a question: the old Dilthey (1988) proclaimed that collapse and proposed his *sciences of spirit* at the end of the nineteenth century; what, almost half a century later, would have led Heidegger to revisit Dilthey’s ideas? This is not a matter here of probing psychological-temperamental reasons, nor of, as a recourse to any panacea, remitting ourselves to the unattainable mystery of Beyng. We insist, however, on Faye’s (1997) provocation: how and why did Heidegger come to disqualify metaphysics – which, once enthroned at the very summit of philosophy, now appears as something that must first be rehabilitated in order finally to be overcome?

There had already been much talk of overcoming metaphysics. There were, at least, three philosophical tendencies that advocated this: (1) by means of critical stance, Kant’s heirs proposed to overcome metaphysical dogmatism, which uses

reason without having clear its power and its limits; (2) save for obvious differences, Hegelians and Marxists replace the metaphysical “immobility” with dialectical dynamism; (3) and the positivists, who maintain that the positive state is superior to the metaphysical. One could also speak of Nietzsche’s critique of metaphysics (the critique against Socratic-Platonic reflection and Christian doctrine) and, at the absolute reverse of Nietzsche, of the neopositivists, who often defended the end of metaphysics.

Heidegger may have dialogued with all those tendencies – and by doing so perhaps incorporated the general purpose that unites them and traced his own understanding of the overcoming of metaphysics. Yet, besides the abstruse but gaping explanations Heidegger offers us in this respect, it is difficult to trace and reconstruct the moment when that philosophical course was taken. There are no indications in his texts of a transition, of intermediate stages: everything is a sudden leap. In Heidegger’s conception of metaphysics, there lies an abyss that the German existentialist persistently seeks to efface.

Thus, we are inclined to accept the thesis that structures Faye’s work: Heidegger, in his courses and studies on Nietzsche, collected those preceding ideas and proposed the surpassing of metaphysics in a situation of political and theoretical controversies within the National Socialist Party. The dedication to Nietzschean philosophy and the offering of prelections about this, as well as the introduction and the postface attached to that 1929 lecture, summarize, one might say, the theoretical controversies between Heidegger and his former allies of the early moment of Nazism. Through documentary retrieval, Ott (1993) observes that these controversies were motivated by rivalries and power struggles in the Nazi Party. The effusive salute that was conferred upon the then-new rector of the University of Freiburg, the avowed Heideggerian ambition to occupy a national leadership role in the newly established regime and, at the same time, Heidegger’s contestation of the regime’s general policy, earned him strong opposition within the Party.

Based on the recoveries by Ott (1993, pp. 256-261) and Faye (1997, *passim*), it is known that the anti-Heidegger group warned Alfred Rosenberg about the consequences of holding Heidegger in such high regard – specifically, that, to the detriment of Erich Jaensech and Ernst Kriek, both “competent philosophers”, Heidegger be considered, *par excellence*, the philosopher of National Socialism. Rosenberg was admonished to intervene and not allow Heidegger to occupy leadership positions in the Reich.

The climate of internal disputes was evident, and Heidegger’s responses to them took multiple forms. The proposition that metaphysics should be overcome

took root precisely within this atmosphere of contention – particularly in opposition to Bäumler (1931; 1937), who brought to the Reich a biologicistic conception of race and a *sui generis* reading of Nietzsche, and to Krieck, who tied the spiritual renewal of the German people to an unconditional adherence to his own pedagogy.

Until 1933, the ontological reflection that Heidegger set against the neo-Kantian tendency – what Faye (1997, *passim*) calls a “turn toward metaphysics” – was well received by the Nazi press, which regarded it as a renewal of philosophical reflection. The acceptance that Heidegger initially enjoyed soon grew exponentially and became a mark of distinction for him: Heidegger was – let us say – *something more* among his anti-metaphysical contemporaries. From 1934 onward, however, the public praise of the “secret king of thought” reveals a dissonance: Krieck (1934) published in *Volk im Werden* the virulent article *Germanischer Mythos und Heideggersche Philosophie* and maintained a critical stance until 1940.

If, in general, we were to summarize Krieck’s arguments – which, to a large extent, refer to *What is Metaphysics?* and *Being and Time* – we would say: (1) alien to the concept of *destiny*, Heidegger’s reflection on being has diverse and non-German origins; (2) in Heidegger one privileges *Logos* over Myth; (3) the emphasis with which Heidegger treats anxiety and care indicate a *metaphysical nihilism*, a theme long considered among Jewish thinkers.

