

Review Article

*A New Image Of Man**

What characterizes the culture of our times is not only the recent transformation of our patterns of thinking, but also an impending renewal of meaning for these patterns. Although the last hundred years or so have brought radical changes into the way we act and think, the full substance of these changes is not yet clear. The pervasive unrest that we experience in so many quarters can be taken as a sign indicating the need for yet something else to come. Thus, while conceptions which modern man holds of himself have been revamped under the growing influences of the sciences, it seems that a full-bodied and regulative image of man can no longer be furnished by these same sciences, no matter how humanistic they might want to be. In fact the more developed and rigorous a science becomes, the less it wants to commit itself to the task of providing an image of man. As in the past, philosophy should be the domain in which the search for man takes place.

But philosophy today has an ambiguous status: a fallen queen, it appears next to the sciences like a poor relative for whom the last seat at the banquet table is condescendingly reserved—perhaps for sentimental or historical reasons. And yet there still hovers around its now shabby head a halo of royalty, no doubt because conceptions about the world and man seem to have issued at one time or another from philosophical reflection. Within this confusion, the question inevitably arises whether philosophy—not in the sense of a course in a college curriculum, but in the sense of reflective thought about whatever we are doing—continues to be relevant, and if so what its relevance might be. Martin Heidegger is one of the few contemporary thinkers who within our crisis-ridden epoch has consistently claimed that philosophy—or what he calls reflective thought—still has a place of the utmost importance in today's world. His works have opened up a true alternative to the increasing preponderance of scientific thought, and it seems that through his works philosophy might once again be raised to the place it held at the time of the Greeks.

Heidegger's first great work, *Being and Time* (1927),¹ completely rethought the image of man. The being of man was seen by Heidegger as grounded in

**What is Called Thinking*. By MARTIN HEIDEGGER. Trans., J. Glenn Gray and Fred D. Wieck, with an Introduction by J. Glenn Gray. New York: Harper & Row, 1968. Pp. 244. \$9.50.

care. He attempted to analyze in detail the care for our world, and the things and the persons therein, as conditioning rational expression but not being exhausted in this expression. The results of his analysis have made their imprint everywhere that investigation is undertaken and understanding sought. For to investigate and to understand could now mean more than to formulate and to seek to master. In Europe not only philosophers, but—even more conspicuously—theologians, psychologists, sociologists, novelists, poets, and literary critics have been influenced in one way or another by this new vista—with the result that in Europe today there is hardly a corner in the domain of hermeneutics where the radiation of Heidegger's philosophy has not been felt.

Although the English-speaking world has been indirectly exposed to Heidegger by such French existential thinkers as Jean-Paul Sartre and Gabriel Marcel, his works have for the most part long remained inaccessible to most North American readers. The translator of any Heideggerian work runs into two difficulties: not only does Heidegger's thought stand in radical opposition to the particular historically-conditioned Anglo-Saxon conceptions of the world and man, but his extraordinary articulation of the German language requires much more than the usual skills in translation, perhaps even a philosophical creativity. With the recent publication of *What is Called Thinking* (a translation of *Was Heisst Denken*, English-speaking readers will finally have the chance to come face to face with both the originality and the mood of Heidegger's thought without having to cope, as they would in most of the previous translations, with German words cluttering up the text and the footnotes.

Four essays by Heidegger were translated and published in 1949 in a volume entitled *Existence and Being*. The pieces chosen were not suitable for an introduction to Heidegger; moreover the translations were questionable and in places not a little meaningless. In 1959 a readable translation of some lectures appeared under the title *Introduction to Metaphysics*,³ but this work is rather technical in nature and not designed for the general reader. Three years later, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*⁴ made its way into English, but this work is of interest mainly to those engaged in making a study of Kant. About the same time, Heidegger's monumental *Being and Time*, a systematic treatment of philosophical themes in the traditional German style, became available in a most exacting, literal, and therefore forbidding translation.⁵ Meanwhile a number of shorter essays and lectures of interest have appeared here and there in translation, some as parts of anthologies. The most recent work came out two years ago as *Discourse on Thinking*,⁶ a rather nicely translated and suggestive piece.

What is Called Thinking is a work from Heidegger's later period of philosophical activity. Sharply divergent from *Being and Time*, a systematic presentation of phenomenological ontology, the present work seems to be making the point that philosophy, if it is to have a place in today's culture, has to come to terms with

and overcome, in some sense, two thousand years of preconceptions: we must think back to the origins of Western thought in a profound and, by contrast, an apparently unsystematic way. Heidegger often expresses this strange need by his claim that thinking must tread a path parallel to that of poetry. Like that of poetry, the path of thought must remain a path rather than justifying itself in terms of a goal to be achieved once and for all. As he says, we must let ourselves be taken into the "neighborhood of thought". Like poetry, the thinking engaged in here must elucidate the concrete, leaving great systems behind.

