

Andrzej Wierciński

Introduction

Studia Philosophiae Christianae 49/4, 5-7

2013

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

HEIDEGGER AND THE ARTS

Studia Philosophiae Christianae UKSW 49(2013)4
--

ANDRZEJ WIERCINSKI

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Germany

andrew.wiercinski@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Each research project has its own history. When I was first approached by *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* to act as guest editor for one of its issues, my spontaneous suggestion was Heidegger despite the fact that volumes have already been written on the author of one of the most renowned books in philosophy's history, *Being and Time*. My idea was not simply to add one more study on a particular issue in Heidegger, but to explore his remarkable historical resonance and influence on contemporary philosophers, particularly the younger generation of scholars philosophizing in English. Despite being a controversial figure, mainly due to his problematic affiliation with National Socialism and his often undifferentiated polemic with Christian theology, Heidegger, himself a theologian of the unknown God, remains a highly influential and inspiring philosopher who challenges our approach to thinking: "The most thought-provoking thing in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking". Can we responsibly say that having been inspired by Heidegger's philosophy and its *Wirkungsgeschichte* we begin to think?

Of the utmost importance is that we neither take Heidegger's philosophy for granted nor act as mere advocates for the continued relevance of his philosophy for contemporary thinkers. However, similar to rethinking the relevance and influence of Karl Marx for intellectuals, at least in the West, over the last over 150 years it seems highly beneficial to address the question of the importance of having a philosophical position on Heidegger. From Max Weber's notion of the "iron cage of rationality" to Georg Simmel's "tragedy of culture", the irrationally

rational meaningfulness of modern society, its angst-inducing disenchantment, is not only a prevalent intellectual theme, but a call for rethinking the imperatives of new ethics in the age of science.

Richard Rorty, in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, praises Heidegger – along with Hegel, Marx, Frege, Freud, and Wittgenstein – for thinking of something new and calls him – with Dewey and Wittgenstein – “one of the three most important philosophers of our [20th] century”. Following Hannah Arendt, we can modify Rorty’s evaluation by saying that Heidegger never thinks about something, but he always thinks something. His thought is fittingly characterized by himself as ways and not as works. Therefore, our project is primarily an invitation to reassess our own relationship to Heidegger’s ways and not so much to perform exegetical analyses of his works.

In the speech delivered at Heidegger’s funeral on May 28, 1976 in his birthplace, Meßkirch, Bernhard Welte, Heidegger’s fellow countryman, a Catholic priest and Professor of Philosophy of Religion at the University of Freiburg, where I currently teach, exalted Heidegger as “perhaps the greatest seeker of this [20th] century”, whose thinking “has shaken the world and this century”. In this project, we wish to reevaluate Heidegger’s inspiration for seeking the truly revolutionary power of philosophy by entrusting ourselves to the groundlessness of radical questioning. What is at stake here is the call to wakeful thinking, when thinking is understood as the being of a human being in the sense of the being of Being. The authors which have been invited to contribute all take Heidegger seriously as a philosopher and question his presence in contemporary discourse by asking which Heidegger and why, by devoting attention to his own philosophy as the means to evaluating his legacy. The co-belonging of being and thinking calls for our radical responsibility toward thinking, which in turn, will hopefully inspire others to act in its wake.

Beginning in his early lectures on Aristotle in Marburg Heidegger has brought metaphysics along new paths. He reminds us that “we name time when we say: Every thing has its time. This means: everything which actually is, every being comes and goes at the right time

and remains for a time during the time allotted to it". Aristotle *redivivus* to his contemporaries, Heidegger is still a powerful inspiration for asking the question of the opportune time, not by providing answers but by opening the horizon in which we seek a way of thinking, not one merely content to make itself intelligible, but a thinking able to embrace the unknown and act accordingly. This calls for taking seriously his appeal to a way of thinking more rigorous than the conceptual. The new way of thinking opens up a questioning of language by questioning the common understanding of the relationship between language and human being: "Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man".

I express my profound gratitude to all scholars who followed my invitation and contributed to this project by critically engaging the historical development of Western philosophy. For Heidegger, this development can best be understood as the progression of metaphysics, which by impoverishingly placing humankind among nature perpetuates the forgetfulness of Being.

On behalf of the participating authors in my capacity as a guest editor, I would like to thank *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* for this opportunity to share our appreciation of Heidegger with a philosophical community. If language is "the clearing-concealing advent of Being itself", our task is to discern the call of Being in language and respond poetically. Working on this project was a great chance for us to become attuned to this call and to transcribe our experience into discourse, which bears witness to the encounter with the truth of Being.