Chapter 19
Phenomenology as Social Critique

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One of the defining characteristics of Charles Guignon as a thinker and teacher is his commitment to live the life of a philosopher rather than merely that of an academic. This does not mean seeking fame or to radically change the way most people approach the world and their lives, but rather means a commitment to addressing pressing problems within our time rather than focusing primarily on technical issues within the profession of philosophy. In other words, Guignon displays and teaches a faith in the power of philosophy to address real issues within our shared life world. In Guignon's work this is found married to a phenomenological focus upon the value of careful clarification in order to dissolve or at least ease seemingly inescapable intellectual and practical deadlocks. In honor of this valuable lesson found in Guignon's work, I would like to begin laying out how phenomenology as developed by Martin Heidegger might be brought to bear upon politics and social thought, that most pressing den of polarized deadlocks in which the wellbeing and lives of so many hang suspended.

The question of the political advantage or disadvantage of Heidegger's thought has rarely been more pressing within academic and intellectual spheres. The recent publication of translations of Heidegger's lecture courses from 1933 to 1934 (BAT/GA 36/37), dialogues written by Heidegger in 1944–1945 (CPC/GA 77), and the first public lectures Heidegger gave following World War II in 1949 (BFL/GA 79) have made more widely available a window into Heidegger's thought during and immediately following his Nazi involvement. This has occurred even as the suggestion that Heidegger's philosophy has direct, and fascist, political

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implications has become once more a hotly debated subject. Meanwhile, several books have attempted to use or modify Heidegger's philosophy to support Marxist or Communist projects. Two key examples are *Hermeneutic Communism: From Heidegger to Marx* by Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala (2011), and *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* by Slavoj Žižek (2012) whose thirteenth chapter is dedicated extensively to arguing that the Heidegger of the mid-1930s was on his way to communism and that the thought of this period can thus be rehabilitated for a communist project (see esp. 879). We also find less polarized examples of attempts to apply Heideggerian phenomenology to social thought, such as Axel Honneth's 2005 Tanner Lectures at Berkeley. In these lectures Honneth uses Heidegger's concept of care along with work from sociology and neuroscience to renovate George Lukacs' presentation of reification in light of the role recognition plays in both basic human cognition and social interaction (see Honneth 2008). These few examples, some of which I will deal with more extensively later, should make clear that the question of the political meaning and application of Heidegger's thought is both a pressing topic and one which many people are discussing.

As I will suggest, however, this spectrum of projects is missing those parts of Heidegger's thought that are most useful and unique when it comes to a practice of social analysis and critique. General attention has been paid more to either specific conclusions Heidegger draws in the course of works like *Being and Time* or his limited overt discussions of political philosophy which occurred primarily in the 1930s. A careful investigation of Heidegger's actual methodological reflections and their application to the study of social and political concerns has not, however, been adequately developed. It is this focus upon methodology I would like to present here, while also demonstrating why this very methodology sharply distinguishes Heideggerian phenomenology from the different methods and traditions of social analysis with which contemporary philosophers have been attempting to unite it.

The question of the political use of Heideggerian philosophy leads inevitably to a confrontation with Heidegger's time as a member of the Nazi party. We probably shouldn't be surprised that it has been fairly common for students of Heideggerian thought to attempt to disconnect Heidegger's work from his political life. This has often occurred through an insistence that phenomenology is a purely descriptive methodology free of prescriptive elements. At times it is suggested that phenomenology, as a method of grounding philosophical claims upon the way in which things show up within our lives, runs afoul of Hume's is/ought distinction if it draws from its descriptive investigation prescriptions for how one ought to live or act. Thus, while *Being and Time* might show that an authentic way of life is one in which a person is consciously aware of their embeddedness within a community and history, it doesn't presume to show that one should strive for authenticity. At most phenomenology might offer an epistemic or methodological prescription such that one is more likely to give credence to distortive philosophical theses without the clear-sighted realization of the dependence of meaningful experience upon community that goes along with authenticity. Beyond this, however, key works like *Being and Time* are not taken to have any direct ethical or political message. What

I would ultimately like to demonstrate is that, while phenomenology is descriptive, it provides the basis for an immanent critique in a way that is both similar and importantly different from Hegelian and Marxist forms of social critique.