For Krieck (1934, pp. 247-246), nihilism is a problem of all philosophy: “Philosophy, in the restricted sense of the word (of Heraclitus’ *Logos* and Parmenides’ ‘being’, through phenomenology and onto-ontology), is the product of universal nihilism and carries nihilism within itself as tendency”. In theory, the Nazi worldview would bring an end to Western nihilism, which Krieck considers a period of errors and wandering. For him, once the Nazi worldview flourishes, the ontological hoax is unmasked and the Jewish specter is banished for good.

In Heidegger’s (1993a, pp. 95-96) eyes, the contention Krieck publicly initiated amounted to a blind polemic. (It should be said that Heidegger says this *textually*, but does not name Krieck.) And commenting on him, Faye (1997, pp. 408-409) observes that all this imposed on the German *intelligentsia* of the time a new element: “The (surprising) event which constitutes the predicate ‘metaphysical’ being attributed to the noun ‘nihilism’ is an event that places in mortal danger, at such a phase of history – when that predicates becomes synonymous with ‘Jew’”.

One of the first responses Heidegger directed toward Krieck is found in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Therein – as we have already said –, Heidegger refers for the first time to nihilism and proposes not the overcoming of metaphysics, by nihilism itself; and that critique is addressed to the figure who is perhaps the most promi-

ment philosophical figure of National Socialism: Nietzsche. Against the philosopher of the hammer, Heidegger (2000, pp. 226-227) asserts that it is misguided to qualify ontological reflection as an error; and Heidegger, who defines nihilism as the preoccupation solely with beings and the consequent forgetting of Beyng, maintains that Nietzsche, inasmuch as he conceives Beyng in terms of *value* and value in terms of *representation*, ultimately affirms nihilism. In veiled but present contradiction with Krieck, the German existentialist argues that the only way to overcome nihilism is precisely the question of Beyng.

Later, Heidegger proceeded with the movement that – one might say – was decisive in his philosophical thought. He, from the courses on Nietzschean thought, although he maintained the doctrine of Beyng, accepted the Krieckian equivalence between nihilism and metaphysics. We are guided by Faye (1997, p. 58) who says that “It should be verified that no writing of Heidegger published before 1934 (before the Frankfurt rectoral controversial offensive) states the metaphysical/nihilistic equivalence, or ‘*metaphysischer Nihilismus*’”. That is, Heidegger, accepting this equivalence, was then able to speak of a second overcoming – namely, precisely, the *overcoming of metaphysics*.

The philosopher Safranski (1999, p. 256) summarizes this movement of Heidegger:

In the lectures on Nietzsche, Heidegger turns the spit around and attempts to show that the will to power, claimed by Nazi ideologues, is not overcoming but rather a refinement of nihilism, without that being even perceived by Nietzsche’s adherents. Thus the lectures on Nietzsche became a frontal attack on the decadent metaphysics of racism and biologism. Heidegger admits Nietzsche’s partial applicability to the dominant ideology – and with that distances himself from it. On the other hand he tries to relate himself to Nietzsche, but in such a way as to present his own thinking as an overcoming of Nietzsche – in Nietzsche’s footsteps.

It seems to us that the criticisms Heidegger thus outlines do not express a full “spiritual resistance” to Nazism, to which Heidegger himself referred in the famous *Der Spiegel* interview (cf. Heidegger, 1993c, pp. 91-116). We would say that Heidegger, rather, developed in the lectures on Nietzschean philosophy his sui generis conception of Nazism: a Nazism – let us say – “spiritualized”. The complaints that arose regarding National Socialism did not amount, in whole, to an opposition to the movement, especially because Heidegger, from what documentary findings of Ott (1993, pp. 229-248) and Faye (1997, *passim*) tell us, was never pointed out as

a regime opponent, but rather as a *dissident*.

After World War II, in the context of the denazification process, Heidegger devoted himself to a new way of reporting those disputes: for example, he asserted that speaking about Nietzsche he intended actually to expose that fascism was the most evident manifestation of nihilism. It is curious, not to say truly *scandalous*, that Heidegger (1988, pp. 40-41), in a 1936 lecture on Schelling, contradicts that very version (it is known that Heidegger, in 1971, removed this passage from the original lecture. Nonetheless, the complete text may be found in volume 42 of his *Collected Works*):

The two men who, in different ways, unleashed a countercurrent to nihilism – Hitler and Mussolini – were influenced, in essentially different ways, by Nietzsche, without in that the authentic domain of Nietzschean metaphysics having effect

In Heidegger, the overcoming of metaphysics is adopted as a defense against the criticisms addressed by strata of the Nazi party. And, with the end of the Great War, “No one will be unaware [...] that Nazism is nihilism, since it reduced Europe to ‘nothing’”, Faye (1997, p. 139) observes. The German existentialist, perhaps taking advantage of this moment, operates in his philosophy a turn in order to defend himself before the denazification commission that was installed at the University of Freiburg. He falsifies his own thought: even though he maintained the term and the idea of overcoming metaphysics, he misstates the elements and context that led him to it.