The work presents a set of university lectures delivered at the University of Freiburg in 1951 and 1952. The title, as well as Heidegger's preliminary reflections, suggests some fundamental features of what it means to teach. According to Heidegger, teaching calls for a special relatedness to thinking on the part of the teacher. It calls upon the teacher to respond to all the hidden calls of his subject matter. Often enough today, in our technological era, the notion of a good teacher is on a par with that of a storehouse of useful information where the diverse wares are dressed up and sold most expediently and most attractively. Heidegger clearly holds in his lectures that teaching thus construed is bound to fail. The alternative he proposes is akin to what Heraclitus once said of the Delphic oracle: "It neither reveals nor conceals but gives a sign." It is an activity which is perhaps best embodied in the Oriental Zen Master who, as a teacher, "lets learn" and who is "more teachable" than his students. For us today, bound as we are by the traditional ideals of technology, this might appear strange, for we usually do not contemplate the essence of teaching as Heidegger does; we rather try to explain teaching from the standpoint of its results. For us the attainment of a degree and the writing of a few scholarly works seem to give an individual the status of an expert in his field, one who then hands down to students the programs necessary for the formation of new scholars. Of late, the definition of teaching as informing and bestowing a degree has consummated itself in the belief that teaching-machines can, in certain fields, displace teachers. If we reflect for a moment about the implications following from the view of teaching which defines it as an activity designed primarily for distributing data and facts, we should not be surprised at the subsequent suggestion that teaching-machines can surpass teachers, both in excellence and precision. Heidegger's suggestions about teaching require from us an entirely different orientation and one which might be seriously considered. For it seems to be evident that, as he remarks elsewhere, "the living example of the teacher and not the dead structure of the curriculum is what remains decisive in the schools."⁷

Perhaps the most remarkable contribution that Heidegger makes in this book lies in his exemplification of what it means to interpret a text. His earlier interpretations of Hoelderlin's poems are landmarks in the field of literary criticism. In *What is Called Thinking*, Heidegger again takes a poem from Hoelderlin and several lines from Nietzsche, as well as from the pre-Socratics, and by encircling

them again and again he not only attempts to think them through with his audience, originally his students and now his readers, but also to demonstrate by his own example what thinking can be. The keynote of the Heideggerian interpretation is a dialogue with the work. The work itself is allowed in the end to speak for itself, and the critical thought involved in the interpretation functions only as setting the stage for this event. Here again, as in Heidegger's discussion of teaching, it is a question of a complete re-orientation of our usual conceptions about literary criticism. In a letter to Emil Staiger, Heidegger defines reading as "a gathering; a gathering up of oneself in a concentration on what is left unsaid in all that is said."⁸ If the unsaid within poetry is to speak, only a radically different interpretative thinking can lead to this speaking. The common and traditional patterns of criticism which report about poems or concern themselves with reviewing or refuting other critics do not really think, since they consummate themselves in and as opinions. Since Heidegger holds that interpretation is a dialogue with the work and that all interpretation is a reflection upon the work, he is naturally led to hold also that value judgments and classifications of works of art are distractions from them. Heidegger teaches that the critic must learn *not* to judge. Heidegger thus associates with literary interpretation the exacting task of preserving and liberating thinking from the notion of value judgments and of opening our epoch to a new form of affirmation.

What is Called Thinking offers the reader a number of reflections on science and its impact on modern man's thinking and doing. The author does not attempt to give an all-embracing analysis of the problem of science; he merely refers to it as a point of contrast, further illuminating what is called thinking. It is, however, evident even here that Heidegger feels that the mode of existence and the ideals which science encourages tend to remove man farther and farther from what he is called on to be, that is, a thinking being. The drive to master and control the earth, the will to achieve bigger and better inventions, all this seems highly suspicious to Heidegger and to all this he says "Science does not think". What he seems to mean by this assertion is that scientific methodology is not to be taken as a paradigm for thinking; rather it is to be taken as a paradigm of calculation. In his recent *Discourse on Thinking* and elsewhere he develops in detail the view that calculation and thinking, far from being of the same nature, are in some sense opposed to one another. Thinking, he says in that piece, might give rise to calculation, but calculation can never lead to thinking. Heidegger's contention might give us food for thought, especially at our time in history when almost all fields of endeavour tend to become guided by the desire to emulate the scientific method.

