

Hegel, Subjectivity, and Metaphysics: A Heideggerean Interpretation

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ABSTRACT: The goal of this essay is to explicate Martin Heidegger's metaphysical critique and interpretation of G.W.F. Hegel's thought. This explication will include a discussion of Heidegger's view on Hegel's conceptions of subjectivity, dichotomy, and self-consciousness. For the sake of presenting a concise essay, I will present only a few of Heidegger's major texts concerning Hegel. Two of the most essential texts analyzed in this essay are from Heidegger's later years. These texts include the *Four Seminars* and "The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics." The most important issue will be to demonstrate the fundamental dilemma that Heidegger finds in the thinking of Hegel. Though Hegel brings metaphysics to its highest achievement, Hegel still lacks the ability to demonstrate the grounds of metaphysics because of his own entanglement in the history of subjectivity.

Throughout my philosophical studies I have always had a hefty interest in Heidegger's critique of metaphysics and his interpretation of Being. I have also had a fascination with Hegel's systematic philosophy and its relation to its historical origins. When the chance came up for me to write an essay on Hegel's thinking from the perspective of Heidegger's metaphysical critique, I jumped at the opportunity. Therefore, the following essay will examine Heidegger's interpretation of Hegelian philosophy and demonstrate its place within his critique of metaphysics.

First, I will present Heidegger's historical-philosophical interpretation of Hegel's philosophy. In this section I will primarily focus on the first three days of a 1968 seminar Heidegger gave in Le Thor, France. During these days of the seminar, Heidegger strictly dealt

with the origins and the key components of Hegel's philosophy. It is important to point out that in his lecture, Heidegger expresses that an explication of Hegel's thinking cannot be done adequately by simply explaining his thought conceptually. Explicating Hegel's thought also requires a "reenactment" in order to do it justice.⁹ As a consequence, many portions of Heidegger's interpretation itself can be seen as a reenactment of Hegel's dialectic-reflexive thinking. Secondly, I will present a reading of Heidegger's "The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics" in which he discusses the dilemma of metaphysical thinking as a whole. In this essay, Heidegger claims that metaphysics confuses the Being of beings with a particular type of being. In the case of Hegel, he confuses the Being of beings with the particular being of subjectivity. Lastly, I will do my best to articulate a brief, but abstract, comprehension of Heidegger's own understanding of Being found in *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*. Explicating this understanding will help demonstrate Heidegger's overall critique of Hegel and metaphysics as a whole. Justifiably, Being for Heidegger is a complex issue and a brief explication will not do his understanding justice, but a complete explanation is outside the scope of this essay. To restate, the main goal of this essay will be to present Heidegger's interpretation and critique of Hegelian philosophy.

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"A mended sock is better than a torn one, not so with self-consciousness."¹⁰

In a 1968 seminar in Le Thor, France, Martin Heidegger opened his questioning of Hegel's thought with his version of this odd quote. "A torn sock is better than a mended one..."¹¹ From a common sense point of view, this statement appears to be in need of a reversal. Common sense says that a mended sock is always better than a torn one, so in what sense can a torn sock be better than a mended one?

Heidegger invites one to think through the statement phenomenologically in order to understand its content. "To tear apart" [*zer-reissen*] means to separate into two distinct parts; to make two parts from one. When a sock is torn into two pieces, it is no longer complete and present-at-hand and therefore it appears not *as* a sock. On the other hand, when a sock is "in one piece" and on a person's foot, the sock still does not appear *as* a sock. More emphasis can be placed on the torn sock because it is only in the sock being "torn" into two that *the* sock as such appears with more strength and exuberance.¹² The sock is shown with more strength and

⁹ Heidegger is unclear on why he says that only a Hegelian "reenactment" can do Hegel's thinking justice, therefore we can only speculate. I believe that a reenactment is necessary because the only way to really understand Hegel's thought is to think like Hegel. To truly get to the bottom of Hegel's thought we cannot approach him from an outside perspective. We must approach his thought from the thought itself. I find this suggestion to be consistent with Heidegger's understanding of phenomenology. In *Being and Time* Heidegger states that goal of phenomenology is "to let that which is, appear from out of itself as what it is." Through the Hegelian reenactment, we are letting Hegel's thought appear as it is from out of itself as what it is.