On the meaning of “overcoming”

The German existentialist is notably meticulous in his treatment of the *Überwindung* of metaphysics, which he immediately distinguishes from the Hegelian sense of “overcoming”. What is at stake here is not *Aufhebung* but *Überwindung*. Although *Überwindung* carries the sense of negation, the notion neither abolishes nor retrieves what precedes it. Rather, as Heidegger (2003, p. 84) writes, it liberates “an essence that is in the first instance impassible of being grounded” and traverses what is overcome in its consummated essence. *Überwindung*, therefore, implies a “turn” (*Wendung*): a turning back toward what is surpassed and a grasping of its proper determination. Yet, in so doing, there also occurs a “twisting” (*Windung*) which, in Heidegger’s (2003, pp. 84-85) words, “transports one into a realm that is no longer

metaphysical”.

In this overcoming, the pull toward the innermost core of metaphysics is so forceful that it imposes the very oblivion that lies concealed within it. If, in principle, one proceeds into the innermost of metaphysics, one may thereby rediscover what has been forgotten: the ontological difference. What is decisive in the overcoming, for Heidegger, is the excavation of a deep fissure between the “entity of beings” and the truth of Beyng; through this fissure, the once-divided elements appear to themselves for the first time without subsuming metaphysics. Thus, as Heidegger (1982-1987, p. 27) notes, there is a turning “into Beyng itself as the uncovering of refusal (appropriating event)”.

Thought returns to the unthought of metaphysics and, for the first time, renders it worthy of being thought. Heideggerian overcoming involves a “step back” (*Schritt zurück*) which, while overflowing metaphysics, strikes at its very essence. In this “step back”, the history of Beyng is recalled, and through this recollection “the essence of metaphysics reveals itself from this history as belonging to it”, as Heidegger (1982-1987, pp. 34-35) reflects. The point is not to depose metaphysics, but rather to restore to it its truth and to retrieve, in an *originary* way, the forgetfulness of being. Heideggerianly speaking, this consists in reclaiming the tradition in its essence for the sake of the future.

Overcoming does not amount to a change of doctrines or opinions, nor is it an action that human beings plan and execute. It is, instead, intrinsic to the history of Beyng – it is, in Heidegger’s (2003, p. 85) terms, “a sustaining of being” and refers to “the historical change in the essence of Beyng from this very moment on”. The subordination of Beyng to beings is surpassed by Beyng itself, through a *new destiny* that Beyng grants to itself. The forgetfulness of Beyng alters its sense and enters into the truth of Beyng. There occurs, Heidegger (1982–1987, p. 83) affirms, a decisive *Kehre*, a “turning” into the interior of Beyng and its truth: “This turning is by no means a mere inversion but an entirely different beginning that must bid farewell to everything that has thus far been, that is, must bid farewell to metaphysics as such”.

With the overcoming of metaphysics, the neglect once given to the question of Beyng, which had been converted into the question of beings, comes to light and appears, for the first time, as a question of Beyng itself. If, in Heidegger’s conception, history is the essentializing of Beyng, then the overcoming of metaphysics is itself an historical transformation: “The overcoming of metaphysics is the first historical disclosure of the essence of history”, Heidegger (1987, p. 28) asserts. The *Kehre* thus represents a turning within the very historical destining that Beyng destines

to itself.

In this operative turning within the *Ereignis*, the human being, confronted with the truth of Beyng, is seized by a certain astonishment – and, astonished, is impelled to repair his bond with Beyng and to assume himself as its guardian. The turning of Beyng in its history thus entails a turning in humankind: as if, from *homo faber*, masters of creation, we were all to become *shepherds of Beyng*, who await. The English commentator on Heidegger, Pattison (2000, pp. 4-5), observes that “If there is a single question that might be considered the center around which the thinking of the later Heidegger turns, then the question and expectation of this ‘turn’ would be a strong candidate”.

From this point on, Heidegger’s later writings take up two principal challenges. First, to determine what becomes of metaphysics after its overcoming; and second, to clarify what this “new beginning” is – or at least would be.

