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Being before Time?
Heidegger on Original Time, Ontological
Independence, and Beingless Entities

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ABSTRACT: In the recently published manuscript “The Argument against Need” (ca. 1963), Heidegger discusses the notion of being-in-itself (*An-sichsein*) with regard to entities that predate the existence of knowers. Section 1 introduces the problem of so-called “ancestral facts,” which Meillassoux and Boghossian have used to argue for a specific form of realism. Section 2 identifies a specific understanding of time as the basis for their argument. Sections 3-4 show how Heidegger rejects this account of time. Section 5 describes the general form of ontologies that deny entity independence (dependence ontology). Section 6 turns to Heidegger’s account of a resistance to ontological sense-making in what he calls “beingless” (*seinlos*) entities. Discussing work by Haugeland and Wrathall, I conclude in section 7 that Heidegger’s response to the “argument against need” is to reject the idea of unidirectional dependence in favor of a triadic interdependence between being, entities, and us.

KEYWORDS: Heidegger, time, being, realism, ontological dependence, in-itself

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1. THE PROBLEM OF ANCESTRAL FACTS

According to geological studies, the formation of the Alps, the so-called Alpine orogeny, is due to the collision of several tectonic plates, in particular, the Eurasian plate from the north and the Indian and African plate from the south. The process is episodic: it probably began about 300 million years ago, entering a particularly active phase about 70 million years ago and resulting in roughly the geological formation we see today. The process is also still ongoing: the mountains of the Alps grow, so to speak, by an estimated millimeter each year.

If this, or something like this, is true, we know several facts about the Alps that concern periods of time that greatly precede our own existence and even the emergence of *Homo sapiens*. The formation of these mountains as well as the emergence of our species are events dating so far back that they belong to a time scale sometimes referred to as “deep time.” Historical sources tell us about events that precede our individual existence and that of our generation. But other forms of knowledge must do without any eyewitness to their object of inquiry: geology, evolutionary anthropology, palaeontology, cosmology, etc. Such deep-time sciences concern facts about entities and events that came and, in some cases, ceased to exist long before humans were around. I follow Quentin Meillassoux in calling such facts “ancestral.”¹

Reflection on ancestral facts can trigger a certain kind of sceptical reasoning. That one may be startled by the recognition that we know about entities and events that are earlier in time than the existence of any possible knower is likely because of a combination of (implicit) epistemological and ontological commitments that come into contradiction in view of ancestral facts. The reasoning goes like this, call it the naïve argument: a notion of knowledge modeled on perception or direct observation implies that the observer and what she observes must both exist at the same time for them to come into epistemologically relevant contact. Simultaneity, in turn, may be understood as overlap in the presence of the observer and the observed on a linear time scale. Given these background assumptions, ancestral facts are difficult to make sense of. The temporal range of what we know extends into the

past through memory, testimony, the transmission of texts, etc. But in the case of ancestral facts, no human being was (yet) around who could have possibly observed them. How, then, is it possible that we know them to be true?

In recent years, Meillassoux and Paul Boghossian have provided an analysis of ancestral facts that departs from the naïve argument. Specifically, they offer an alternative between, on the one hand, accounts of knowledge that require simultaneity and, on the other hand, more sophisticated views of genuinely scientific knowledge. To account for the truth of ancestral facts, they argue, we must prefer an epistemology modeled on the natural sciences; it is the only type of epistemology that can make sense of deep-time entities. This epistemology goes hand in hand with a renewed commitment to realism in metaphysics. Although they differ in detailing what this commitment entails, both Meillassoux and Boghossian take ancestral facts to motivate a new form of realism.

Meillassoux argues that genuine access to reality is only achieved in the “speculative” use of reason he finds paradigmatically embodied in the use of mathematical models.² He opposes this idea of knowledge to a “correlationist” form he holds is the dominant view in Kant and post-Kantian philosophy, particularly phenomenology.³ Meillassoux’s affirmation of “speculative” realism is meant to reorient philosophy away from an understanding of knowledge modeled on immediate perception and hence implicitly or explicitly committed to the model of simultaneous observation and toward the knowledge generated by the speculative qua scientific use of reason. Boghossian proceeds in a similar way: he offers an alternative between, on the one hand, epistemologies that take ancestral facts to be the result of scientific practices that achieve a social construction of deep time and, on the other hand, a genuinely realist account of knowledge, which the hard sciences embody. To understand our access to deep time on the construction model is to misunderstand and implicitly dismiss the knowledge to which deep-time sciences lay claim. It is to show, as the title of his book has it, *Fear of Knowledge*.⁴

What Meillassoux and Boghossian leave unquestioned, however, is the understanding of time as a linear chain of events and the ontological commitments it entails. Once one takes these into account, the problem of ancestral facts becomes more complex. The naïve argument developed above leads to the conclusion that, on the views of knowledge and time the argument assumes, deep-time entities would be radically unobservable and would remain essentially unknown to us. Meillassoux and Boghossian invoke ancestral facts to make the point that this conclusion cannot be right: we *know* these entities. This motivates the idea that the epistemology leading to scepticism about deep-time entities must be rejected. On the understanding of knowledge they attack, however, it is not only the case that deep-time entities are unknown. The implicit commitment to a certain ontology is an additional premise in the naïve argument: although the specific (ontical) shape of deep-time entities remains unknown to us, we do know something about them, namely that they exist in linear time even if very far removed from us.

On this analysis of ancestral facts, these facts do not merely indicate the naïveté of both the observation model of knowledge and the idea that the deep past is a construction from the present. They also reveal a genuinely ontological problem resulting from the commitment to an account of linear time: in the naïve view, the schema of linear temporality comes into conflict with the claim to a fundamental knowability of things, leading to the paradoxical status of deep-time entities as both *ontologically* known and *ontically* unknowable. For a naïve epistemology wedded to the notion of simultaneous observation, we cannot answer the *ontical* question as to whether living dinosaurs ever existed (though their bones might indicate that); but we do know, as a matter of *ontological* fact that, if they existed, it was in a time long before ours. For the ontologist, the trouble with a case like that is that our ontical or empirical contact with reality and our ontological knowledge about entities come to contradict each other.

Heidegger understood this very well. Given that the relation between being and time is central to his early philosophy, it is perhaps no surprise that he was challenged by reference to ancestral facts already

during his lifetime. Indeed, Heidegger in a recently published manuscript entitled “The Argument against Need” (AAN) explicitly discusses the status of ancestral facts such as the formation of the Alps.⁵ The example is his, and its choice was likely due to the context in which the manuscript was originally prepared. Although it was later collected in a folder of manuscripts intended for publication in a never-completed introduction to the Gesamtausgabe, Heidegger originally composed at least part of AAN in preparation for and in response to discussions with Medard Boss, the Swiss psychoanalyst and philosopher with whom Heidegger taught in Zollikon. Boss took notes on their conversations, and they report that the status of the Earth before the emergence of human beings came up during their return flight from Sicily to Zurich in May 1963.⁶ That flight would have taken them just above the Alps.

Heidegger’s main concern in the discussion of ancestral facts in AAN is precisely with the coming apart of the ontical and the ontological on the naïve view. Heidegger takes the question as to the epistemic status of ancestral facts to be an example of the ontological problem with which the manuscript is concerned, namely, how to make sense of the fact that entities are independent from us, or in the Kantian terminology he uses, that they are *an sich* (in themselves). Deep-time entities appear to be examples of entity independence: the Alpine orogeny is a process that occurred (and still occurs) independent from us. According to the naïve argument, that their existence predates us makes clear that deep-time entities cannot depend on human beings for their emergence, their subsistence, or their causal efficacy. Hence, they run against any argument that would aim to show that entities generally depend on us in these ways.