I would like to take a moment to discuss Axel Honneth's use of Heidegger and his own orientation within the descriptive/prescriptive spectrum in order to prepare the ground for my own discussion of Heidegger's position upon that same spectrum. Honneth is overtly concerned with the descriptive/prescriptive tension and considers an unjustified prescriptive element as a weakness in both Heidegger and Lukacs. Honneth's project is to reinterpret Lukacs' conception of reification, i.e. treating human subjects as market objects, in terms of a philosophy of mutual recognition. In order to develop his philosophy of recognition, he turns to the role that practical coping within a world originally disclosed in terms of qualitative significance, called care, plays in Heidegger's philosophy. Using Heidegger along with the philosophy of John Dewey and the sociology of George Herbert Meade, Honneth claims that all human cognition is primarily based on empathetic mutual recognition between individuals before later becoming reified such that we lose sight of the fundamental role played by recognition. In the course of this argument Honneth suggests that both Lukacs and Heidegger use a descriptive methodology that attempts, nonetheless, to offer normative prescriptive judgments concerning how social life should be lived. Despite their own ambitions, Honneth suggests, neither philosopher is able to actually justify a criticism of the loss of an empathetic participant perspective through the dominance of a neutral subject/object perspective. As Honneth points out, for Lukacs "if reification constitutes neither a mere epistemic category mistake nor a form of moral misconduct, the only remaining possibility is that it be conceived as a form of praxis that is *structurally* false . . . [it] must form an ensemble of habits and attitudes that deviates from a more genuine or better form of human praxis" (2008, 26; emphasis in the original text). While Lukacs and Heidegger can't seem to make good this claim that certain practices are better than others, Honneth's own project also attempts to offer something other than an epistemic or moral critique of reification. What seems to be missing in either Lukacs or Heidegger is a fully developed conception of social health and sickness such as can be developed, Honneth hopes, through appeals to work done in areas such as neuroscience. Honneth is not entirely successful in this and the best he can do is show that objectifying or reifying practices are always already grounded in something like Heideggerian care or intersubjective empathy while gesturing to a breakdown in this empathy in cases like autism. In cases of such breakdown, Honneth suggests, we lose the ability to understand the meaning and purposes of the social practices within which we find ourselves. Despite Honneth's own attempt to arrive at a critique of reification as a "social pathology," he seems to only provide a factual claim concerning the importance of intersubjectivity for cognition without arriving at the required normative standards of social "health" that the purely descriptive claim that objectification relies on intersubjective recognition cannot furnish. In other words, even if my objectification of other humans relies upon an earlier sympathetic relation to them, this doesn't at all demonstrate that these later reifying practices are not entirely "healthy" (Honneth 2008, 84).

Our momentary detour through the work of Honneth helps to orient our own reflections upon Heidegger's phenomenology within what we might call the main axis of social thought. As Honneth points out, most social and political thought is explicitly prescriptive; "In the last three decades, social criticism has essentially limited itself to evaluating the normative order of societies according to whether they fulfill certain principles of justice" (2008, 84). We see here, of course, the entire tradition of liberal social philosophy from the original social contract theorists to John Rawls and Robert Nozick. Debates in these areas almost inevitably settle into wars of attrition waged around supposedly universal standards of rationality or self-evident values such as liberty, equality or rights. In contrast to these prescriptive practices we find purely descriptive disciplines generally free of any pretensions to normative evaluation or social critique. Sociology, admittedly with major important exceptions, fits this category. Honneth, as a representative of the fourth generation of Critical Theory, follows this tradition's attempts to find a middle road connecting the normative goals of many political philosophers with the descriptive practice of disciplines like sociology.[1] Honneth is, I suggest, not wrong in seeing Heidegger as similarly falling within this middle region but fails to appreciate Heidegger's difference from other projects that attempt to provide a normative bite to description.

The middle region between normative critique and neutral description is far from unpopulated. It is here, in fact, where most of what we might call continental political philosophy can be found and the region is dominated by the figures of Hegel, Marx and those whose thinking follows in their dialectical footsteps. If the practice of purely normative political philosophers might be characterized as using universal principles to critique social practice, the middle region we are now dealing with is made up of a variety of methods of immanent critique. Immanent critique includes any of several methods which attempt to show that various social practices or formations are inadequate according to their own, rather than universal, standards. The main form of immanent critique is dialectic, whether Hegel's idealist brand or Marx's materialist version, and it is from this tradition of dialectical immanent critique that the great works of Critical Theory, such as Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002), draw their foundation. The purely descriptive understanding of phenomenology misses the way in which phenomenology is a unique form of immanent critique oriented specifically in opposition to the, nonetheless similar, Hegelian and Marxist methodologies. It is likely that the location of phenomenology within the region of immanent critique dominated by dialectic has at least contributed to the push to connect phenomenology and communism.

As noted, engagements with the social or political applications of Heidegger's thought tend to follow one of two strategies. Either key conclusions from his main works, for example *Being and Time,* are mined for social or political applications

[1]It is interesting that Habermas, with his more overtly normative practice, seems rather distinct from critical theory's more descriptive tendency.

as in Honneth's work or his overt discussions of political philosophy are focused upon. The period during which Heidegger most directly discussed politics proper was the time of his Nazi involvement, which is hardly a promising sign. During the period of the early 1930s, Heidegger's overt political thought displays two main characteristics. First, Heidegger adopts Carl Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction as the determination of the political and the state. This distinction is overtly understood in terms of the struggle against "... each and every person who poses an essential threat to the Dasein of the people and its individual members" (Heidegger BAT, 73/GA 36/37, 90–91). This aspect is usually discussed in terms of Heraclitus' fragment in which *polemos,* i.e. war or struggle, is described as the father of all. The second aspect is the idea that particular creative individuals such as leaders, thinkers or artists form the state or nation through leaps of creative power and, in so doing, open up a people's history for them:

> ... The German people as a whole is coming to itself, that is, it is finding its leadership. In this leadership, the people that has come to itself is creating its state. The people that is forming itself into its state, founding endurance and constancy, is growing into a nation. The nation is taking over the fate of its people. Such a people is gaining its own spiritual mission among peoples, and creating its own history. (Heidegger BAT, 3/GA 36/37, 3)

We can find a similar focus upon the history determining power of creative individuals in other works of the time such as *Introduction to Metaphysics* and the early versions of "The Origin of the Work of Art."[2] At the same time both of these elements of Heidegger's thought are in tension with the work that precedes and follows his thinking in the early 1930s. For example, other than the period of the early 1930s, most of Heidegger's discussion of Heraclitean *polemos* goes hand in hand with an insistence that it does not represent a struggle amongst people. For example, as soon as a year after the 1933–1934 discussion of *polemos* as struggle against human enemies, Heidegger insists in *Introduction to Metaphysics* that *polemos* "... is not war in the human sense ..." (IM, 65/GA 40, 66) and in the published version of "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1971) this same *polemos* becomes a struggle between world and earth, or disclosive practices and the undisclosed. By the end of the war Heidegger will be critical of both of his main political ideas from the early 1930s. He will indirectly characterize his early thoughts concerning the German nation as dangerous subjectivism in his dialogues from 1944 to 1945:

> Older Man: Nationality is nothing other than the pure subjectivity of a people that purports to rely on its 'nature' as what is actual, from out of which and back to which all affecting is supposed to go.