In his conception of the history of Beyng, Heidegger (2003, pp. 84-110) recognizes that it is impossible for us to know *when* or *how* this great event of Beyng will occur. Nor is it possible to know its reasons. The German existentialist speculates that metaphysics, in the form of modern technology, may remain dominant for a long – and indeterminate – time. In the face of and within this situation, the human being must renounce the anxiety of seeking answers to such questions and, while awaiting this new destining of Beyng, must prepare for the overcoming through a new relation to Beyng – and, for Heidegger, this necessarily involves *thinking*. Beyng is not a product of thought; rather, thought is provoked by Beyng. Moreover, thinking consummates the relation between Beyng and human consciousness: thought does not establish this relation, but, since thought is once and for all the thinking of Beyng, it offers to Beyng only what Beyng itself has entrusted to itself.

In thinking, Beyng comes into language – or, in Heidegger’s (1993b, p. 217) words, “Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell”. The task of the human being is that of *guarding*: we, as human beings, bring Beyng into language, and within it we preserve and protect it. Language is the great gift that Beyng grants to itself; it is the site wherein the human essence resides. Hence, if language is the house of Beyng, then the human being, insofar as he dwells within it, belongs to Beyng. Furthermore, since Beyng requires thinking in order to speak its truth, thinking belongs to the history of Beyng, serving, as it were, as a “memorial” of that history. It is for this reason that, according to Heidegger, the history of Beyng comes into language; and thus thinking itself, under the dominance of metaphysics, loses its essential element and becomes valued as merely technical, calculative, coldly logical, and representational thinking.

If, as Heidegger (1977, pp. 36-37) proposes, “the advent of a new destiny of Beyng can neither be pre-calculated in a logical-historiographical way nor constructed metaphysically as the consequence of a historical process”, then Beyng does not occur through causal association: it arises abruptly from itself. The turn in the destining of Beyng is itself a reappropriation by Beyng of thinking, so that thinking, in its attunement with Beyng, might fore-sense its beckoning – its, so to speak, flash of lightning in a clear sky.

Remembrance in the history of Beyng belongs to Beyng itself and takes place through a kind of foreshadowing, a blink of an eye (*Augenblick*). In this untimeliness, thinking is carried toward the passage that prepares the overcoming of metaphysics through historical-ontological reflection. Heidegger (1982-1987, p. 158) writes that “in the passage there essentializes itself the gathering of what has been in its end and of what is to come in its preparation”. The *preparatory thinking* to which Heidegger refers – and to which, as a religious man clinging to his sacred texts, he himself holds fast – has a limitation: metaphysics is in its terminal phase, and no other kind of thinking can yet manifest itself; nonetheless, this thinking *is*. In this sense, thinking can only offer indications that might enable an entry into the abode of the *Ereignis*. (We have already seen that Heidegger characterizes his earlier texts as belonging to this “preparation” for the overcoming of metaphysics and, in a certain way, acknowledges their limits.)

Reappropriating its belonging to Beyng, thought recollects, in a single breath and in a single instant, the whole of history – and thereby seeks to bring the truth of Beyng into language. This does not entail, Heidegger (1982-1987, p. 278) insists, a total and final negation of metaphysics:

The step back does not set metaphysics aside. Rather, thought now for the first time has the essence of metaphysics before itself and around itself, within the circle of experiences of beings as such. The historical-ontological provenance of metaphysics continues to be what remains to be thought. Thus its essence is preserved as the mystery of the history of being.

Here, the human being appears as the creature who awaits and guards this new destining of Beyng. The recollection and reappropriation of thinking by Beyng are among the “implicit acts” of guarding Beyng – and, we might add, there is another: the inscription of thought’s saying into language. The German philosopher asks what kind of *saying* might correspond to this thinking that is no longer metaphysical. That is, he asks how one might speak this *Kehre* in the history of Beyng. This question occupies him throughout his final years of philosophical reflection.

It concerns, fundamentally, the enigma of how to reach the originary phenomena, the experience of life, without losing their originality through representational or objectifying attempts. The search for this path, one that would turn toward factual life without wounding its originary character, demands a language that is “non-concealing” or “non-obscuring”.