The crucial point in Heidegger’s development of the idea that deep-time entities are *in themselves* is his claim that independence is not a domain-specific attribute of some entities. It is a mistake to divide entities into those that do not depend on us (natural entities, say) and those entities that do (artifacts, values, or those in the domain of culture generally). Heidegger brings this out by drawing a distinction between, on the one hand, “entities-in-themselves” (*Ansichseiendes*), the set of those entities that are independent, and, on the other hand, entity independence as

ontological fact, their “being-in-themselves” (*Ansichsein*). The former notion presupposes a setup of ontological regions on a single plane. Saying that (all) entities are in themselves, by contrast, is to recognize that some form of independence is part of what it means to be an (any) entity at all.⁷

The aim of this paper is to bring into view the ontological function of this kind of independence as Heidegger describes it. I will begin by discussing how the problem of ancestral facts relates to Heidegger’s philosophy of time in sections 2–4. Section 5 draws from Wrathall’s account of ontologies that deny entity independence⁸ to define a form of ontological reasoning I call a *dependence ontology*. Section 6 turns to Heidegger’s discussion of how being-in-itself becomes manifest in what he calls the “beinglessness” (*Seinlosigkeit*) of entities. In section 7 I engage with work by Haugeland⁹ to show that Heidegger’s response to the “argument against need” is to reject the idea of unilateral dependence in favor of a mutual interdependence between being, entities, and us. In contrast to the type of ontological thinking discussed in Section 5, I call this form of reasoning, again drawing on Wrathall, *adaptation ontology*.

2. HEIDEGGER’S RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM OF ANCESTRAL FACTS

The problem of ancestral facts must have troubled Boss already in the 1950s. Boss shared with Heidegger a letter he had received in 1955 from Rudolf Trümpy, a geologist at Zurich’s technical university, and it appears he had asked Trümpy for authoritative statements about the Earth’s geology, who responded by sending several references to scientific textbooks, commenting that “for us geologists there can be no doubt about the reality of a very long history of the Earth before humans.”¹⁰ Just like Meillassoux and Boghossian, Boss not only accepts the authority of science on ancestral facts. He further accepts that in virtue of these facts, science becomes the legitimate spokesperson for the independence of entities-in-themselves.

This is one of the ideas Heidegger attacks by making use of the distinction between entities-in-themselves and being-in-itself. Here is a central passage from his discussion, which begins by presenting a version of the naïve argument:

The Earth, the cosmos, are older than the human. They were already existing before the human came to be an entity. One can hardly refer, in a more decided and persuasive way, to entities that are what and how they are independently from the human.

Yet, in order to exhibit such entities, is it necessary to make the cumbersome appeal to the results of modern natural science regarding the various ages of the Earth and the human? To these researches, one could right away pose the awkward question as to where they take the time periods from for their calculation of the age of the Earth. Is this sort of time simply found in the ice of the ‘ice age’, whose phases geology calculates for us? Yet to exhibit entities that are independent from the human, it is enough simply to point to the Alps, for example, which tower up into the sky and in no way require [*bedarf*] the human and his machinations to do *that*. The Alps are entities-in-themselves—they show themselves as such without any reference to the various ages of the Earth’s formations and of human races [*Menschenrassen*]. (AGB: iv-v/AAN: 522-23)

Heidegger here denies the prerogative of the sciences for understanding ontological independence. Although the reference to ancestral facts appears to be a “decided and persuasive way” to exhibit “entities that are what and how they are independently from the human,” this way of accessing them in truth conceals a more basic (ontological) presence of their independence. Due to their implicit ontological commitments, the sciences can assert the independence of entities-in-themselves as their domain of study only by assuming their deeper dependence on an ontology in virtue of which entities appear at all. They can only assert the ontical independence of entities by assuming their ontological dependence.

Heidegger's way of breaking with this logic, particularly fitting for a flight above the Alps, is to repeat the basic gesture of phenomenology: their ontological independence is a trait so obvious that "it is enough to simply point to the Alps" to reveal it. The critical implication of this gesture is clear: science has no privileged access to the ontological trait of being-in-itself, nor is deep time the paradigm for ontological independence. Given the right referential context and the proper "attention to being-in-itself," the idea of an "independence from the human [is] already and in each case only a consequence of the being-in-itself of the Alps" (AGB: v/AAN: 523).

Heidegger's example may be perplexing, however, and in the context of the contemporary debate might give rise to the following rejoinder. Reacting to the naïve argument, Heidegger also rejects the idea that linear time is "simply found in the ice of the 'ice age,'" which may be interpreted as the claim that geological time is a retrospective construction, undercutting the ancestral facts' claim to truth. This would be Boghossian's worry, and it is also the worry Boss had in the 1950s when presenting his "argument against need." The aim of the next two sections is to discuss whether Heidegger's account of time falls prey to it. While this may be true for the view of time Heidegger develops in *Being and Time*, it isn't for the later view developed in the 1962 lecture "Time and Being."

3. DEEP TIME AND *BEING AND TIME*

Central to the ontological shape of time that Heidegger describes in *Being and Time* is a transcendental argument aiming to determine basic conditions of temporal intelligibility. The notion of time as a linear, asymmetric, and irreflexive sequence of events, what Heidegger calls the "now sequence" (*Jetztfolge*), is explanatorily derivative of a phenomenology of lived time, what Heidegger calls "timeishness" (*Zeitlichkeit*). What sets both apart is the specific format they give to temporal presence. The model of time as linear continuum assumes some basic temporal unit measured differently on different time scales. Heidegger follows Aristotle in calling the units of the time continuum "now." Within this

conceptual scheme, that entities are in time means that they become manifest in a way for them to be correctly described and measured as a sequence of “now” units. The model of timeishness, by contrast, takes the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future as the basic forms in the manifestation of time.

Heidegger’s argument for the primacy of lived time is simple. Measuring linear time presupposes the “now” as its basic unit. This notion in turn presupposes some idea of the present moment in contrast to past and future. Therefore, the three dimensions of lived time are explanatorily more basic than the notion of time as series of “nows” (GA 2/SZ §81).

This argument to the explanatory priority of Dasein’s time is combined with another critical point. Among the three dimensions of lived time, the future rather than the past or present is the most basic. This claim is a consequence of the paradigmatic role Heidegger attributes to Dasein in fundamental ontology (GA 2: 9–10/SZ 7). Regarding time, this leads to the consequence that the primacy of the future that characterizes our being-toward-death is also the defining feature of the phenomenology of time. Hence, the explanatorily basic format of temporal presence is neither the “now” unit nor the present as a dimension of lived time. It is the future in its contrast to past and present: “The now is not pregnant with the not-yet-now, but rather the present arises from the future in the primordial ecstatic unity of the temporalizing of timeishness [*ursprünglichen ekstatischen Einheit der Zeitigung der Zeitlichkeit*]” (GA 2: 406/SZ 427 tm). Hence, every manifestation of time depends on structural features that Dasein embodies. In Heidegger’s terms: although “world time” (*Weltzeit*) functions both as a “condition of possibility of innerworldly entities” and gives form to “the factically existing self” (GA 2: 398/SZ 419), it is Dasein’s “timeishness that temporalizes such a thing as world time” (GA 2: 399/SZ 420 tm). Hence, timeishness is “original time” (GA 2: 405/SZ 426).