[2] "This struggle is then sustained by the creators, by the poets, thinkers, and statesmen. Against the overwhelming sway, they throw the counterweight of their work and capture in this work the world that is thereby opened up" (Heidegger IM, 65/GA 40, 66). For a discussion of the early versions of "The Origin of the Work of Art" see Jacques Taminiaux's paper "The Origin of 'The Origin of the Work of Art'" (1993).

> Younger Man: Subjectivity has its essence in that the human –the individual, groups, and the realms of humanity – rises up to base himself on himself and to assert himself as the ground and measure of what is actual. With this rebellious uprising into subjectivity emerges the uprising into work as that form of achieving by means of which the devastation of the earth is everywhere prepared for and ultimately established as unconditional. (CPC, 154/GA 77, 235–36)

What this, admittedly brief, discussion should have revealed is that Heidegger's most explicit discussions of political philosophy are far from representing Heideggerian phenomenology's political promise or lack thereof. Rather, for all its historical importance and interest, the thought of the early 1930s should be considered anomalous and, as I will discuss shortly, demonstrates a failure to apply the phenomenological method as it was developed early in Heidegger's career.

Heidegger's development of his own phenomenological methodology was centrally influenced by his commitment to escape from a philosophical tradition dominated by modern epistemology's ontological assumption that the problem of knowledge must be addressed in terms of the connection between an actively cognizing consciousness and an independent external reality. The key path out of this tradition was indicated to Heidegger in several philosophical developments, which their own creators seemed to underappreciate. Specifically, Emil Lask's principle of the material determination of form, Wilhelm Dilthey's principle of immanence and Husserl's categorial intuition were each interpreted by Heidegger in a realist sense foreign, in the case of Lask and Husserl, to the actual systems and intentions of their originators. For Heidegger, each principle states that the matters of concern to philosophy should be approached through a relationship determined by the matters themselves. Lask suggested that concepts, or formal elements of thought, should be understood ontologically as arising from the content they structured and that therefore, methodologically, we should avoid imposing concepts upon subjects of concern. Dilthey suggested that the historical development of human life gives rise to its own frameworks of understanding through concrete cultural expressions, or objectivations, that should guide the human sciences in understanding history. Finally, according to Heidegger's reading, Husserl offered the argument that we intuit categorial or conceptual forms rather than imposing them, which collapses Kant's distinction between active conceptualization and passive intuition. Each of these points forms the background of Heidegger's own concept of formal indication and the phenomenological destruction and adjudication such an indication makes possible.

The most robust early presentations of Heidegger's thoughts on formal indication show up in his 1920 summer lecture course *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression: Theory of Philosophy Concept Formation* (PIE/GA 59) and the 1920–1921 lecture course *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (PRL/GA 60). In the religion lectures Heidegger states that any phenomenon which phenomenology addresses is made up of a sense-complex consisting of three types of meaning that make it possible (PRL, 43/GA 60, 63). For any phenomenon there is the "what" of the phenomenon, i.e. the content of the phenomenon that is discussed as matter in Lask's material determination of form, the "how" of the phenomenon

that corresponds to the relation we have towards the phenomenon that allows it to show up as a matter of concern and, finally, a second "how" sense corresponding to the way in which the relation is made actual in being united to the content which Heidegger calls the "enactment-sense" of the phenomenon. Heidegger's critique of the theoretical standpoint he finds in most philosophy, including Husserlian phenomenology, is already well underway here when he stresses that the common understanding of the way in which philosophy is a general or formal science prejudices any investigation from the start by prescribing a purely theoretical relation-sense upon any subject it engages with rather than letting the subject matter determine its own relation as it does in everyday life:

> One could say that a formal-ontological determinateness says nothing about the 'what' of that which it determines, and thus does not prejudice anything. But exactly because the formal determination is entirely indifferent as to content, it is fatal for the relation- and enactment-aspect of the phenomenon – because it prescribes, or at least contributes to prescribing, a theoretical relational meaning. It hides the *enactment*-character – which is possibly still more fatal – and turns one-sidedly to the *content.* A glance at the history of philosophy shows that formal determination of the objective entirely dominates philosophy. How can this prejudice, this pre-judgment, be prevented? This is just what the *formal indication* achieves. (PRL, 43/GA 60, 63)

In contrast to traditional conceptions of formal determination, Heidegger's phenomenology holds this prejudice at bay by first asking what original relation-sense provides us access to any topic under discussion and whether this original relation-sense is understood as an indication arising from the matter of concern itself. This active investigation of the formal indication provided by the lived relation-senses which open a subject of investigation to us constitutes the earliest sense of phenomenological destruction and is followed by an attempt to clarify this relation-sense by seeking its enactment-sense within our lives. Heidegger at this point calls this clarification and assessment by means of enactment-sense "phenomenological adjudication," but it will later be called phenomenological attestation. Heidegger insists that his new conception of the formal always concerns something relational, i.e. the how of our access to the matter that concerns us. As becomes even clearer in works such as *Being and Time*, the relational-sense of a phenomenon will generally be the lived practical context within which, and through which, any matter of study becomes a focus of our concern. We originally ask, for any philosophical problem, what practice and concern within our lives presents this problem to us.