Looking retrospectively, the German existentialist acknowledges in his writings prior to the Nietzsche lectures that, in the long run, metaphysical language remains necessary. Later, on the same problem, Heidegger (2002a, pp. 42-43) asserts that the great difficulty of the step back concerns, above all, language itself:

Our Western languages are, in ever different ways, the languages of metaphysical thought. The question remains open whether the essence of these languages is itself purely metaphysical and thus definitively characterized by the onto-theo-logical, or whether these languages grant other possibilities of saying – and this at the same time means possibilities of a non-saying that nevertheless says.

The problem deepens to such an extent that Heidegger (2002a, p. 44) even comes to say:

To think being without beings means to think being without taking metaphysics into consideration. But such consideration still prevails even in the very intention to overcome metaphysics. For this reason, what is called for is to set aside the idea of the overcoming of metaphysics and to leave metaphysics to itself.

If any overcoming remains necessary, then it concerns that thinking which properly inserts itself into the *Ereignis*, in order to speak it from and toward it.

What is required is to overcome tirelessly the obstacles that so easily render such saying inadequate.

By the late 1960s, Heidegger (2003, pp. viii–xxiii), responding to his own doubts, concludes that founding a new language is not a *sine qua non* condition for the overcoming of metaphysics. What is required, rather, is another relation to the old language. (It is worth noting that it is within this linguistic problematic that Heidegger elaborates several semantic variations. Poetry here, too, gains prominence: poetry is not merely a literary form but a privileged mode of access to *Beyng*, an example of non-objectifying saying.)

“Die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen”: the end of philosophy and the new beginning

After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this”.

Revelation, 4:1

“For insofar and as long as philosophy is metaphysics”, says Heidegger (1982-1987, pp. 101-102), the overcoming of metaphysics is not, broadly speaking, a *refinement* of philosophy but rather its *end*. Thus, historical-ontological reflection cannot be compared in any way to philosophy – and this, for Heidegger, does not mean that thinking itself has come to an end, but that it is instead being transposed into a *new beginning*.

The direction that Heidegger’s reflection then takes is radical – and, in our view, unthinkable within his writings of the 1920s. The German philosopher renounces philosophy and, assured of his decisions, repeatedly declares it. Even in his *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger (1993b, p. 160) observes that “The thinking that is to come is no longer philosophy, because it thinks more originally than ‘Metaphysics’, which is the same name”. The radicality becomes clear in the celebrated 1964 *The End of Philosophy*, in which Heidegger explains that the *end*, as *completion*, unleashes the utmost possibilities. With regard to philosophy, this means that, in thinking the truth of beings, its ultimate possibility lies in its unfolding into sciences. That is, amidst technological expansion, the dominance of representational models, and calculative reflection, the end of philosophy consists in its fragmentation into science: “The end of philosophy reveals itself as the triumph of the manipulable arrangement of a scientific-technical world and of the corresponding social order”, Heidegger (2003, p. 74) affirms.

With the end of philosophy, conceiving a new task for thought – and rigorously inquiring into it – may well unsettle those who undertake it. Heidegger himself recognizes that this entails investigating a mode of thinking that is neither metaphysics nor science; hence his lifelong effort to characterize what this *new beginning* of thought might be. In his notes on Nietzsche, Heidegger identifies this new thinking as historical-ontological. The sense of this is none other than to make manifest the historical dimension of *Beyng*. Historical-ontological reflection refers to a return to what was unthought in metaphysics, so that its belonging to the history of *Beyng*

might be grasped. In *The End of Philosophy*, Heidegger (2003, p. 76) remarks:

For any attempt to prepare an access to the supposed task of thinking depends on a return over the whole of the history of philosophy. And not only this: such an attempt finds itself in the contingency of first having to think about the historicity of that which grants philosophy a possible history.

In the *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger offers further indications regarding this thinking. The thinking to come is presented to us primarily through negations. The thinking that inquires into the truth of Beyng is neither ethics nor ontology, neither practical nor theoretical; it produces no effects whatsoever. The thinking to come abandons subjectivity, stands opposed to humanism and to the technical thinking that responds to the needs of making and operating; and, though rigorous, it is not conceptual thinking. In short, Heidegger sets thinking of Beyng against metaphysical reflection. If Beyng is the *to-be-thought*, then this thinking, heedful of the voice of Beyng, is *more thinking*.

One might say that the most refined characterization of this thinking, which Heidegger (1993c, *passim*) calls *originary thinking*, intertwines with the notions of *thing* (*Ding*) and *fourfold* (*Geviert*). Originary thinking occupies a threshold that is neither science nor philosophy; it lies beyond representational thinking and surpasses the distinction between reason and unreason. Speaking of the thing, the German philosopher explains that human beings deal with things. Whereas an object does not exist by itself and presupposes a subject before which it stands as representation, the thing, as Heidegger understands it, is that which is nearest – its handling requires no representation. That is, the thing does not demand to be thought as a thing: the thing gives itself. The presencing of this “gift of the thing” unfolds in the manifestation of the thing withing an originary configuration of gathering and unity – that is, the *world*.