¹⁰ Hegel, G.W.F. "Aphorisms from the Wastebook." Trans. Susanne Klein. *Independent Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 3. 1976. p. 4.

¹¹ Heidegger, Martin. *Four Seminars*. Trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul. Indiana University Press. 2003. p. 11; Initially, Heidegger used his own translation that was originally prepared for his essay *What Is Called Thinking?* Heidegger's quotation stated that, "A torn sock is better than a mended one..." but it was later "corrected" to Hegel's original statement by the printer of *What Is Called Thinking?*

¹² *Ibid.*

exuberance because by it being torn, the unity that makes the sock a “sock” is shown more clearly. In its separated state, the sock as a whole is more apparent than it is in its unified state.¹³ This is the meaning Hegel intended.

Hegel wants to make clear that the torn sock demonstrates a lack of *unity* that is unseen in the “intact” sock. Nevertheless, the lack of unity should not be understood as something negative, but should instead be viewed as something positive. It is only through the lack of unity that the unity of the sock becomes clear. “Unity in being-torn is *present* [*gegenwärtig*] as a *lost* unity.”¹⁴ Heidegger states that it is this understanding of unity that should be taken as a point of departure when examining the thought of Hegel.

Before continuing, it is best to present the entirety of a passage from Hegel’s *The Difference Between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy*. Heidegger almost refers to this passage exclusively throughout the 1968 seminar in Le Thor.

Opposites such as spirit and matter, soul and body, faith and understanding, freedom and necessity, etc. used to be important; and in more limited spheres they appeared in a variety of other guises. The whole weight of human interest hung upon them. With the progress of culture they have passed over into such forms as the opposition of Reason and sensibility, intelligence and nature and, with respect to the universal concept, of absolute subjectivity and absolute objectivity.

The sole interest of Reason is to sublimate such rigid opposites. But this does not mean that Reason is altogether opposed to opposition and limitation. For the necessary dichotomy is One factor in life. Life eternally forms itself by setting up oppositions, and totality at the highest pitch of living energy is only possible through its own re-establishment out of the deepest fission. What Reason opposes, rather, is just the absolute fixity which the understanding gives to the dichotomy; and it does so all the more if the absolute opposites themselves originated in Reason.

When the power of conjoining vanishes from the life of men and the opposites lose their living connection and reciprocity and gain independence, the need of philosophy arises.¹⁵

Heidegger states that for Hegel, the “dichotomy” is the source from which philosophy can arise. Hegel considers the dichotomy “as what is originally experienceable and experienced.”¹⁶ This statement is stressed when Heidegger places it in relation to the passage, “[o]pposites such as spirit and matter, soul and body, faith and understanding, freedom and necessity, etc. used to be important; and in more limited spheres.... With the progress of culture they have passed over into such forms as the opposition of Reason and sensibility, intelligence and nature and, with respect to the universal concept, of absolute subjectivity and absolute objectivity.”¹⁷ Any attempt at suppressing or abandoning this “tearing” is futile because the tearing is what is most basic to existence. It is what remains and must always remain. This is because it is only through a tearing that the *unity*, as the absence of unity, can make its appearance. Heidegger states that, “in the tearing there always reigns unity or a necessary conjoining, that is, a *living* unity.”¹⁸

¹³ We must remember that Hegel, in mentioning the sock, is referring to self-consciousness. Though the connection is not explicitly discussed here, it will be later in the essay.

¹⁴ *Four Seminars*. p. 11.

¹⁵ Hegel, G.W.F. *The Difference Between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy*. Trans. H.S. Harris and Walter Cerf. State University of New York Press: Albany. 1977. p. 90-91; It must be noted that Heidegger is relying on a very early text by Hegel and that this could play a major role in how he understands Hegel.