The key point to remember is that this is developed as a theory of philosophical concept formation, and the take away lesson is that concepts are what our practices and daily concerns become when they are discussed from the distorting view of the theoretical perspective, especially when that theoretical perspective is particularly entrenched in modern epistemological conceptions of the mental. To ask about concept formation, then, is to ask about the origin of our practices, traditions and in general our ways of speaking and relating to ourselves, each other and the world. In his lecture course from the previous semester Heidegger had discussed this in terms of the way that meaning directs us to the context from which something shows up

as meaningful and, in doing so, brings with it various motives that really define the entire sense-complex formed through content, relation and enactment: "The peculiar thing is in fact that meanings point into contexts; phenomenologically, it is found how in them themselves motives are posited in such a way that these give a direction of the sense-complex" (PIE, 25/GA 59, 34). If we are attempting to clarify, then, the meaning of something like "freedom," we refer ourselves to the ways in which we find ourselves in a relation to freedom. What are the traditions and projects in which freedom shows up as a matter of concern? We apply phenomenological adjudication next by asking about the ways we enact or live the relation that we have already clarified and what motivates these projects, what lived attestation and motivation we can provide for the meaning in question.

In the summer lecture course immediately before his religion course, Heidegger had already more fully presented the concept of adjudication presented above and addressed the problem that most philosophical topics have several different relational-senses and even more enactment-senses. During the lecture course, the topic at hand is the question of the meaning of "history," to which Heidegger offers six different possible relational meanings. How are we to adjudicate between these possible meanings? Heidegger proposes that the plurality of meanings can be organized in terms of a genealogy insofar as some meanings will be parasitic upon others while certain meanings will be found to be basic or primordial. The adjudication, then, ties directly into the question of the historical lived origins of the practices in question. Where did they come from and how have they changed, developed or degenerated? Obviously, however, this adjudication requires a criterion both in order to determine primordiality and in order to assess development or degeneration.

Any relation can be investigated in terms of the way it is lived and these enactments can be assessed such that the most basic ones will be those enactments that reveal the basic motivational concern, and thus the meaning, of the relation in question. The basic motivational concern of a relation will be its origin. What should be clear is that, though these origins will have a historical dimension such that the motivation they contain very likely came to appearance at given places and times, the investigation into origins is not a practice of traditional historiography but rather is uncovered phenomenologically through an investigation of the actual way that any relation in question is enacted in the life of those who relate to the matters of concern in this way. The assessment of primordiality, then, won't be some sort of historical prejudicial preference for those relations which are temporally older but rather is directed at determining which relations ground the others in terms of providing the actual concerns and motivations which in turn motivate less primordial relations. It need not be the case, then, that the oldest relations are the most primordial since it might be the case that older relations have come to be lived-out in terms of newer motivations that are not themselves grounded in terms of the older practices. Heidegger offers his criterion of primordiality in the following rather dense passage:

> An enactment is primordial if, as an enactment of a relation that is at least co-directed in a genuinely self-worldly way, it requires, according to its sense, an always actual renewal in a self-worldly Dasein. It does so precisely in such a way that this renewal and the 'necessity' (requirement) of renewal inherent in it co-constitutes self-worldly existence. (PIE, 57/GA 59, 75)

In developing this criteria Heidegger depends upon a distinction between the environing-world, the with-world, and the self-world. At this point in Heidegger's career the environing-world is the world of meaningful entities and tasks taken unreflectively as given. Heidegger offers the example of his lecture in the context of the general life of the university or his work (PIE, 63/GA 59, 82). At the environing level, we do not inquire as to the origin or nature of the meaningfulness of the items, roles, or tasks we find ourselves within, they simply are taken as the self-evident medium in which we exist. When we delve below the given environment to what makes it possible we discover the with-world, or those collective social practices out of which alone meaningful entities and personal projects arise. This is the level at which formal indication and relational-sense is uncovered. In order to assess the full meaning and origin of these relational-senses, however, we must turn to their enactment within the lived self-world of personal Dasein. The self-world is the sphere at which the tasks and practices of the with-world are taken up and lived by individual instances of Dasein.