From this point, Heidegger provides us with hints about what “world” means. Whether in his reflections on Nietzsche (cf. Heidegger, 1982-1987, pp. 45-52; 2002b, pp. 157-199) or in his texts written during the 1940s, such as *The Turning* (cf. Heidegger, 1977, pp. 36-49), the German existentialist begins to present the world as a fourfold, a figure and concept that would thereafter occupy a central position in his thought.

In Heidegger’s description, the elements that compose the fourfold are *Earth* (*Erde*), *Sky* (*Himmel*), *Mortals* (*die Sterblichen*), and *Divinities* (*die Göttlichen*). The Earth is the ground of construction, the fecundity of nearness; the Sky, roughly

speaking, is a *stairway to heaven* – the path of the Sun and Moon, of light and darkness. The mortals are those human beings who not only die but know death as death, and the divinities, in turn, are heralding gestures of the divine. In the presencing of the thing – that is, in humanity’s experience of the being of beings – the Sky and the Earth endure; mortals live and die. Human beings dwell upon the Earth, but in order to measure their dwelling they must look toward the Sky. Thus, human dwelling takes place in the co-belonging of being upon the Earth and beneath the Sky. The touchstone by which humankind measures its own conditions as purely mortal is precisely the divine; and the divine, revealing itself, allows the human to appear as mortal who merely exists upon the Earth and beneath the Sky.

None of these regions exists in isolation. Rather, they occur within an *originary unity* through which the world becomes world. The mortals, dwelling, find themselves within the fourfold and thus safeguard it: they secure the Earth, open themselves to the Sky and receive it, await the gods, and, finally, *die*. For Heidegger, all this transpires as mortals linger in their dealing with things. According to Heidegger (1971a, pp. 180-181), the fourfold provides the standing and setting for this lingering – the fourfold, therefore, is the world itself: “To think the thing as thing means to let the thing preside and come to pass in its thinging, out of the worlding of world”. The thing *is* at the intersection of the fourfold, and precisely for that reason it always calls forth the world.

The German thinker further explains that, in the event of thinging – that is, in the essentialization of the thing – human access to its essence occurs through language. Though humans comport themselves as creators and masters of language, they receive the call of Beyng, which becomes language: “Language [...] remains the master of man”, Heidegger (1971b, p. 209) stands. Human beings speak only because they receive the appeal of language, the most primordial of all appeals, for, as Heidegger (1971b, p. 209), “It is language that, first and last, calls us into the essence of a thing”.

One might say that Heidegger offers this description of the world because he believes that the world itself resists conceptual investigation. It is, we would say, a newly mythic structure, whose poetic force is both evident and tangible. Moreover, Heidegger seems to reframe Husserl’s phenomenological emphasis, but in different terms: to return to the things themselves is to return to things before they become objects. The philosopher devotes particular effort to illuminating and disclosing that realm in which representational thought is banished – where there are no longer *objects*, but only *things* that remain in themselves and not before subjects; a real in which thought is no longer obliged to provide grounds. And it is

precisely in this context that Heidegger (1971a, p. 160) contends that the *step back* is “The step that leads from a merely representational, i.e., explanatory, thinking to a meditative thinking that thinks meaning”.

In 1955, Heidegger (1966, pp. 43-57) delivered a beautiful lecture on *serenity* (*Gelassenheit*), in which he further illuminated meditative thought. The power of technology dominates the entire Earth and decisively influences the relation between human beings and what exists. In this sense, calculative thinking imposes itself inexorably, turning nature into an object of exploitation and reducing it to the mere domain of planning and investigation. Yet Heidegger’s unease does not stem from the process of *technification* itself; rather, he worries that human beings are unprepared to face this transformation. For Heidegger (1966, p. 43), nothing can either halt or redirect the “historical course of the atomic age”. His resignation is clear: “No merely human organization is capable of mastering the age”.