¹⁶ *Four Seminars*. p. 11.

¹⁷ *The Difference Between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy*. p. 90.

¹⁸ *Four Seminars*. p. 11.

There are two main characteristics of the “tearing” or in the scission (Heidegger switches to using the latter word). First, in a scission there is always a splitting into two whereby something leaves something else. What remains are the two parts that have been separated. Secondly, the scission takes place because there is a lack of conjoining between these two separate parts. Heidegger reflects on the use of the phrase “lack of conjoining” rather than “lack of unification.” Unification takes on the meaning of “unifying” or “becoming one,” in that the opposing parts return back into a completed whole that abolishes the oppositions. On the other hand, conjoining for Hegel is an indication of the absolute.¹⁹ This is a conjoining in which the opposites are brought into a unity but in a way that the *oppositions do not disappear*. Conjoining is a power that holds opposites together for one another in a manner that still maintains them as opposites. It abolishes their autonomy and separatism in an approach that allows them still to be distinguished.²⁰

This “necessary dichotomy” arises because for Hegel, every position is also counter-position. For anything that is posited, there is also something counter-posed. The act of conjoining in this instance is itself a posited unity that brings the posited and the counter-posed together. Yet this unity is also a posited one and in turn brings forth its own counter-position which must be conjoined as well, repeating the process. This process leads Heidegger to discuss the nature of the infinite in Hegel’s thought. In one sense the infinite can take on the meaning “*ad infinitum*,”²¹ which is the *negative* infinity. This distinction is associated with the “endless” character of the finite. For Hegel, “philosophy does not waste time with such empty and otherworldly stuff. What philosophy has to do with is always something concrete and strictly present.”²² What philosophy has to do with is the true infinite that Heidegger distinguishes as the “in-finite,” and Hegel as the “*nonfinite*.” The true infinite is the overcoming (sublation) of the finite realm. The true “infinite is no longer the lack of ends, but rather the power of conjoining itself.”²³ What is important to remember is that through the sublation of the finite, the finite is *abandoned*, but not solely abandoned. It is an *abandonment* that still preserves the character of the finite.

Heidegger returns to the statement about the mended sock and explains that it can be further comprehended if one keeps in mind Hegel’s two-fold sense of the term “*self-consciousness*.” The *self-consciousness* can mean the ordinary and everyday understanding of consciousness in its non-thematic form towards objects in the world. On the other hand, the *self-consciousness* can mean the dilemma of the *ego cogito* that was the central problematic of modern philosophy. It is not the everyday understanding that views the torn sock as better, but the dialectic-reflexive thinking – the thinking of the *ego cogito*. As soon as the *self-consciousness* is thought of in the sense of the dialectic-reflexive thinking, “one needs to understand that dialectic-reflexive thinking gathers both sound common sense and its truth (its philosophical thematization) into a higher unity.”²⁴

¹⁹ It is important to note that the meaning of the *absolute* in Hegel is unclear. He used the term rarely. For the most part, he used the word absolute in the descriptive form in order to describe such terms as *absolute knowledge* or *absolute consciousness*.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 12.

²¹ Heidegger’s italics.

²² Hegel, G.W.F. *The Encyclopaedia Logic (with the Zusätze)*. Trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris. Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis. 1991. p. 150.

²³ *Four Seminars*. p. 12.

²⁴ *Four Seminars*. p. 13.

Heidegger then asks, “If the ‘scission’ is the source of the need of philosophy, if philosophy arises as soon as life has become torn, *what is the driving force of the dichotomy?*”²⁵ This question can be answered if we consider Hegel’s most essential dichotomy. Hegel claims that throughout the progression of culture the lesser examples of dichotomy such as spirit and matter, soul and body, faith and understanding, pass over into the more essential forms of opposition such as Reason and sensibility, intelligence and nature, until finally passing over into the deepest opposition – the opposition of *absolute subjectivity* and *absolute objectivity*. Only once the dichotomy reaches its most extreme possibility can it most genuinely transform or overcome its opposition. In fact, only in the experience of the most extreme opposition can the need to overcome appear. In the *Lectures of 1827* Hegel propounds, “The deepest need of spirit is that the antithesis within the subject itself should be intensified to its universal, i.e., its most abstract, extreme.”²⁶ Yet the question still remains, how do we arrive at this dichotomy between absolute subject and absolute object?