Structuralism, the latest scientific branch of literary criticism, which construes literature as a purely linguistic object to be rid of all contingencies and ambiguities, might serve as an example of the attempt to transplant scientific methodology into a domain which might better be explored by reflective thought. No

doubt it has become relevant today to study one side of literature through the perspectives and with the techniques of modern scientific methods. Even in the field of literature, the contributions of scientific thought are not debatable. However, what should give rise to thought is the inevitable imperialism of scientific calculation. This problem always appears when a scientific method tries to generalize its mode of investigation, proper to one particular sector, into a totalitarian explication, when a science transforms itself into its own ideology. This transformation seems to occur when the objectivity inherent in the scientific approach becomes shaped into a philosophy of objectivity. On the ideological level this operation accompanied the major breakthrough of the natural sciences in the nineteenth century, and today the rise of the behavioral sciences is accompanied by the same phenomenon. What we still have not learned even today, though, is that the scientific system of knowledge tends to close itself on to itself and to forget that what is said about man as a mute object must finally be recognized by man as a thoughtful subject. A problem to be examined in literary criticism today is whether the attitude which is both legitimate and necessary for scientific research is not a dead-end road for hermeneutic understanding. One might ask oneself whether the movement of literary creation does not here go in the inverse direction of the movement animating scientific methodology. After all, literature is that language which, by definition, incorporates within itself the relations and significations which the sciences wish to expel, namely such things as the ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings.

History and circumstances have required action and calculation from those who had to conquer a new territory and install new cultures on the North American continent. It is no wonder then that systematic philosophy has therefore been viewed for a long time on this side of the Atlantic as a complicated pedantic structure to be taught at the university, but a bit too abstract to be of direct relevance to our everyday doings. Heidegger, coming from quite a different tradition and culture, has also felt the need to change the face of philosophy, to think concretely. It is for this reason that he abandoned completely the conceptual and systematic thought-patterns worked out in *Being and Time*, and that all of his later works, including *What is Called Thinking*, are at once poetic and philosophic. *What is Called Thinking* prepares us for a way of thinking where we may remain open to the things that lie before us and abandon our drive to mere thoughtless mastery of nature. This work therefore attempts to reach non-philosophers as well as philosophers. It might be that here a special call is made to all mankind, for today the danger that Nietzsche already saw is perhaps still present: "that conventional man will adhere with growing obstinacy to the trivial surface of his conventional nature and acknowledge only the flatness of these flatlands as his proper habitation on earth."

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NOTES

1. *Being and Time*. MARTIN HEIDEGGER. Tuebingen: Max Niemeyer, 1927. Pp. 437 (now in its 10th edition).
2. *Existence and Being*. MARTIN HEIDEGGER. Trans., Douglas Scott, R. F. C. Hull and Alan Crick, with a lengthy introduction by Werner Brock. London: Vision Press, 1949. Pp. 392. (Now available in Gateway paperback: \$1.95)
3. *Introduction to Metaphysics*. MARTIN HEIDEGGER. Trans., Ralph Manheim. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959. Pp. 214. \$4.00. (Also in Anchor paperback \$95.)
4. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. MARTIN HEIDEGGER. Trans., James S. Churchill. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962. Pp. 255. \$7.50 (paper \$2.45).
5. *Being and Time*. MARTIN HEIDEGGER. Trans., John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row, 1962. Pp. 589. \$12.50.
6. *Discourse on Thinking*. MARTIN HEIDEGGER. Trans., John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund. New York: Harper & Row, 1966. Pp. 93. \$3.50.
7. *Ueber Abraham a Santa Clara*. MARTIN HEIDEGGER. Stadt Messkirch: Heuberg Druckerei, 1964, p. 4. (My own translation.)
8. *Die Kunst der Interpretation*. Emil Staiger. Zurich: Atlantis Verlag, 1957, p. 48. (My own translation.)

AT A BIRTHDAY PARTY

Robert Beum

For the wasted seed, for the children
 never to wake to the bird or singing bough
 or wake or sleep in the sleep
 in October mist;
 for those hushed in the darkness, unborn
 to this house or the earth,
 silenced well
 to the surf washing starfish,
 to mill whistle mornings;
 more than blind, who might have read
 pennies and cats' eyes and the neighbour girls';
 for these, too many
 for any house or measured earth, may
 silences
 live in our speech and loud birthdays.