The only alternative, if one is not to fall prey to calculation, planning, and the coldness of thought, is *meditative reflection*. Though one cannot escape technology, one can sustain a non-representational, detached thinking. This does not mean rejecting technology but rethinking our relation to it through meditative reflection. “The thinking that meditates demands of us that we do not become one-sidedly confined to a representation, that we do not continue running in one direction toward a representation”, Heidegger (1966, p. 49) explains. His indication is that, in confronting technology, we should temper optimism with pessimism, or vice versa. It would be *naïve* or foolish, he warns, to oppose the technological world as though it were a demonic manifestation. Yet the same Heidegger (1966, p. 54) cautions that “Without our noticing it, we are so firmly entangled in technical objects that we have become their slaves”. If, however, we use these objects “normally”, we may at once remain free of them: they will not touch our innermost being. Saying both “yes” and “no” to technology allows the human being to sustain a simpler, calmer, more *serene* relation to it – as Heidegger (1966, pp. 56-57) concludes:

We let technical devices enter our daily world, and at the same time leave them to rest in themselves as things which are not something absolute but depend themselves upon something higher. I would like to call this comportment of simultaneous “yes” and “no” toward the world of technical devices, using an old word: serenity toward things (*die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*)

What Heidegger regards as “salvation” is found within the danger of total technification: the destitution of the contemporary world is itself the destiny of *Beyng*. To experience the essence of technology is to experience it as one of the

historical figures of the *Ereignis*. In the destining of technology, Beyng reveals itself and at the same time withdraws. *Serenity* consists in opening oneself to this mystery of Beyng: together, serenity toward things and openness to mystery prepare a new ground upon which humankind may stand and endure within the technological world – though this does not erase the profound danger of humanity’s ruin. It is within the reflection on serenity and openness to mystery that Heidegger presents the necessity of forgetting metaphysics.

One might say that this tone is the crown of Heidegger’s entire discourse on the history and destiny of Beyng: it evokes what Habermas (1985, p. 59), forever opposed to Heidegger, calls a “submission to destiny”, an abnegated obedience before an auratic, woodland, indefinite authority endowed with *quasi*-sacral powers.

In general terms, the overcoming of metaphysics to which Heidegger admonishes us is interwoven with poetic language and ethereal, mystical imagery. In his “demystifying” reading of Heidegger, Caputo (1978) recognizes this, observing that the philosopher’s later writings consist largely of a dense mytho-poetic meditation akin to pagan (largely Germanic) mysticism and to the poetry of the German Romantics such as Hölderlin. And Heidegger, not coincidentally, often turns to Meister Eckhart¹ in his reflections on serenity. Even the conception of the history of Beyng reveals clear parallels with the history of divine revelation, despite Heidegger’s claim to have reached it through rigorous readings of the ancient Greeks. According to Caputo (1978, p. 254), Heidegger Hellenizes and secularizes “A fundamental biblical conception of the history of salvation – a stratagem compounded and betrayed by the radicality with which it seeks to exclude the biblical origins of these operations”. The new beginning is likewise traversed by these elements: one perceives affinities with a kind of conversion, or even with a kind of Second Coming.

Yet certain differences remain between the “divine” invoked by Heidegger and traditional religious notions. Caputo (1978, pp. 254-255) writes:

The god who emerges in Heidegger’s later writings is a profoundly poetic god, a god of the forests arising from a poetic experience of the earth as something sacred and worthy of reverence. It is a cosmo-poetic god, not the ethical-religious God of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. [...] In truth, Heidegger’s later works suggest more a kind of Buddhism, a certain

¹Meister Eckhart, born Eckhart of Hochheim, was a German Dominican theologian, philosopher, and mystic. He is best known for his sermons and treatises that emphasize the direct experience of God beyond conceptual mediation, often employing paradoxical language to express the unity of the soul with the divine. Eckhart’s thought deeply influenced later German mysticism, and though some of his teachings were condemned by a papal bull in 1329, his legacy remains central to the history of Christian spirituality.

meditative, silent, reverential world.

The mystical tone of the history of Beyng can also be discerned in one of the major problems that arise from it: its possible relation to the *end of history* that Hegel (1977, pp. 399-344) speaks of, above all, in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. However distinct the meanings and intentions of each may be, there remains, we would say, an insoluble element within Heidegger's history of Beyng: if the history of Beyng is the history of its truth and untruth, of its disclosure and withdraw, would the *Kehre*, as a turning toward the truth of Beyng, constitute a change in the inner constitution of the *Ereignis*? Or, in other words: would the new beginning in the history of Beyng amount to be the end of that history and the opening of a *new history* – or, in the spirit of postmodernity, a *post-history*?