That this harbors a crucial problem becomes particularly clear in the discussion of the “temporality” (*Temporalität*) of being in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (GA 24). Although temporality is the temporal structure of all entities and hence the anticipated answer to the

question of being in general (GA 2: 18/SZ 19), in contrast to timeishness as defining the temporal nature of Dasein, both are here said to be separated only by a kind of change of aspect: “Timeishness [*Zeitlichkeit*], insofar as it is understood as the condition of possibility of ... understanding being, we call temporality [*Temporalität*]” (GA 24: 388/274 tm). But it remains unclear how the idea that the contrast between timeishness and temporality is functional rather than substantive is compatible with the difference in referential scope. Arguably, the project of *Being and Time* to answer the question of being in view of time fails for just this reason: it cannot make plausible the transition from timeishness as the meaning of the being of Dasein to temporality as the meaning of being itself.¹¹ The discussion of temporality is “so unspecified as to be more a label for the gap in Heidegger’s argument than the completion of it.”¹²

But whether complete or not, Heidegger’s early view of time already provides resources to develop some response to the naïve argument. Martin Hägglund has attempted to counter Meillassoux in this way, explicitly drawing from Heidegger’s early philosophy of time.¹³ Such a response, reiterating Heidegger’s transcendental argument in *Being and Time*, would argue that the notion of time according to which some geological events precede the existence of knowers is derivative of the three-dimensional time that fundamental ontology describes. Heidegger explicitly claims in *Being and Time* (§§79–81) that the “datability” (*Datierbarkeit*) of events presupposes Dasein’s experience of lived time. Yet this type of response is unsuccessful. For Boghossian and Meillassoux, privileging “our” time over deep time is simply committing the constructivist mistake. Hägglund’s response, in any case, is not the one Heidegger gives to the naïve argument in AAN.

4. DEEP TIME AND “TIME AND BEING”

By the time Heidegger wrote AAN, he had accepted that the early discussion of time cannot make plausible the transition from the temporal constitution of Dasein to that of all entities. After the failure to complete the project of a temporal ontology, Heidegger changes his proposal for an ontology of time. Although he continues to take the notion of

linear time to be derivative of a more basic phenomenon, in texts from the middle and later period this phenomenon is no longer associated with the specific temporal nature of mortal Dasein.

The crucial text for Heidegger's later view is "Time and Being," the lecture with which he returned to the main argument from *Being and Time* in 1962, a year before the Sicily flight. In the AAN manuscript, in line with "Time and Being," Heidegger introduces the notion of *Ereignis* as that which structures the manifestation of time, effectively replacing the idea that time must be understood as the interaction between the temporality of being and Dasein's timeishness.¹⁴ It is in this regard that the question of time connects with being-in-itself as an ontological trait of all entities:

And if it is proven that the Earth is older than the human, then in that case which is older and which younger: *entities-in-themselves* or *being-in-itself*? If the being-in-itself of the Earth is older, that is to say, according to natural-scientific chronometry, if it lies farther back in the past, even unimaginably far back, could not *being-in-itself* in the end be *still earlier* than the oldest of the oldest entities-in-themselves? How would we come to the oldest entities-in-themselves if something like being-in-itself were not already given previously—previously, not only within the backward chronological order of the old, older, and oldest entities-in-themselves, but 'previously' as before this chronological order as such? This latter 'previously' belongs in the inception of earliness [*Frühe*], which we must learn to think of as the time which first grants time-space to the ordinary time *in* which the entities-in-themselves of the cosmos and the Earth exist. What grants this is the event [*das Ereignis*] itself. (AGB: vi/AAN: 524)

Parallel to this reasoning, Heidegger in "Time and Being" discusses *Ereignis* as that which lets both time and being "relate and belong to

each other, that which not only brings both into their own but also brings them into and holds them in their belonging-together” (GA 14: 24/19 tm). For the ontology of time, two things follow from this claim: first, the phenomenology of time should not be considered the explanatory ground for being. The titles of both *Being and Time* and “Time and Being” are misleading in this regard. The reference to *Ereignis* is rather meant to indicate, second, that concepts such as being and time do not refer to unified over-arching structures but to forms of relationality. Because several such forms of relationality can be identified, the interaction between them (second-order relationality) promises to be an explanatorily basic feature in the constitution of phenomena.

The explanatory structure associated with *Ereignis* will be further discussed in section 7 below. But we can already note what is characteristic of the discussion of time in AAN. Although the regress from the notion of time as linear continuum (“chronological order,” “ordinary time”) to a more basic phenomenon of time reiterates the transcendental argument of *Being and Time*, Heidegger now identifies a different condition of possibility: “time-space,” comparable to what Heidegger would have called “world time” in 1927, is “granted” not by the timeishness of Dasein but by whatever is related by the co-ordinating power of *Ereignis*. Because *Ereignis* is a second-order phenomenon of the interaction between different forms of relationality, the different dimensions of time do not form an explanatory hierarchy. Rather than assuming that the future has priority over the other dimensions of time, the past, present, and future are conceived of as reciprocally determinative forms of presence that, while necessarily related, remain irreducibly plural. In “Time and Being,” Heidegger describes this reciprocal determination of past, present, and future as the “interplay of each for each” (GA 14: 19/14 tm), identifying it as a fourth, coordinating dimension of time. “Genuine time is four-dimensional” (GA 14: 20/15 tm).

Heidegger has several ways to express the thought that such interplay, no longer indexed to Dasein, includes a constitutive absence. He calls it the “nearing nearness” (*nähernde Nähe*) or the “in-ceptual extending” (*an-fangende Reichen*, GA 14: 20/15 tm), both expressions

that emphasize not immediacy or direct contact but a distance remaining between what becomes manifest and the forms and conditions for such manifestation. Genuine time as nearness “grants the openness of time-space and shelters what is denied in having-been, what is held in reserve in what is coming-toward us” (GA 14: 20/15 tm). In marginal notes to this passage (not available in Stambaugh’s translation), Heidegger glosses the “in-ceptual extending” as a *Brauchen* and the proper response to original time’s “character of denial and reservation” as this time’s being “purposed in releasement [*gebraucht in die Gelassenheit*]” (GA 14: 20n4, 20n6; see also 28n10), linking the account of time in “Time and Being” directly to the question of ontological independence crucial to the manuscript on *Brauch*.

But although “Time and Being” and AAN present the same explanatory regress to second-order relationality, AAN gives the transcendental argument a different focus than the earlier lecture. While “Time and Being” situates the discussion of *Ereignis* in an attempt to “think being without regard to entities” (GA 14: 5/2 tm), the question as to the status of deep-time entities raised in AAN forces Heidegger to make clear what follows from this ontology of time for the manifestation of entities. What is at stake in the discussion of time is not merely the meaning of time, being, or the forms of “extending” (GA 14: 17, 22, 17 tm) characteristic of each, but how they determine entities’ possible forms of presence. “Time and Being” identifies genuine time as the interaction between different formats of presence, but it does not make thematic that time thereby plays into the manifestation of *something*. Yet any account of the intelligibility provided by temporal categories will be phenomenologically incomplete if it does not provide an account of how these categories shape how entities are experienced.

To see this problem, consider what the philosophy of time aims to achieve. Setting aside the differences between the versions of a transcendental argument in the philosophy of time that emerge from *Being and Time*, AAN and “Time and Being,” respectively, in each case such regress must be motivated, and this motivation ultimately leads back to our knowledge of entities in time.