With the distinctions between worldly levels in mind we can now return to Heidegger's criterion of primordiality. The criterion contains two main requirements. First, to be primordial an enactment must require a renewal in a self-worldly Dasein rather than just existing at the level of the environment or collective practices. I could enact a relation to a coffee mug by drinking from it in a non-reflective way, and as such the enactment of the relation has occurred at the level of the environing world. Similarly, I might note that I drink coffee as *we* collectively do. I frequent the popular coffee shop and behave as one normally does at that coffee shop. I drink from a cup, further, that has been made available through a practice whereby frequent customers can keep named mugs waiting for themselves so that even the use of this particular mug is overtly made meaningful and possible through a collective practice. I am also aware that this mug has arisen through the existence of various industrialized business practices in which mechanized mass production churns out mugs of this type and capitalist economics provides for their availability for purchase. As such I have enacted a relation to this mug in terms of the with-world. But the relation, that of "use for drinking coffee," has not been shown to be primordial as it does not need to be enacted at the level of self-worldly Dasein in order to be understood. In other words, coffee cups can be used, environmentally or socially, without our reflecting upon the way in which they co-constitute who and what we are as particular people. It is also possible, however, to enact the relationship of coffee-cup-use at the level of the self-worldly, perhaps by becoming aware that the frequency and location of my coffee consumption is part of what determines me as a scholar, intellectual, or typical American consumer, but such an enactment is not necessitated by the relation itself. A primordial enactment will show up then only when we are dealing with ways of relating to matters that themselves are so fundamental for personal identity that they can only be understood in the fullest sense in terms of the manner in which they constitute who and what we personally are. The first requirement for primordiality is thus unavoidably connected to the second, namely that the enactment that necessarily occurs at the level of the self-worldly also co-constitutes the self-worldly sphere in contributing fundamentally to our sense of who we are.

We can return to my example of drinking coffee to clarify primordiality. As already mentioned, the practice of drinking coffee is not primordial, but from this view all practices are based eventually on a relation that can be primordially enacted. When searching for such a relation and enactment, it first strikes me that I don't just drink coffee alone in my home, perhaps purely for the caffeine or pleasure it provides, but rather frequently drink it in coffee shops and restaurants. Even when I drink it at home, I am not fully alone in the sense that I drink it with a vague awareness of its social meanings and traditions concerning how coffee consumption is generally enacted. Many, if not all, of my practices of drinking coffee are, then, based on the deeper relation of being together with others, often specifically during the action of sharing meals or lighter repasts. Indeed, most human practices of eating do not occur in their barest form. We very rarely if ever simply take nutrition into our biological system. Rather, we eat together in highly ritualized ways. Drinking coffee is no different. This suggests, then, that the primordial relation and enactments on which the relational practice of drinking coffee is based include, for example, sharing-pleasure. Sharing-pleasure, here specifically the pleasure of coffee consumption, can be seen as a primordial relation and, when actually performed, a primordial enactment because any habituation that invades it can only result in a loss of the extent to which the pleasure is shared. If I perform the act by rote, without thinking either about my own experience or about those around me, I am not in fact sharing anything though we may all be experiencing similar things. Sharing here is taken, then, as a specific practice and indeed a primordial one and not some biological fact about pleasure receptors. To share pleasure requires me to be aware of both my experience and the possibility of yours. It constitutes me as a being interconnected with other people and able to join together with them to experience the world collective in certain ways. Sharing-pleasure, then, only fully occurs when I am aware of what Heidegger will call Mitsein, or being-with, in *Being and Time*. This is one primordial motive for the common act of drinking coffee in a coffee shop. It is certainly not very common to engage in it fully at the level of the primordial and without the primordial level in view it is easy for the practice to become distorted in ways that would distance us from our awareness of sharing with others. Coffee consumption could occur in a context of reification as discussed by Honneth such that less primordial practice has come to work against the very goals it once served, the goal of sharing-pleasure and being-with one another in a particular way.

As should be clear, primoridiality for Heidegger offers an assessment of the importance of a relation or practice for the people who engage in it, even though that importance may not be overtly apparent. Drinking coffee or even sharing meals may not seem particularly important, but they are part of one of the most basic ways we constitute ourselves at the level of self-worldly as members of a community of pleasures, joys and hardships. This aspect of the self-world provides the basis for the existence of the with-world. From this view we can imagine coffee disappearing without doing dramatic harm to our sense of self, but the loss of the practice of shared repast in general would likely do extensive damage. The immanent character of this phenomenological method should also be clear, as Heidegger is not proposing an external historiographical method for determining the primordiality of

our practices, but rather is attempting an assessment from within those practices of their basic motivations and their interrelation in terms of their own sense of importance. Those relations will show up as most important to us, at least after a careful phenomenological investigation, which contribute necessarily to our sense of our own identity and as such provide the ground for the meaning of other practices. Sharing-pleasure provides one ground for sharing-meals and sharing-meals provides one ground for sharing-coffee. For this reason phenomenology offers a method of analysis for social practices which, when successful, offers a form of critique that should be convincing to those engaged in the actual practices in question rather than offering assessments from universal principles external to those practices. A given enactment of a relation-sense allows an assessment of the meaning and motivation of the relation itself.

There is, at the very foundation of this vision of phenomenology, a methodological commitment to a guiding ontological-epistemological premise that, at the same time, achieves support through the successful application of the method. The premise is that all forms of relating to matters of concern, for our purposes, all social practices, at some level open up a particular vision of who we are and what the world is like. In other words, all practices are at some level disclosive of reality though they may indeed no longer be enacted in a way that connects with their original disclosive power. Most simply put, Heidegger demonstrates that practices only exist because they bring to appearance the way things are. This position follows directly from his realist commitment to understand our relations to things, whether practical or cognitive, as originating from outside the sphere of subjective imposition. For this reason Heidegger understands practices to be grounded in a basic experience, or primordial enactment, in which the world opens up as a meaningful space for action in which we are called forth into certain personal identities. No practice or relation is primordially deceptive or distortive. Distortion and deception arise through a process of losing sight of the original and foundational motives and experiences from which the practice derives its meaning. The phenomenological method works as a critical practice when distortive practices are shown to be in contradiction with their own internal meaning and motives.