This is not a frivolous provocation. Even Guzoni (1972, pp. 29-54), in the protocols *Time and Being* (a 1962 lecture) recognizes the importance of this discussion. A jurist and philosopher, interlocutor of Heidegger and responsible for the “translation” – that is, the more accessible version – of this dense and difficult presentation, Guzoni (1972, p. 30) notes in these protocols that the end of history of Beyng appears twice in *Time and Being* in the following sense: the overcoming of metaphysics involves the entry of thought into the *Ereignis*; moreover, it entails for the first time the manner of disclosing the *Ereignis*, which denotes “the same as the end of this history of withdraw”. The obscuration that characterized metaphysics no longer conceals itself, for it is now accompanied by attentiveness of thought. Nevertheless, this in no way guarantees whether metaphysics will or will not persist: concerning this, nothing can be decided or stated. Regarding Heidegger's relation to Hegel, Guzoni (1972, pp. 30-31) asserts:

In any case, the end of the history of Beyng in Heidegger's sense is something quite different [from Hegel's]. The *Ereignis* conceals, in truth, possibilities of disclosure that thought cannot resolve, and in this sense one should certainly not say that, with the entry of thought into the *Ereignis*, the destining comes to a “standstill”. Yet it remains to be reflected whether, after the entry, one can still speak of Beyng, and thus of the history of Beyng, if the history of Beyng is understood as the history of destinings in which the *Ereignis* conceals itself.

As we approach the end of this text – without resolving that polemic, but perhaps pointing toward directions for future reflection –, we recognize the possibility

of developing a debate based on two elements that Guzoni separately highlights in his protocols. First, the parallel between the methodology of negative theology and the step back; second, the mystery of Beyng itself.

The Heideggerian interlocutor observes that thought, in turning toward what was unthought in metaphysics, does so through the *demolition* or *destruction* of the ontic models given in metaphysical language – much as, in his view, negative theology operates. The *methodology* of negative theology begins with affirmations about what God *is*; these affirmations are then negated, revealing the insufficiency of any attempt to conceptualize the divine. Such skepticism is not about God's existence, but rather about the human capacity to grasp divine greatness. The utmost that can be known of God is that He is unknowable.

At this specific point, the history of Beyng approaches negative theology: just as, in the latter, one can only experience God, in Heidegger one can only *experience* Beyng. Beyng is the ground of all that *is*, but, to be a ground, it dispenses with grounds: Beyng is, as Euripides might say, the perplexity of a sinister sea. This tone resonates with the second element that Guzoni (1972, p. 32) notes and which we refer: “In Heidegger [...], one cannot speak of a ‘because’. One can only say the ‘what’ – the history of Beyng is thus”.

Hence, the entry of thought into the *Ereignis* restores the truth of Beyng: for the first time in all time, it is perceived that its history moves within its own self-disclosure and withdrawal. This does not imply, however, that we understand the reasons for it. It seems to us that Heidegger, by his own paths, arrives at a vision of God akin to that of negative theology: Beyng manifests itself in historical configurations that determine how beings reveal themselves to human beings, thereby shaping the pre-understandings of world disclosure; yet the highest knowledge one can attain of Beyng is to recognize that it is unintelligible, enigmatic, mysterious. Here, finally, lies the highest degree attained by preparatory thought for the overcoming of metaphysics.

For Heidegger, such recognition carries within it the passage to the thinking of Beyng – that is, it may signal entry into the very experiment of a serene meditation open to mystery, without attempting to decipher or represent it. It is a thinking both obedient and resigned, which nurtures the promise of a turning of Beyng – and which, *serenely*, awaits its coming.

Conclusion

Heidegger's reflection on the overcoming of metaphysics reveals itself, as a whole, as a long passage that moves from the destruction of "traditional ontology" to the foreboding of a new beginning for thought. This study sought to follow that passage through its principal moments, emphasizing the conceptual and historical inflections that mark Heidegger's trajectory from *Being and Time* to his later writings.

We might say, ultimately, that Heidegger's itinerary reveals both the radicality and the ambivalence of his enterprise. The overcoming of metaphysics, far from signifying a mere termination, emerges as the beginning of a new relation between thought and being – a relation marked by waiting, by serenity, and by the acknowledgement of the essential obscurity of Beyng.

Yet one question remains open: does Heidegger's "new beginning" amount to a transfiguration of the history of Beyng, or to its definitive exhaustion? The thought that reaches the threshold of the *Ereignis* cannot determine the destiny of Beyng; it can only guard it, in the hope that its truth might once again flash forth. Perhaps it is precisely in this gesture of listening and resignation that thought finds its highest task.

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