In *Being and Time*, this motivation is easy to discern. “Now time” (GA 2: 400/SZ 421) misconstrues the genuine temporal constitution of Dasein in a way “original time” does not. The regress to timeishness is thus motivated by an epistemically detrimental effect that a certain view of time has for Dasein in its attempt to understand its own being. Although only mentioned in passing, “Time and Being” has a similar critical ambition. It aims to dispel the idea that time is something humans *make*; rather, it is something *given* to us (GA 14: 21/16). The regress to the genuine, four-dimensional time aims to give an account of what it means for us to receive time rather than make it, and to receive it in the mode of *Gelassenheit*.

The argument in AAN follows this general structure, yet the epistemic consequence of a problematic view of time is now linked to its effect on our understanding of (all) entities and, more specifically, to misconceiving ontological independence: what gets obscured when something is situated in the “backward chronological order of the old, older and oldest entities-in-themselves,” is “*being-in-itself*” as an aspect in the manifestation of (all) entities, independent from their position in time. Because being-in-itself is part of what the view of time as world time aims to explain, the fact that an entity’s independence is misconstrued by the account of being-in-itself resulting from this view must lead to revising the metaphysical presuppositions of this view. It motivates, first, rejecting the specific ontology of time that led to this misrepresentation. Because any alternative account needs to be preferable with regard to the motivating question, however, the specific motivation for thinking about time in AAN leads, second, to identifying a different explanatorily basic phenomenon that *can* make sense of ontological independence. From the phenomenology of temporal passage, AAN moves to the phenomenological grounds of time, to what is “given previously ... ‘*previously*’ as before this chronological order as such” (AGB: vi/AAN: 524).

Should Heidegger have pointed at the Alps while in the plane with Boss, the best way of explaining this gesture would be as a reminder of what motivates the ontology of time under discussion: making sense of the fact that any entity is independent, such as “the Alps, for example, which tower up into the sky and in no way require the human and

his machinations to do *that*.” The criterion for making headway in the ontology of time ultimately does not regard our own relation to time but whether our understanding of time does justice to entity independence. That Heidegger believes he can directly refer to the ontological independence in the “inceptual” constitution of this entity in 1963 is no indication that any truth about an entity’s deep past must be some kind of construction from the present. The point is that, given the proper attention and understanding of ontological knowing, entity independence is a constitutive feature of their manifestation that is misrepresented as their distance in time from “us.” Positioning an entity in a time before any possible cognitive contact with humans may ascribe a kind of ontic independence, but it obscures rather than reveals that independence’s genuine ontological form.

5. DEPENDENCE ONTOLOGIES

Both the example of the Alps and the specific form the regress to a more originary phenomenon of time takes in AAN show that the point emerging from the problem of ancestral facts does not concern the problem of time considered in isolation. Rather, it concerns the argumentative structures through which ontologies such as those used in the naïve argument fail to make sense of entity independence. Ancestral facts are interesting for Heidegger because they allow us to see at work in the metaphysics of time a deeper, general ontological, or meta-ontological point: the contrast between asserting the independence of entities on an ontic and an ontological level. To distinguish between an ontic misrepresentation as beings-in-themselves and a proper representation of entities within forms of second-order relationality, as AAN ultimately proposes, exceeds the problematic of time by contrasting different ways of understanding the independence of entities.

Heidegger mentions two other models for entity independence in AAN. One is the Nicene Creed, an early Christian creed according to which it is against Church doctrine to say that anything existed before creation (AGB: xv/AAN: 533). This is a version of the problem of ancestral facts, where a naïve ontology of linear time comes to conflict not with the

findings of the sciences but with beliefs about the beginning of everything. Even if both are forms of ontological knowledge, upholding both the idea of creation and a linear notion of time leads to the contradiction described above: if creation is an event in time, an entity cannot be conceived as both created and prior in time to the event of such creation. Although it is easy to respond to this problem by rejecting that creation is an event in time and arguing that (linear) time is itself a production of creation, this makes the act of creation even more enigmatic.

A more salient case Heidegger discusses is Kant's assertion of both empirical realism and transcendental idealism. This dual claim paradigmatically embodies the contradiction between independence as ontological fact and as ontical property. In rejecting it, Heidegger follows the same strategy as in other late discussions of Kant (such as in the *Country Path Conversations*, GA 77: 97–106/63–69), when he attacks the notion of objectivity (*Objektivität*). But the point is here presented as an incapacity to do justice to the independence of entities. The notion of objectivity fails to capture the genuine being-in-itself because it already presupposes “the turnedness of entities toward subjectivity”: “Objectivity is not synonymous with the being-in-itself of entities-in-themselves.” Rather, the notion of objective being degrades ontological independence to an ontic and domain-specific property some entities have and others lack. Being-in-itself is cast as “only that region of experience of entities-in-themselves, whereby the latter turns *toward* scientific representation” (AGB: viii/AAN: 527).

The discussion of Kant in AAN thus reiterates the argument from the discussion of ancestral facts with which the manuscript begins, only now developing it independently from the question of time: Kant's notion of objectivity gives to the independence of entities a presentational format that implicitly assumes a deeper dependence of entities on the human understanding, hence restricting entity independence to a merely ontic feature. This is the problematic consequence of each of the three models, motivating Heidegger's search for an alternative account of entity independence that can avoid such implication.

To get a better grip on what denying ontological independence entails, consider Mark Wrathall's reconstruction of the main argument in AAN. Heidegger's aim is to refute what Wrathall calls the "Basic Idealist Argument" meant to establish that "entities depend on us." It does so with the help of two premises:

1. Entities depend on being.
2. Being depends on us.
- ∴ 3. Entities depend on us.

As Wrathall points out, the argument makes a further assumption, namely that the sense of dependence is transitive. The same meaning of dependence must be in play in each of the two premises and the conclusion. As Wrathall shows, commentators not only disagree over which of the three claims Heidegger endorses. They also disagree about how the underlying notion of dependence is to be understood.¹⁵

Wrathall's reconstruction not only makes explicit that accepting idealism concerns the independence of both being and entities. It also allows us to articulate the formal element that the background assumptions of the naïve argument regarding ancestral facts and the other cases Heidegger discusses have in common. They each model the continuity in the meaning of dependence and, correspondingly, of independence on the ontical and the ontological level. If the "Basic Idealist Argument" provided a correct representation of the relation between being and entities, then whatever it would mean to say that entities are dependent on or independent from us would always be determined by their prior dependence on or independence from being. Whatever stance one takes on whether entities do or do not depend on us, the relation between being and entities is one of unidirectional dependency: its dependence on us only transfers from being to entities if there cannot be entities without being.

But as Wrathall points out,¹⁶ this is what Heidegger explicitly rejects in the penultimate paragraph of AAN when he suggests that, no matter how we model entity independence, ultimately there is no way to "avoid the concession that entities-in-themselves are beingless [*seinlos*]" (AGB: xi/AAN: 529). In the most extended discussion of the distinction between being-in-itself and entities-in-themselves, Heidegger

consequently highlights that being-in-itself is prior even to the notion that entities are “independent *from* the human” (AGB: v/AAN: 523). The more fundamental question to ask is whether entities are independent from *being*. Because Heidegger rejects the “Basic Idealist Argument” in this way, its rejection does not motivate embracing a symmetric account of realism by asserting the *independence* of entities and being from “us.” The problem Heidegger finds in the “Basic Idealist Argument” is that it assumes the dependence of entities on being, occluding any possible sense in which entities could be said not to depend on being or, inverting the dependence relation, any sense in which being could be dependent on entities.