We should be able to see from our considerations so far that phenomenology is a descriptive method that achieves a critical force. Through phenomenology's immanent critique, social practices are made to give voice to their own standards and can then be measured against those standards. It is worth stressing, however, that those standards may be found in more primordial motivations housed in more basic relationships such that non-primordial practices cannot be isolated from the larger context of motives and lived meanings from which these practices derive their impetus. What we see here is an analysis of a process that comes to occupy both Heidegger and the late Husserl. Practices can become merely habitual or traditional, a process of using words without considering their motivation or meaning for example, which Husserl understands in terms of sedimentation and the seduction of language in "The Origin of Geometry" (1970, 361–62). As Heidegger stresses, a primordial enactment that constitutes self-worldly Dasein can never be habitual but rather is a type of intensification in which one's personal identity is actively

reaffirmed such that habit is decisively cut off (PIE, 65/GA 59, 79). Once a practice becomes habitual, as indeed most of our practices are, it loses much of its disclosive power and also risks altering over time in such a way as to work against the motives from which it originally sprang both historically and within the life of a given person. One of the ironies of this type of historical drift is that people can continue behaving in certain ways because of the original motives from which the practice originated even when that practice has ceased to serve its original motive for decades or even centuries. If we take as a main element of social critique as it has been developed in Marxist and post-Marxist thought the uncovering of ideology, in which there is a sharp difference between what people do and what they think they do, we should now be able to see that phenomenology is perfectly capable of a robust critique of ideology in which certain behaviors are habitually followed for reasons that those behaviors have long since failed to serve. One important difference between phenomenology and Marxist dialectic will be, however, that phenomenology will reject the possibility of any practice having been ideological from the start.

There are a few other differences between phenomenology and dialectic generally conceived that we can now bring to light. It is first necessary to stress that Heidegger consistently oriented his own philosophy in a negative relation to that of Hegel, going so far as to suggest that Marxist philosophy remains within the framework of Hegelian dialectic and that dialectic was the most powerful manifestation of the philosophical and historical developments he was attempting to get beyond.[3] In particular Heidegger associated Hegelian dialectic with the triumph of the theoretical attitude, the same attitude he opposed in Husserl, and generally equated Hegel with the Neo-Kantianism he criticized in thinkers such as Paul Natorp (Heidegger TDP, 91/GA 56/57, 108). If we recall Heidegger's criticism of abstract or formal philosophy generally, which he insisted formal indication worked against, we begin to get a clearer sense of his criticism of dialectic. In general dialectic relies upon the impossibility of unmediated access to the matters that concern us. The dialectic is always fueled by mediation, whether through language, cultural practice or conceptual thought, in which there is always an inadequacy between the medium and the content of the mediation either on the side of an inadequate expression of the content or an inadequate content for a more highly developed form of mediation. As Heidegger points out in 1919, this type of dialectic leads to a distortion of life such that any lived immediacy is always dissolved into a higher level of mediation and thus a higher level of generality or abstraction (TDP, 91/GA 56/57, 108). Here we see a clear example of the formalism that Heidegger identified as both dominating the history of philosophy and closing off any appreciation of the relation-sense and enactment-sense of phenomenon. The basic inadequacy of all lower levels of mediation in dialectic points towards the consistent sublation of the

[3]See, for example, his formulation of phenomenology as standing "on the front against Hegel" (TDP, 81/GA 56/57, 98) or his extensive discussion of Hegel in his 1949 Bremen lectures and 1957 Freiburg lectures (BFL/GA 79).

relation-sense into continually more general relations. As our previous discussion should make clear, Heidegger's own focus on arriving at primordial forms of enactment and relation that are understood to provide the meaning and motivation for less primordial relations works in the precise opposite direction from dialectic. Heidegger attempts to move ever nearer to the way in which life itself comes to appearance through its most basic enactments of relations. For this reason, thinking of the relation-sense of a phenomenon as mediation is already to take the wrong path. Relations are precisely the manner in which anything comes to appearance, and these relational disclosures, while admittedly never complete or exhaustive, are nonetheless not merely lenses through which reality is seen or mediated. For Heidegger, relations are direct engagements with what exists that arise from what exists, they are not ways in which active minds or collective spirit attempt to come to grips with a reality that always escapes their grasp. This view is at the heart of Heidegger's rejection of modern epistemology.

Within the realm of social thought, Hegel's dialectic has largely been eclipsed by its reformulation within Marxist and post-Marxist thought but the general points we have made remain pertinent. A materialist dialectic of history is powered primarily through contradictions between material practices and the purposes those practices are meant to fulfill. Again, as in the Hegelian content/mediation distinction, the contradiction can show up in two ways. Either the attempted means to achieve a goal are inadequate and the tension between the goal and the means of achieving it become too great, or the means of achieving a goal eventually demonstrate that the goal was inadequate such that new goals and purposes developed within the practice take precedence. In either case the assumption is always that there was a problem situation that future developments attempt to resolve and that eventually is either transcended or translated onto a higher level. The key difference between dialectic and phenomenology is whether the future or past is prioritized. For Heidegger the origin of practices and relations is not a problem situation destined to be worked out or escaped through development, but rather a basic grasp of a certain aspect of reality along with a basic motivation or response to that grasp. We are dealing here more with a conversation between the terms of a relation than with a challenge, and the meaningfulness of our lives depends upon our ability to hold our most basic motivations in view rather than developing beyond them through further mediation.