Heidegger’s answer is clear. The driving force of the dichotomy “is the quest for absolute certainty.”²⁷ Originally interpreted by Descartes, the origin of the subject-object dichotomy is an interpretation of truth as certainty. It is important to note that the quest for certainty did not solely begin with Descartes. Anticipation of the event can be seen historically as well. Heidegger first points to the Lutheran search for the certainty of salvation, which was followed by Galileo’s pursuit of *mathematical* certainty in the realm of physics.²⁸ In a Hegelian “reenactment,” Heidegger uses the historical anticipation of certainty as a demonstration of dialectic-reflexive thinking. He asks, “Is it possible to grasp in one concept, with compelling necessity, the unity of mathematical certainty and the certainty of salvation?”²⁹ In each case, it is the *assurance* that is sought that relates these two concepts. It is *assurance* that unites them. The search for mathematical certainty is a search for assurance in the *sensible* world (nature)³⁰, while the search for certainty of salvation is the search for assurance in the *supra-sensible* world. Heidegger concludes that the origin of the dichotomy is historically founded; the origin of dialectic-reflexive thinking is the *mutation* of truth into certainty.³¹

From this point onward, nature always appears as an object placed before a subject. The quest for certainty corresponds to “the priority given to the entity man in the sense of the *ego cogito*, its rise to the position of *subject*. Henceforth, nature becomes *object* (*ob-jectum*), the object being nothing other than “what is thrown over and against me” [*das mir Entgegengeworfene*].”³² Truth as certainty allows for subjectivity to become a possibility. Descartes’ quest for the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Hegel, G.W.F. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, One-Volume Edition: Lectures of 1827*. Ed. Peter C. Hodgson. Oxford University Press: New York. 2006. p. 452.

²⁷ *Four Seminars*. p. 13.

²⁸ *Four Seminars*. p. 13-4. Heidegger also mentions that the quest for mathematical certainty was long prepared by the nominalism of William Ockham which separated words from things in language. He states that the evacuation of the concept of reality provided the mathematical key to the world.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 14.

³⁰ The claim that the search for mathematical certainty is the search for assurance in the sensible world seems questionable. What I think Heidegger means here is that human beings search for certainty in the sensible world through mathematical certainty – i.e. physics.

³¹ The claim that the origin of dialectic-reflexive thinking is the mutation of truth into certainty needs plenty of clarification. The only way to do this clarification justice is to go back and phenomenologically examine Descartes. Heidegger considers Descartes as the point in which truth mutated into certainty. Yet for the sake of this essay, this issue must be left to further inquiry.

³² Ibid.

indubitable leads him to the formalization of the *ego cogito*. From that point on, human beings can be certain of their existence and that objects *appear* over and against that existence. Objects now appear before the “self” – i.e. the subject. Then with Kant, the mode of subjectivity as perception is what drives the subject-object relation. In the dimension of subjectivity, the subject-object relation is always decisive and primary. Hegel determines the dimension of subjectivity as *consciousness*.³³ *Consciousness* is always the most essential term in Hegel’s thinking because it is the sphere that encompasses all experience.