Note that this point is more general than Wrathall’s reconstruction of the “Basic Idealist Argument” that AAN aims to refute. The Nicene Creed conceives entities as dependent not on “us,” but on their creator, and there is no indication Heidegger wanted to make the further claim that believing entities to be created makes them in some sense rely on our believing. But this model of entity dependence need not fit the scheme of the “Basic Idealist Argument” to be an example of the kind of ontological reasoning Heidegger attacks. Whether their dependence is on “us,” God, or some X, conceiving the relation entities/*being* as asymmetrical dependence is what leads to the two crucial features Heidegger identifies in all three models for entity dependence mentioned in AAN: they (i) establish the transitivity in the meaning of dependence that the “Basic Idealist Argument” requires; they (ii) rule out as an *a priori* implication of the notions of being and entities any sense in which entities could be independent from being, hence they (iii) deny an independence of entities from being, i.e., genuinely entitative independence. The alternative between idealism and realism, conceived as entities’ dependence on or independence from *us*, is ultimately a surface phenomenon. The crucial feature of the form of ontological reasoning under attack in AAN is that a dependence of entities on being is taken to be the only possible way to conceive the relation between being and entities in terms of dependence or independence.

6. "BEINGLESS" ENTITIES

That Heidegger takes a critical stance toward an asymmetric dependence of entities on being raises the question of what alternative view he offers and to what extent his own ontology escapes the form of thinking he attacks in AAN. To get clear on this, it is useful to discuss the idea that entities ultimately remain *seinlos*, "beingless" or "bare of being" (AAN: 529). Putting emphasis on the concluding paragraph of AAN, where this idea is present, Wrathall comments:

Heidegger thus urges us to come to terms with the idea that entities-in-themselves are beingless. . . . 'The beingless' [*das Seinlose*] is one of the locutions he coins for referring to entities as they are without us. The beingless, he emphasizes, is not at all the same as a non-being [*das Nicht-Seiende*] or a non-entity [*das Unseiende*]. . . . A 'non-being' or a 'non-entity' is something that simply does not exist – the king of France, for instance, or a centaur. A beingless entity, by contrast, subsists or is individuated by relational structures that don't require being or us humans. In other works, Heidegger employs the convention of bracketing the word 'entity' to indicate entities prior to their entry into being: for instance, "⟨'entities'⟩ can ⟨'be'⟩ without being" (GA 70: 79).¹⁷

Although Wrathall does not make this connection, the early and the later accounts of time, as developed in sections 3 and 4, map onto this contrast between a non-being or non-entity and a "beingless" entity. Entities "individuated by relational structures that don't require being or us humans" are ruled out by the ontology of time envisaged by the early Heidegger but are allowed by the later comments on time. If the basic temporal categories for all there is were those of Dasein's timeishness, any entity would have to be individuated in reference to the temporal structures in which Dasein makes sense of it; by contrast, the later notion of original time would provide an example of relational structures that, although Dasein lives them in a specific

way (i.e., privileging the future, in *Gelassenheit* or otherwise), do not depend on “us humans.” The interaction of the relational structures characteristic of time (present, past, future) defines the form of coordinated presence and absence (“nearing nearness” in the words of “Time and Being”) anything could have, hence individuating something as something even without the participation of an observer. It is for this reason that Heidegger can say that this individuation occurs “previously,” prior to such participation of the observer.

Heidegger’s other discussions of beingless entities confirm that these must be located at a level of theory more basic than any specific set of ontological categories such as those provided by an ontology of Dasein’s lived time. Wrathall lists several passages in Heidegger’s works where he similarly speaks of the “beinglessness” (*Seinlosigkeit*) of entities.¹⁸ I will comment on two of these in detail, both found in the 1941 manuscript *On Inception* (*Über den Anfang*, GA 70).

The first passage, located in a chapter entitled “The inceptual character of the inception” (*Die Anfängnis des Anfangs*, GA 70: 9–67), introduces a technical term to indicate the situation in which a human being first enters into a relation to entities: the *Dazwischenkunft* of being, its “arriving-amidst” entities. This is likely the closest Heidegger comes to describing what it would mean to say that knowledge has at some point *become* possible. Because knowledge or understanding for Heidegger is of non-vicious circular form (GA 2: 197–204/SZ 148–154), to explain the beginning of knowledge must mean to give some account of how the circle of understanding first started. Unlike anyone following them, a hypothetical first knower would have no prior knowledge, including no understanding of being to rely on for making sense of entities. Hence, the first sense in which entities are “beingless” is that they lack the kind of intelligibility provided by an understanding of being. Given Heidegger’s view of knowing as dynamic process, it is unsurprising that the explanatory priority here, similar to AAN, is expressed by before-and-after contrasts:

Essential insight into the history of beyng: beyng is later than ⟨“entities”⟩. Being first falls in among ⟨entities⟩ in

such a way that this falling-in [*Ein-fall*] is an *arriving-amidst* of an essential kind. It first lets the in-between come to pass [*ereignet das Inzwischen*].

This falling-in of being amidst entities changes nothing about them, but merely first and only lets entities *be*, which being, before the arriving-among, was the concealed of being, i.e., of concealing.

This event-like arriving-amidst is of a completely different essence than the “later” and the belatedness of beingness with regard to entities. The arriving-amidst also cannot be explained in reference to the change of the human being: the essence of the human rather first gains the possibility of change from its belonging to being-there.

When conceived inceptually and in terms of the history of being, ⟨“entities”⟩ can ⟨be⟩ *without* being; *then* is neither concealment nor unconcealment; and least of all is there *then* the nothing. The latter’s inception lingers in being. “Then” there is also no “then” or “before.” For “time” comes to pass in and comes into its own as appropriating event [*Er-eignis*] and that is to say: as the *ecstatic* clearing of the present and future and past essencing [*An- und Zu- und Ge-wesen*], not as simple sequence. Here there is inceptual historicity. (GA 70: 79–80)

Although the reasoning is difficult to unpack, Heidegger describes the role of ⟨entities⟩ as anything but trivial. There are rather several respects in which the beingless in this passage is said to play an essential part in describing the most basic structure of phenomena:

- 1) regarding time, Heidegger locates ⟨entities⟩ at the level of original time, in turn described as an interplay of past, present, and future not indexed to Dasein;

- 2) this interplay of the temporal ecstases not indexed to Dasein constitutes inceptual historicity
- 3) human historicity cannot be explained in reference to any (ontic) beginning but takes the form of an openness to inceptual historicity;
- 4) an opposition or dialectic of being and nothing is explanatorily secondary to ⟨entities⟩;¹⁹
- 5) ⟨entities⟩ are found on a level explanatorily more basic than both concealment and unconcealment, hence to any notion of true or discovered being.

The last point is of particular interest. Although prior to the contrast between what is known and unknown, the encounter with ⟨entities⟩ is nonetheless revealing in a different sense because it establishes the contrast between ⟨entities⟩ and being, i.e., some raw version of the ontological difference.²⁰ The epistemic yield of such encounter is indeterminate; allowing entities to be measured against (their) being, such letting *be* merely enables the epistemic contact with ⟨entities⟩ typical for understanding. Not itself a determinate act of understanding, it resembles a proto-epistemic and entirely “Practical Apriori.”²¹ Although Heidegger emphasizes that the “falling-in of being amidst entities changes nothing about them,” he does describe one specific modification: being, now understood and cast as the being of entities, is separated from the self-concealing of being.²² This separation not only opens up the logical space in which something can be known to exist and to exist in a certain way. The separation of self-concealing being from its transcendental functioning in the disclosure of entities is also co-constitutive with reasoning in a tensed explanatory sequence: “being *before* the arriving-among *was* the concealed of being, i.e., of concealing” (emphases added).