We can see a fair example of the use of the dialectic in social critique in the example of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002). There it is argued that the driving goal of the Enlightenment is to free humanity from myth by gaining power over nature. The original problem situation is that of the collective subjectivity of humanity finding itself confronted by an overpowering and threatening nature. Myth, magic and religion each arise as a response to this original problem situation and each is overcome through the progressive development of technological power over nature. But, as a means of escaping myth and gaining power over nature, Enlightenment and the modern science and technology it gives rise to are revealed to be inadequate. The dialectical formulation of this failure within the work is multiple but some main points can be made.

First, the problem situation was originally to achieve a power over nature for the sake of the individual subject. However, the very power in question is achieved by means of an instrumental self-control through which the nature within oneself must be dominated and overcome such that the very subjectivity one was originally concerned with protecting is itself deformed and crippled through the process. On the other hand, the more the mastery over nature progresses the clearer it becomes that it is simply the achievement of power for power's own sake. This sheer rule of power under the guise of politics, economics or social engineering is itself just the reappearance of nature, "In the mastery of nature, without which mind does not exist, enslavement to nature persists. By modestly confessing itself to be power and thus being taken back into nature, mind rids itself of the very claim to mastery which had enslaved it to nature" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 31). The more we dominate nature, both internally and externally, the more we reveal our social relations to be purely a play of domination and submission no different from the natural violence we sought to escape. In this way we see that the problem situation persists, and indeed is intensified, in the course of its address through the historical development of instrumental rationality. We see this same dialectic if we turn to the topic of Enlightenment and myth. Myth is developed as a way of escaping the fear of nature by presenting the nonliving as if it were living, for example appealing to the consciousness that lives in the heart of the storm and goes by the name of Zeus in order to gain some sense of power over the lightening. Enlightenment remains motivated by this basic fear but simply inverts the method, viewing the living in light of the non-living, for example through the conception of living humans as market commodities. In this sense, "Enlightenment is mythical fear radicalized . . . " and the problem situation consistently remains as the ongoing motivation of the dialectical process (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 11). This analysis offers a form of immanent social critique because each phase of the dialectic allows for criticism according to its own internal logic, specifically by asking to what extent it has solved the problem situation of subjectivity facing the overpowering force of nature.

We can see the contrast between this type of dialectical immanent critique and a phenomenological one if we compare *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to the surprisingly similar critique of instrumental rationality in Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" (QCT, 3–35/GA 7, 5–36). This essay that grew out of the Bremen Lectures Heidegger gave following World War II in 1949 will also allow us to demonstrate that, while the terms used to describe his method have shifted since 1920, Heidegger's actual method remains primarily the same. If we read this essay in the light of Heidegger's earliest methodological dictates, the argument reveals a familiar structure. The matter of concern is technology. What relation-sense do we find in our engagement with technology? The most obvious relation-sense is that of use, much like our previous discussion of the coffee cup. Our first insight, then, is that we relate to technology in terms of our daily activities of getting things done during which technology shows up as a means for achieving an end. When, further, we inquire as to an enactment-sense of this relation we find that technology as a means is encountered in enactment as a human activity. We had previously shown that 'use' is not itself a primordial relation-sense, because it does not require an

enactment at the level of the self-worldly and because it does not, in being enacted, necessarily co-constitute our sense of who and what we are. Technology, understood in terms of a human means for achieving ends, must then be based upon a more primordial relation-sense and enactment-sense. The deeper relation-sense is that of cause, we understand what it means to use something in terms of the relation of bringing about an effect through the use of a cause. What enactment-sense can we find for the relation of causal-use? We might first note that causal-use does grow from a very specific enactment experience within the self-world, namely the experience of the self as a causal agent bringing about events and changes in the world. The concrete example of this enactment-sense Heidegger selects is that of the silver smith making a chalice, and what he reveals is that this enactment is not, in fact, experienced in terms of a causal agent bringing about an event in the world but rather in terms of a participation within a larger event that cannot itself occur through the power of the silver smith alone. The smith requires silver, the previous existence of chalices or something like them from which to draw a form, and social practices within which chalices feature in order to shape a chalice at all. Without the material, the form, or the social use of the chalice, it would be impossible to make one. For this reason the relational-sense of causal-use or causal-agent collapses into the more primordial relational-sense of indebtedness. Indebtedness itself is primordially enacted in that event in which we most fully experience ourselves as constituted entirely as indebted, namely the event of the world showing up as meaningful in the first place which alone allows for any meaningful action on our part. This phenomenological destruction and adjudication reveals the primordial meaning of 'use' and thus both means-end instrumental rationality and concepts of causality to be an openness to, and thus dependence upon, the disclosure of the world and ourselves within it. Technology, in turn, implicitly is an attempt to remain more fully open to the rise of a meaningful collective life world. However, through a process of historical drift it has become instead a process of dominating and forcing the world, others and ourselves to show up in terms of very specific standards of usefulness. The key here is that what one might have taken as the original problem-situation, namely an attempt to manipulate aspects of the world around us for the sake of subjective ends, is revealed in the course of analysis to be illusory rather than simply inadequately solved. The original motivational experience, or enactment, of the relation is not a problem that haunts us but an ongoing event that continues to call for a response from us through which our self-world is constituted.