At this point Heidegger has demonstrated that the Hegelian dichotomy emerges from an interpretation of truth as certainty. This interpretation prepares the groundwork for the reign of subjectivity and its decisive subject-object relation in modern philosophical thinking. The *assurance* of the subject-object relationship is what leads Hegel to conclude that the dichotomy is what is most basic to experience. Finally, once the dichotomy of opposites intensifies into its most extreme form and the power of conjoining is completely lacking, a need for philosophy arises. Hegel writes, “When the power of conjoining vanishes from the life of men and the opposites lose their living connection and reciprocity and gain independence, the need of philosophy arises.”³⁴

The phrase “the need of philosophy” can take on many meanings and is itself in need of something – that something being clarification. On the one hand, it can mean that when the power of conjoining is absent, human beings feel it is their task to philosophize. On the other hand, what does Hegel mean by *need*? A need can have both negative and positive implications. Negatively, to need something signifies the lack or absence of something else and therefore the necessity of that something else. Positively, to need something means to work towards or set out for something else, “to take pains to obtain something.”³⁵ When Hegel claims that “the need of philosophy arises,” is it that something is in need of philosophy or is it philosophy itself in need of something? Heidegger claims that Hegel is asking the latter question. Hegel wants to demonstrate that philosophy is in need of something before it can be deemed a genuine philosophy.

Heidegger explains that for Hegel, philosophy is in need of the *έν*. Since the thinking of Heraclitus (*έν πάντα*) and Parmenides (*έν*) philosophy is no longer oriented towards the many, but is always oriented towards the unified and the manifold, towards the one. The task of philosophy is to bring the many into the unified whole of the *έν*. Philosophy desires the *έν*. If the power of conjoining vanishes from the life of men, then the need of philosophy arises because the task of philosophy itself is conjoining. Philosophy should and must be employed because unification is the business of philosophy. “It is only if one understands what philosophy needs, absolute and total unity, that one can then understand why the need of philosophy arises.”³⁶

The life of men is in need of unity because the unity is never given; only the dichotomy is given. In turn, it is only within the dichotomy, the lacking between opposites, that the need for unity can arise. “In the midst of the highest dichotomy, unity is constantly restored.”³⁷ The highest dichotomy for Hegel is the opposition of the absolute subject and absolute object, and therefore the conjoining of these extreme opposites through philosophy is the achievement of absolute knowledge. Yet recall that this conjoining is always a sublation that preserves as well as

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *The Difference Between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy*. p. 91.

³⁵ *Four Seminars*. p. 15.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

unifies the opposites. Hence, philosophy as absolute knowledge is always “the subject which knows itself as *fundamentum inconcussum*.”³⁸

Hegel’s understanding of absolute knowledge as “the subject which knows itself as *fundamentum inconcussum*” is the starting point for Heidegger’s critique of Hegelian thinking. Heidegger claims that dialectic-reflexive thinking, like many of the modern thinkers before him, falls into the “trap”³⁹ of metaphysics. Heidegger critiques Hegel’s thinking for its metaphysical nature. But before we can adequately comprehend the problem of Hegelian thought, Heidegger’s understanding of metaphysics in general must be presented.

In his essay “The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” Heidegger claims that:

Metaphysics thinks of beings as such, that is, in general. Metaphysics thinks of beings as such, as a whole. Metaphysics thinks of the Beings of beings both in the ground-giving unity of what is most general, what is indifferently valid everywhere, and also in the unity of the all that accounts for the ground, that is of the All-Highest. The Being of beings is thus thought of in advance as the grounding ground. Therefore all metaphysics is at bottom, and from the ground up, what grounds, what gives account of the ground, what is called to account by the ground, and finally what calls the ground to account.⁴⁰

Metaphysics always thinks of the Being of beings from the standpoint of beings in general. It attempts to ground the Being of beings in beings themselves, instead of thinking of Being as Being. Metaphysics thinks from beings back to beings. Now all this “Heidegger-speak” about Being with a big “B” and beings with a little “b” is rather confusing, abstract, and perhaps even comical to those outside the field, but Heidegger’s point is extremely important and must be explained. Metaphysics comprehends Being by thinking only about beings and what is most universal to beings as such, i.e. that which unifies all beings as one. The universal is thought of as the original matter of all beings. This is why Heidegger on the one hand constitutes metaphysics as onto-logical. On the other hand, metaphysics is equiprimordially constituted as theo-logical. The original matter of beings as beings is placed as what is All-Highest for beings, as the grounding ground of beings. The original matter, the Being of beings in this sense, is only complete when it is represented as the first ground.