In this passage at least, the explanatory ground for any contrast between a before and an after thus results from the contrast between the self-concealing of being and ⟨entities⟩ on the one hand and, on the other hand, entities that, after having been let be, have become intelligible through an understanding of being. But isolating an understanding of (their) being from ⟨entities⟩ not only allows one to measure them (qua

entities) against this being, such as by explaining them in their dependence on being. It also introduces the possibility that the understanding of being at work in making sense of entities *fails* to make sense. With the possibility of knowing things in their being comes the possibility of failing to know them in this way. Haugeland, whose work I will discuss in section 7 below, calls this the “failure of ontological truth.”²³

Heidegger addresses the form of such failure in the next paragraph of GA 70. As soon as a specific ontology has been assumed to function as ontological background understanding and has begun to provide *a priori* ontological knowledge, the understanding of being may itself become a form of distortion. Heidegger refers to an ontology of such distorting effect not as an understanding of being but as an understanding of beingness (*Seiendheit*):

Being in its event-like arriving-amidst entities demands that thinking reopen all directions of questioning that still hold fast to an “apriori character” [*Apriorität*] and soon invert being into beingness. . . . Yet this does not mean that questions regarding the relation of being to entities are cut off. (GA 70: 80)

As Heidegger describes it here, assigning *a priori* status to a specific account of what and how entities are is a mistake in ontological reasoning that may arise once a specific ontological understanding is available. Its effect is to close the question of being by supposing it to be answered by the understanding of being we already have. As Heidegger adds in an inserted comment omitted from the above quotation, determining elements of *a priori* knowledge means reducing the question of being to asking for the conditions of possibility of such knowledge, i.e., to a “question of possibility [*Ermöglichungsfrage*].” While the *a priori* is by definition free from any need for empirical or experiential justification, the response to the inversion of an understanding of being into an account of beingness Heidegger envisages does include a specific reorientation toward the ontic. Reopening “all directions of questioning” does not “mean that questions regarding the relation of being to entities are

cut off.” Rather, this direction of enquiry is among those that must be reopened in case ontological sense-making fails. When Heidegger takes overcoming the suppression of ontological questioning as a “demand” on thinking, he is making explicit the normative function of the logic of ontology he describes. The claim that the “falling-in of being amidst entities changes nothing about them” is best understood as articulating such a demand: being’s arrival amidst entities does change something about them, in the sense that they are now related to by us in a certain way, disclosed as entities, possible objects of knowledge supposing ontological categories; but understanding being *better* does not change entities in an *inadequate* way.²⁴

7. ADAPTATION ONTOLOGY

The difficulty with this idea, of course, is that the standard for such adequacy could be none other than ⟨entities⟩. This leads to the *prima facie* paradoxical thought that something is supposed to function as a measure the disclosure of which depends on what is to be evaluated by that very measure. To avoid this paradox, Heidegger conceives a kind of reciprocal normativity, where what is evaluated with the help of a norm can, in another respect, function itself as the measure to which this norm can be beholden. This reciprocity in normative evaluation is the crucial feature setting Heidegger’s proposal for thinking about ontological dependence and independence apart from the dependence ontologies discussed in section 5 above. I propose to call this kind of ontology *adaptation ontology*, a label I will explain shortly.

Before discussing this form of ontology in more detail, let’s look at the second passage from GA 70 to which Wrathall refers.²⁵ In a section entitled “⟨entities⟩ as the beingless” (GA 70: 123), Heidegger insists that the problem of the beingless, despite its extreme difficulty, cannot be avoided: “Here, that must be thought which in essence repels thinkability . . . In what sense and under which conditions [*Bedingnis*] can we partake in this utmost for the thinking of being?” (GA 70: 123). Heidegger then

goes on to explain that not confronting ⟨entities⟩ would mean giving up on understanding what entities really are:

Only when entities “are” the beingless is that terminus [*Bestimmung*] reached that is searched for whenever one takes the in-itself and by-means-of-itself [*Durch-sich*] of entities for the ownmost of entities [*das Eigenste des Seienden*]. The beingless is not in need of being and yet is not the non-existing. (GA 70: 123)

The first passage from GA 70 argued that determining ⟨entities⟩ as non-existing fails to make sense of the fact that they are beingless. This passage brings out two additional points, namely (i) that the notion of being-in-itself is an attempt to make sense of “the ownmost of entities,” although (ii) it cannot be said to succeed by this measure. AAN details the reasons for this claim: ascribing independence in such a way assumes a deeper dependence required to make such an ascription. These points confirm the idea, mentioned in the first passage and discussed in section 6 above, that reopening the question of being should include reorienting it toward entities. It further makes clear that the motivation for this reorientation is none other than making sense of entities as what they really are, i.e., to grasp “the ownmost of entities.”

Haugeland is one of the few to explicitly recognize such normative import of the ontic. Rather than the later works, Haugeland considers the “failure of ontological truth” discussed in *Being and Time*, the “systematic breakdown” of an understanding of being qua framework of ontic intelligibility. Haugeland is interested in what to do in such a case:

the only responsible response (eventually) is to take it all back, which means that life, *that* life, does *not* ‘go on.’ But this response, too, is a response to discovered entities and only to them—a refusal to accept what we might paradoxically call ‘*real*’ impossibilities among them. Intransigent impossibilities can show up *only* among entities as ostensibly discovered. To be sure, they may

turn out in the end not to have been discovered entities after all, but that eventuality *presupposes* ostensible discoveries of entities.²⁶

Notice that the three dependence ontologies discussed in section 5 have exactly the effect Haugeland describes: each of them fails because it creates “intransigent impossibilities” for an entity to be. In the case of the naïve ontology, for example, the independence of the Alps would have to be both close enough in (linear) time to us to be known and as far remote as is claimed in statements about it. But if the ontology and epistemology of the naïve argument are implausible because they combine incompatible ideas, the standard for such incompatibility is not some form of logical or theoretical incoherence as such but the resulting projection of an impossible way of being – and yet an entity of such being exists. In this sense, “ontological truth is beholden to entities – the very same entities ontical truth is beholden to.”²⁷