The point of the above interpretation of "The Question Concerning Technology" is not to present strengths or weaknesses of either the dialectical or phenomenological method of analysis, but rather merely to demonstrate their differences. A much lengthier presentation would be necessary to draw any further conclusions. What should be clear, however, is that while the similarities between the two methods of immanent critique inevitably present a temptation to conjoin the two philosophical traditions, there are rich differences which we risk losing in too swiftly allying the traditions. Heideggerian phenomenology as it was methodologically developed early in Heidegger's career and practiced throughout his career remains a path for social critique that has been too little considered or practiced in its own right.

The final point to be made is that, while works such as "The Question Concerning Technology" can absolutely be read in light of Heidegger's earliest methodological commitments despite the tendency of Heidegger scholars to discuss his "phenomenological years" as set off from his later thought, the period of his open support for National Socialism cannot be so read. As I have already suggested, the prescriptive/descriptive distinction has often been used to save Heidegger from his own political choices. This same distinction has often been used to explain Heidegger's Nazi involvement through arguments that phenomenology did not provide any normative critical position from which National Socialism could be rejected.[4] The understanding of phenomenology as immanent critique I have offered undermines both this standard defense of phenomenology and the standard criticism of it. Rather than appeal to these responses, we can confront Heidegger's political philosophy of the early 1930s with his founding methodological reflections.

We have, of course, only dealt with Heidegger's political thinking in the 1930s very briefly and so what we can say is also very limited. It was already suggested that Heidegger's thought at the time is clearly divergent from what comes both before and after this period, but we can also say that Heidegger's earliest methodology is inconsistent with the implicit subjectivism of the two main elements of his political and social thought at the time of his Nazi involvement. Heidegger's methodology, as I have discussed it, is anti-subjectivist. It insists that ways of relating to things arise originally from events in which we come face to face with some aspect of reality. Relations are not created or imposed by minds or subjects, rather what we think of as mind arises as the echo of these primordial encounters with reality. The same point can be made, however, concerning social arrangements. These are not imposed through subjective creation but rather arise, at least at some point, from sincere encounters with reality and these encounters are to a large extent collective. Individuals or groups never find themselves meaningfully located within history by creating that history or through the creative force of some individual leader or thinker. Rather, the meaning of our place in history is arrived at through a process of recall, by rediscovering those personal and collective experiences in which a sense of reality and our place in it was uncovered, or through a new encounter with reality that cannot be forced and can certainly not be had by one member of a group, the leader, for the sake of the rest. Indeed, the very focus on the reduction to the self-worldly in Heidegger's methodology makes clear how impossible the role of some particular leader or prophet is within Heidegger's phenomenological methodology. In the same manner that habit fails to engage with a practice at the level of the self-worldly, it is impossible for anyone else to discover, create or impose primordial enactments upon us. We can share motivations and encounters, undoubtedly, but no one can bring it about that we do share them. Certainly conformity can be encouraged, taught and even enforced, but any occurrence of actual primordial enactment at the level of the self-worldly is as fatal to any such conformity as it is to habit.

[4]See, for example, Ernst Tugendhat's "Heidegger's Idea of Truth" (1994).

We can also see that the image of social life offered by Heidegger's phenomenology is dramatically different from one based on the friend/enemy distinction of Schmitt and, further, that an application of Heidegger's method to his views from the early 1930s would have revealed their distortive nature. Communities are constituted through overlapping layers of meaning and motivation that provide the basis for shared practices. The enemies of such a community are the dangers Heidegger often spoke against, primarily unthinking repetition of habitual or traditional practices without a grasp of their motivation and meaning. This perspective can only rather awkwardly be applied to actual people, in which case we would be concerned with people who somehow encourage thoughtless habitual behavior. But the deeper point is one that Heidegger would develop later in "The Question Concerning Technology," namely that the very domination or negative influence one might attempt to identify with individuals, groups or practices in society itself derives from a process of drifting from primordial motivations and meanings. In other words, none of our relations to each other are originally relations of sheer domination but rather aim at responding to encounters with the meaningfulness of the world. When cases of conflict arise, the philosophical response is one of phenomenological destruction and adjudication through which we clarify and reconnect with original shared meanings and motivations. Through this process we discover that the status of "enemy" is always a rather shallow one arising from a deeper level of shared meanings and concerns. This non-primordiality of the enemy relation makes it impossible to affirm the struggle against an enemy as definitive for a people. Other than in the early 1930s, struggle for Heidegger is struggle against some form of forgetfulness and thoughtlessness.

The final, and likely the most important, point to be made is that the response of Heidegger to the events of the early 1930s should have been to inquire into the enactment-sense of the relations with the world and others National Socialism offered. To provide such an analysis is well beyond the scope of this work, but it would consist in looking closely at what enactments of National Socialist relations Heidegger would have had access to at the time of his decision to join the party. It seems very likely that, despite the horrors that were still to come, there was more than adequate enactment-sense to the Nazi phenomenon for a careful phenomenological analysis to have revealed its deeply distorted and destructive motivations. But this is, admittedly, something we can only suggest at this point. What should, however, be clear is that Heidegger's early methodology and its later manifestations provide adequate grounds for criticizing his political choices and elements of his overt political philosophy from the early 1930s. It is precisely through considerations like this that the promise of Heidegger's phenomenological method for social and political thought, and the extent of his own failure to apply this method when it mattered most, can be clarified amidst the exceptionally diverse attempts to engage with Heidegger's phenomenology politically.

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