The original matter of thinking presents itself as the first cause, the *causa prima* that corresponds to the reason-giving path back to the *ultima ratio*, the final accounting. The Being of beings is represented fundamentally, in the sense of the ground, only as *causa sui*. This is the metaphysical concept of God.⁴¹

What is most universal to beings is thought of as what grounds all beings from the ground upward. All beings are oriented from this ground or first being. This creates a scaffolding effect in which all other beings are placed in relation to grounding ground of beings. “The essential constitution of metaphysics is based on the unity of beings as such in the universal and that which

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ The claim that Heidegger considers all metaphysics as a “trap” is disputable. This dispute concerns the point that Heidegger may believe in the possibility of an authentic metaphysics. Yet, this can only be achieved if metaphysics can deal with its own problematic onto-theological constitution.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, Martin. “The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics.” *Identity And Difference*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Harper & Row Publishers: New York. 1969. p. 58.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 60.

is highest.”⁴² This is the meaning of Being for metaphysics. Nevertheless, this meaning only thinks of Being from an orientation that begins with beings and therefore understands Being as a being itself, and for Heidegger, the true meaning of Being is something far different.

It is clear to Heidegger that metaphysics thinks only of beings as beings. It is equally as clear to him that beings can only make their appearance by the source of something else that renders them un-concealed. This something else is necessary before one can even have beings in a metaphysical gaze.⁴³ Before one can make a metaphysical claim, there must be something else there that allows the claim to *exist*, to *be*, to make its *appearance*. For what allows beings to come out of concealment is the true question of Being for Heidegger. This is the question that Heidegger believes has long been forgotten in the Western tradition. Yet in order to express Heidegger’s thinking more adequately, perhaps it is best to demonstrate the place where Hegel lies in this critique. By doing so, we will be able to conclude Heidegger’s interpretation of Hegel as well as more accurately depict Heidegger’s conceptualization of philosophy.

In *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, Heidegger refers to the preface to the *System of Sciences* where Hegel makes the call “to the things themselves,” to the whole of philosophy. Superficially, Heidegger makes the observation that the call first takes on the sense of a rejection. It is a rejection of the inadequate relations of philosophy that attempt to grasp “the things themselves.” These inadequate relations can never be the whole of philosophy. If one wants to grasp the “things themselves,” then one must investigate the matter with a method appropriate to matter itself, and therefore appropriate to the whole of philosophy. For Hegel, this identity is the absolute idea. One must recall what was stated in the 1968 seminar in Le Thor, and now in *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking* in which Heidegger claims that the absolute idea:

...is historically determined as subjectivity. With Descartes’ *ego cogito*, says Hegel, philosophy steps on firm ground for the first time, where it can be at home. If the *fundamentum absolutum* is attained with *ego cogito* as the distinctive *subjectum*, this means the subject is the *hypokeimenon* transferred to consciousness, is what truly presences; and this, vaguely enough is called “substance” in traditional terminology.⁴⁴

But the true philosophy for Hegel is not to be understood solely as substance, but just as much as subject.⁴⁵ Heidegger states that this means that the Being of beings, the presence of what is present, is only complete and visible when it becomes present for itself in the absolute idea. Since the absolute idea is historically determined as subjectivity, the method appropriate to Being’s coming to itself can only occur in the speculative dialectic. In fact, the absolute idea is the matter itself. “Only the movement of the idea, the method, is the matter itself. The call “to the thing itself” requires a philosophical method appropriate to its matter.”⁴⁶ At this point, Heidegger’s criticism becomes clear. The matter itself, the matter of philosophy, is already decided from the outset of Hegel’s thinking. The matter of philosophy is determined as metaphysics, as the Being of beings in the form of subjectivity. The matter of philosophy as subjectivity is already presupposed.

⁴² Ibid. p. 61.

⁴³ Richardson, William. *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*. Fordham University Press: New York. 2003. p. 5.