Haugeland’s defence of the importance of entities as a measure in ontology reveals an additional reason why Heidegger believes it is enough to point to the Alps to show the flaw in the naïve argument. Even when our frameworks of intelligibility break down and the ontical and the ontological come apart *for us*, they remain joined in the entity. For all the devastating effects it has on our sense-making, the failure of ontological truth is unique in revealing that entities and being do not depend on us for their interaction. Unless, as Haugeland writes, entities “turn out in the end not to have been discovered entities after all,” thus to have been mere illusions and hence inexistent, it is for us to ask how we can adapt to the being-in-itself of, say, the Alps *better* than asserting that it is reducible to the fact that we conceive of them as entities-in-themselves. Although the failure of ontological truth is existentially consequential (“life, *that* life, does *not* ‘go on,’” Haugeland writes), Heidegger has in view something else than the “existential sources of normativity,”²⁸ our ability to freely commit to taking our thinking and doing as bound by whatever norm. What Heidegger describes concerns the “bindingness”²⁹ of norms in a different sense: the deeper failure here is a failure to do justice to ⟨entities⟩. What Heidegger refers to in GA 70 as “the ownmost of entities”

resembles a kind of raw normativity that ontology is both beholden yet constitutively fails to measure up to. As the translators of AAN note, Heidegger's ambition in this text is not to reject the notion that being "needs" us but to give it its proper sense.⁵⁰ Interpreting the manuscript as an attempt to understand the failure of ontological truth reveals in what sense being "needs" us: not only do we depend on entities to correct our ontological understanding; if the appropriateness of an understanding of being is decided by $\langle \text{entities} \rangle$, being depends on both us and $\langle \text{entities} \rangle$ for being understood, i.e., for being true being. The difficulty of this thought is that the kind of proto-ontological relation to beingless entities Heidegger describes in AAN and GA 70, while ultimately setting the measure for our ontological sense-making, also by definition exceeds it, indeed is explanatorily prior to knowing by means of an understanding of being. Heidegger's response to this problem in AAN and GA 70, lacking from but fitting into Haugeland's picture, is to distinguish $\langle \text{entities} \rangle$ from entities. Let's see how it complicates the picture of how Heidegger conceives of ontological dependence and independence.

Taking into account the dependence of being on entities, the dependence relations emerging in Heidegger's account of ontological knowledge are both more complex and more numerous than those expressed in the "Basic Idealist Argument." They are more complex because if *our* ontological understanding is beholden to the *entities* we attempt to make sense of when we understand *being*, this can only be expressed as a dependence relation between two relata in turn relative to a third. I hesitate to generalize in this way, but on the account of ontological knowledge Heidegger envisages, then, all of the following dependence relations seem to obtain:

- (i) we depend on being for knowing $\langle \text{entities} \rangle$;
- (ii) we depend on $\langle \text{entities} \rangle$ for understanding being;
- (iii) entities depend on being for being disclosed to us;
- (iv) entities depend on us for being known in their being;
- (v) being depends on $\langle \text{entities} \rangle$ for being understood by us;
- (vi) being depends on us for disclosing $\langle \text{entities} \rangle$.

Further, two dependence relations are explicitly ruled out:

- (vii) $\neg \langle \text{entities} \rangle$ depend on being for their being disclosed to us;

(viii) \neg \langle entities \rangle depend on us for being known in their being.

If these claims capture the outlines of an account of ontological knowledge that allows for entity independence as Heidegger describes it, the first thing to note is that the connection between \langle entities \rangle and entities, while obviously crucial to this proposal, isn't itself a relation of either dependence or independence. This shouldn't come as a surprise, if it is in this relation that our freedom to form different understandings of being plays out, each disclosing things differently and thereby enabling us or hindering us from knowing things as they are. At the same time, only the contrast between \langle entities \rangle and entities allows things to prove wrong any understanding of being we form.³¹ Rather than one of dependence, the relation is normative: we ought to know things such that there would be no gap between things as they appear in our ontological understanding (entities) and things as they are in themselves (\langle entities \rangle). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger takes just this to be the "formal" notion of the basic normativity of phenomenology: "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (GA 2: 46/SZ 34).

Moving toward that goal is not such that it allows for a single path of approach, progress on which could easily be measured. Recall Heidegger's discussion in GA 70: even if we determine the "arriving amidst" of being as the starting point of knowledge, as an understanding of being begins to function as a condition to our access to entities, it also makes possible the kind of error characteristic of a failure of ontological truth, namely taking a particular understanding of being providing a set of transcendental categories as a priori, no longer beholden to its success in the disclosure of entities. Reducing being to beingness, this form of ontological disclosure has failed in understanding being, but it has also failed with regard to the second determinant: conceived as *a priori*, this understanding of being is neither capable of nor in need of a confirmation in view of entities. The possibility of a failure of ontological truth, which Haugeland likened to Kuhnian paradigm shifts, makes it impossible to conceive of phenomenology as steadily progressing toward an identity of entities with \langle entities \rangle .

As emerges in GA 70, Heidegger's alternative to such a teleology is to describe the sequence triggered by the proto-ontological nearness of \langle entities \rangle as dynamic and non-viciously circular. If (v) captures the beginning of ontological knowledge in the formation of an understanding of being "amidst" \langle entities \rangle , at a second stage this meaning of being would be fully operative: we depend on it to make sense of \langle entities \rangle (i) at the same time that being depends on us (vi) to function in this way (rather than remaining concealed or forgotten). With an understanding of being in place, entities appear as dependent on both being (iii) and us (iv). If ontological sense-making were failsafe, this would establish a coherent sense of dependence, the "Basic Idealist Argument" would succeed, and this would be the end of the story. But it isn't. As a breakdown of ontological understanding occurs and "*that* life" comes to an end, the present dependency of things, as expressed in (iii) and (iv), contrasts with their (v) independence at the onset of ontological understanding, revealing the true nature of our own dependency, which is on \langle entities \rangle rather than entities (i, ii). Recognizing this contrast forces a "reopening" of ontological questioning and, in particular, a renewed confrontation with \langle entities \rangle such as what Heidegger would have attempted to incite should he really have pointed to the Alps in the plane with Boss. Seeing the distorting effects of a specific way of understanding being and disclosing entities may in turn lead to a *better* way of projecting being, completing the circle.

It is worth pointing out that whether this circularity is vicious is decided by factors not currently represented in the above. Firstly, ontological understanding post breakdown should be different from naïve ontological sense-making because its ontic beholdenness is now recognized as of the form of a normative contrast between entities and \langle entities \rangle . To express the fact that ontological sense-making is of limited, particular, and possibly distortive form, (i) and (vi) can be modified:

(i*) we depend on being for knowing \langle entities \rangle *as entities*;

(vi*) being depends on us for disclosing \langle entities \rangle *as entities*.

Secondly, while the failure of ontological truth brings us back to recognizing (v) being's inceptual dependence on \langle entities \rangle , it at the same

time shows entities resisting the form of sense-making an understanding of being can provide, manifesting their independence with regard to both being (vii) and us (viii). Denying that a failure of ontological truth is possible at all is to take ontological thinking to have the incorrigible and therefore vicious form of an identical repetition. By contrast, recognizing the constitutive gap between \langle entities \rangle and entities avoids an identical repetition of the same ontological operations, opening the space of phenomenological normativity.

Elsewhere, I have proposed to label the logic described here the ontological circle and argued that Heidegger understands the history of being as displaying this circular logic in a non-vicious form.⁵² What emerges in the present context is that the claim that the ontological circle represents the logic of the history of being (and, by extension, of history tout court) is consistent with Heidegger's discussion of genuine time. Recall that Heidegger's later discussion of time in "Time and Being" and AAN, laid out in section 4, leads back to explanatorily basic before-and-after contrasts. Representing an iteration of just such contrasts, the ontological circle mirrors the temporal categories specific to genuine time. The idea of linear time, by contrast, requires a particular interpretation of the relation between time and being determining the nows the sequence of which it describes. The idea is hence explanatorily derivative and, to the extent that it replaces the circular nature of ontological understanding with a search for the starting point of the now sequence, distortive of the genuine ontology of time. It misconceives what it means to begin and to begin *anew*.