⁴⁴ Heidegger, Martin. “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking.” *Basic Writings*. HarperCollins Publishers: New York. 1993. p. 438.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Heidegger is referring to the Preface of the *System of Science* (ed. Hoffmeister, p. 19)

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Heidegger's interpretation demonstrates that the dichotomy in Hegel's thinking is determined by his understanding of subjectivity as the Being of beings, but the problem lies in that Hegel cannot account for the ground of subjectivity. Hegel cannot demonstrate what gives subjectivity its unshakable right as the whole of philosophy. This is the dilemma in which Heidegger's thought is most concerned. Heidegger wants to ask about what still remains unthought in the call to "the matter itself." If the speculative dialectic is the mode on which philosophy comes to itself and for itself, then what allows the speculative dialectic itself to make its appearance? On the one hand, something can only make an appearance by virtue of its being illuminated. On the other hand, that illumination itself rests upon something else that allows it to bring its brightness to a being. "Only by the virtue of some sort of brightness can what shines show itself, that is, radiate. But brightness in its turn rests upon something open, something free, which it might illuminate here and there, now and then."⁴⁷ Brightness can only illuminate if there already reigns an openness that allows brightness to play forth. Whenever one present being encounters another present being, whether that encounter is speculative or something other, there is always an openness that already allows this encounter to be freely at play. "Only this openness grants to the movement of speculative thinking the passage through what it thinks."⁴⁸

For Heidegger, the "clearing" is the name of the openness that grants the possibility of letting beings appear. It is important to distinguish between the meaning of "light" or "brightness" and the meaning of "clearing" for Heidegger. Light can move through and traverse the clearing, but it is the clearing itself that allows the light to bring brightness to the darkness within its openness. It is not the light that creates the clearing and its openness, rather, as Heidegger states, "light presupposes it."⁴⁹ In fact, it is not only brightness and lightness that can enter into the open clearing, but Heidegger says that also resonance and echo, sound and diminishing sound, can enter into the open region of the clearing. The clearing is the openness in which any and all beings can become present and absent, appear and disappear.

Heidegger claims that the task for thinking is to become aware and to make explicit the phenomenon of the clearing. He believes that the current situation of philosophy knows nothing of the clearing. "Philosophy does speak about the light of reason, but does not heed the clearing of Being."⁵⁰ Philosophy needs to become aware of the "primal phenomenon" of the clearing. The phenomenon itself sets philosophy on the task of learning from it while also questioning it in a manner that allows the clearing to speak to philosophy. For Heidegger, Hegel's thought does not (can not?) ask the question concerning the clearing.

The mission of the above essay was to present Heidegger's interpretation of Hegel's thinking as well as his critique. In the 1968 seminar in Le Thor, France, Heidegger presented a historical-philosophical interpretation of Hegel's thinking. He claims that the key to understanding Hegel's thinking is the dichotomy of opposites. This dichotomy arises from an understanding of the Being of beings as subjectivity that was historically prepared by an interpretation of truth as certainty. This interpretation of Hegel is supported by a critique of metaphysics in which Heidegger claims that any metaphysical attempt to grasp "the matter itself" presupposes the matter from the outset and for Hegel, that matter is subjectivity. Finally, Heidegger's overall critique of Hegel stems from his understanding of what he calls the

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 441.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 442.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 443.

“clearing” of Being which is the ground of all beings. In conclusion, the most important issue of this essay was to demonstrate the fundamental dilemma that Heidegger finds in Hegel’s thinking. Even if Hegel brought metaphysics and its complex onto-theo-logical structure to the point of its highest achievement, he does not and perhaps cannot exhibit its ground.⁵¹ This is why Heidegger believes he is warranted in reserving the task of thinking for exploring the non-metaphysical ground of all metaphysics and beings in the clearing. He claims that subjectivity as metaphysics lacks the ability to explore and learn from the clearing and that this is the major dilemma of Hegel’s thinking. As Heidegger would say, Hegel, as well as all metaphysics, does not heed the clearing of Being.

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⁵¹ Richardson, William. *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*. p. 360.