Lastly, the circular logic of ontological understanding ties in with Heidegger's idea of the primacy of second-order relationality he also encounters in his later discussion of time. Wrathall recently proposed "adaptation" as an English translation of Heidegger's *Ereignis*. Whether or not "adaptation" covers all of Heidegger's uses of the German term, the relations of dependence/independence obtaining between being, entities, and us are quite naturally described as reciprocal or, better, triadic adaptation. Elaborating what Wrathall takes to be the crucial elements in that notion, he proposes to distinguish two dimensions in

the question of being. One of these is directed at the past, asking for the different meanings of being since the “first inception” of ontological thinking, i.e., what I would call past iterations of the ontological circle. Asking in this direction, we learn about those “condition[s] of suitedness, aptness, or fittingness” that governed past epochs in the history of being. The second direction of questioning regards the transformative quality of our understanding of being, i.e., future iterations different from those of the past. Another way in which adaptation occurs is in “a process of disrupting, reorienting, and then consolidating the constitutive relational networks that allow entities to be what they are.”⁵⁵

Given the importance Heidegger in AAN attributes to *Ereignis* for the question of ontological independence, it seems plausible to add to Wrathall’s account of the past and future direction of adaptation, drawn mainly from *Contributions to Philosophy*, an orientation specific to Heidegger’s adaptation ontology in contrast to dependence ontologies, i.e., an orientation toward entities as the locus of the manifestation of ontological independence. Situated in the transition from past to future understandings of being, the failure of ontological truth reveals a crucial element in ontological normativity: the radical independence of ⟨entities⟩ to which both being and we need to adapt. To make sense of this independence is what being *needs* us for.

NOTES

- 1 Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2009), 1–27.
- 2 Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 5.
- 3 Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 5.
- 4 Paul A. Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructivism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2010). See Dan Zahavi, *Husserl’s Legacy: Phenomenology, Metaphysics, and Transcendental Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), chapter 6, for a defence of the “correlationist” account of knowledge and a critique of Meillassoux’s speculative realism as “epistemologically

- underdetermined” (ibid., 203). See Ernest Sosa, “Boghossian’s *Fear of Knowledge*,” *Philosophical Studies* 141, no. 3 (2008): 399–407, for a critique of Boghossian’s realism focused on his assumption that a knower is “blindly” entitled to any part of their epistemic system that is beyond (reasonable) doubt (Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge*, 99–100).
- 5 The text was first published in German in a limited edition in 2014. It was recently republished as “*Das Argument gegen den Brauch (für das Ansichsein des Seienden)*,” ed. Dietmar Koch and Michael Ruppert, with emendations and notes by Tobias Keiling and Ian Alexander Moore, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 30, no. 3 (2022): i–xvi (henceforth “AGB”) and translated into English as “The Argument against Need (for the Being-in-Itself of Entities),” trans. Tobias Keiling and Ian Alexander Moore, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 30, no. 3 (2022): 519–34 (henceforth “AAN”). For details, see Tobias Keiling and Ian Alexander Moore, “Heidegger on Deep Time and Being-in-itself: Introductory Thoughts on ‘The Argument against Need,’” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 30, no. 3 (2022): 508–518. Markus Gabriel, “Ancestrality and (In-)dependence—On Heidegger on Being-in-Itself,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 30, no. 3 (2022): 535–46, situates Heidegger’s position in the context of the debate following Meillassoux.
- 6 Keiling and Moore, “Heidegger on Deep Time and Being-in-itself,” 509.
- 7 The earlier notion is thus incompatible with the form of ontological pluralism specific for Heidegger’s (later) philosophy. See Tobias Keiling, “Phenomenology and Ontology in the Later Heidegger,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Phenomenology*, ed. Dan Zahavi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 251–267, and Tobias Keiling, “Worlds, Worlding,” *Epoché: Journal for the History of Philosophy* 27, no. 2 (2023): 273–295.

- 8 Mark A. Wrathall, “The Question of Ontological Dependency,”
British Journal for the History of Philosophy 30, no. 3 (2022):
 547–59.
- 9 John Haugeland, *Dasein Disclosed: John Haugeland’s Heidegger*,
 ed. Joseph Rouse (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).
- 10 Cited in Keiling and Moore, “Heidegger on Deep Time and Be-
 ing-in-itself,” 510.
- 11 Heidegger himself presents the strongest argument to that conclu-
 sion in his “Running Notes” to *Being and Time* (GA 82: 5–137). For
 an account of this argument and discussion, see Tobias Keiling,
 “Heidegger on the Failure of *Being and Time*,” in *The Cambridge*
Critical Guide to Heidegger’s “Being and Time,” ed. Tobias Keiling
 and Aaron James Wendland (Cambridge: Cambridge University
 Press, forthcoming).
- 12 Sacha Golob, *Heidegger on Concepts, Freedom and Normativity*
 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 144.
- 13 Martin Hägglund, “Atheist Materialism: A Critique of Meillas-
 soux,” in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Re-*
alism, ed. Levi R. Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman
 (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 114–29.
- 14 Jussi Backman, *Complicated Presence: Heidegger and the Post-*
metaphysical Unity of Being (Albany: State University of New
 York Press, 2016), 231.
- 15 Wrathall, “The Question of Ontological Dependency.”
- 16 Wrathall, “The Question of Ontological Dependency,” 556.
- 17 Wrathall, “The Question of Ontological Dependency,” 556. Wrathall
 and the edition in the Gesamtausgabe render Heidegger’s brackets
 as square brackets instead of angle brackets. I amend quotes as
 needed.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 557–58.
- 19 Heidegger thus reverses the order of explanation found in Hegel’s
Logic, where it is the opposition between being and nothing that
 sets off a dialectic eventually leading to the (being and under-
 standing of) individual entities or objects.

- 20 See Katherine Withy, “The Trouble with the Ontological Difference,” in *The Cambridge Critical Guide to Heidegger’s “Being and Time,”* for a critical discussion of the status of the ontological difference and its (ultimately aporetic) function in Heidegger’s ontology.
- 21 Ian Alexander Moore, *Eckhart, Heidegger, and the Imperative of Releasement* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019), 37 and passim. See Tobias Keiling, “Letting Things Be for Themselves: Gelassenheit as Enabling Thinking,” in *Heidegger on Technology*, ed. Aaron Wendland, Christos Hadjioannou, and Christopher Merwin (London: Routledge, 2018), 96–114, for a discussion of the function of ontological knowledge in Heidegger’s account of letting be.
- 22 See Katherine Withy, *Heidegger on Being Self-Concealing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), for a discussion of the self-concealing (or *kruphesthai*) of being and its contrast to concealment and unconcealment as related but crucially different phenomena.
- 23 Haugeland, *Dasein Disclosed*, 218.
- 24 The same would hold for Husserl’s analogue to this idea, found in §61 of the sixth *Logical Investigation*. Husserl here claims that “categorical forming involves no real reshaping of the object.” Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 2001), 307. “Categorical forming” is nonetheless truth-responsive, which in the framework of *Logical Investigations* means that it can yield lower or higher degrees of evidential fulfilment.
- 25 Wrathall, “The Question of Ontological Dependency,” 556.
- 26 Haugeland, *Dasein Disclosed*, 218.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Steven Galt Crowell, *Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 239–60.
- 29 Haugeland, *Dasein Disclosed*, 219.
- 30 Keiling and Moore, “Heidegger on Deep Time and Being-in-itself,” 512.

- 31 For more on this genuinely ontological freedom, see Tobias Keiling, “Heidegger’s Black Notebooks and the Logic of a History of Being,” *Research in Phenomenology* 47, no. 3 (2017): 406–28.
- 32 Ibid., 412.
- 33 Mark A. Wrathall, “Adaptation (Ereignis),” in *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, ed. Mark A. Wrathall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 20.