Heidegger's Question of Being: the Unity of *Topos* and *Logos*

Axel Onur Karamercan[1]

Abstract

In this article, I elucidate the significance of Heidegger's 'question of being' from a topological point of view by explaining the relationship between his thought of place and language. After exploring various hermeneutic strategies of reading Heidegger's oeuvre, I turn to Richard Capobianco's interpretation of Heidegger and critically engage with his idea of the experience of being itself as the 'luminous self-showing of *logos*'. In doing so, I explain the later turn from 'truth' to 'place' and articulate why *logos* needs to be conceived as the gathering site of the presencing of being. In arguing against the primacy of passive receptivity and active projection, I put forward the primacy of language as the *topos* and *logos* of being. In returning to the Capobianco-Sheehan debate, I conclude by explaining why Heidegger's place-related notions cannot be thought metaphorically.

Keywords Martin Heidegger · Richard Capobianco · Being · *Topos* · *Logos*

Reading Heidegger

Most Heidegger scholars would agree that understanding Martin Heidegger means understanding his lifelong project of illuminating the 'question of being' (*Seinsfrage*), which is one of the most fundamental questions, if not—according to Heidegger—the most decisive question, of Western thought. When we ask the question of being with Heidegger, however, the difficulty is doubled, as not only the question itself but also Heidegger's own way of explicating it is at stake. Here a hermeneutic obstacle flashes right before us: Heidegger's thought spans over more than five decades and his collected works (*Gesamtausgabe:* GA), which includes various writings such as theoretical treatises, personal and students' notes, complete and incomplete texts for lecture courses, and letters. His gigantesque oeuvre consists of 102 volumes, with some of them—GA 72, 84.2, 92–3—remaining to be published. Though

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✉ Axel Onur Karamercan
onur.karamercan@utas.edu.au

[1] Meudon, France

one might expect that with the near completion of his 'ways, not works' (Gadamer, 1994, 135), we would arrive at a more comprehensive picture of his thought, this is not such a straightforward procedure. On the contrary, the more we are able to see the shifts and transformations that took place in his thinking, the more it is getting tricky to be able to keep the whole of his thinking in sight.

Where do we begin reading Heidegger and where does that take us? From his 1915 *Habilitationsschrift* on Duns Scotus's categories and meaning? From his early hermeneutics and interpretations of Aristotle that paved the way for him into the core issues of phenomenology? His magnum opus *Being and Time*, where he identified time as the horizon of the question of the meaning of being in 1927? His elucidations of the early Greeks, or his Nietzsche and Hölderlin interpretations in the 1930s and 1940s, which are inextricably bound together in the attempt of overcoming Western metaphysics and descending back to the beginnings of philosophy? His 1933 rectoral address which brought out the 'political' Heidegger? *Black Notebooks*, to unmask the so-called anti-Semitic Heidegger for once and all? The *Letter on Humanism* where he stated that language is the 'house of being'? *On the Way to Language*, as language was already the defining issue of his thinking of being from the very beginning? *Time and Being*, to reflect on the 'reversal' or the never written, second half of *Being and Time*? *Le Thor* Seminars, where he puts forward meaning—truth—place as the three defining steps and themes of his thinking? Does one start from the early texts and progressively move towards the later texts, or fix the later Heidegger as the ultimate point of reference and try to make sense of him moving backwards? In either case, could one ever come to 'appropriate' the other Heidegger that one may have—deliberately or not—ignored, delayed, forgotten, or misunderstood? Could one arrive at the same conclusions about Heidegger's philosophy after having commenced from a particular point in the GA? As the contemporary British songwriter Laura Marling says in one of her songs: 'What I leave behind, I come back to find/ It's no longer mine'.

As the 'question of being' is so fundamental and intricate, and Heidegger's thought and terminology in rendering the question meaningful is so particular and groundbreaking, it is perhaps understandable that Heidegger scholarship has seen the emergence of various approaches and hermeneutic strategies. One of the most widespread approaches is to read his thought by dividing it into two periods. A clear-cut distinction between the early and the later Heidegger, at least in its current form, originates from the American scholar William Richardson's seminal work *Heidegger, Through Phenomenology to Thought* (Richardson, 2003).[1] Following the paradigm of two Heideggers that Richardson's work proposed, it is often thought that Heidegger's *Being and Time* and subsequent lecture courses up until the 1930 lecture *On the Essence of Truth* involves a subjectivistic mode of thinking. Until that point, the transcendental outlook of his 'fundamental ontology' in posing the question of being from the standpoint of Dasein—the *essence* of human existence—outlines Heidegger's thought. By finding some support from Heidegger's sporadic

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[1] Laurence Hemming attributes the division to Karl Löwith's reading of Heidegger as tied to the question of the place of God (2002, 3).

assessment of his own work, the argument that his Dasein analysis led to a human-centric world view, which obstructed the main goal of the inquiry of making sense of 'being itself', is often entertained (Capobianco, 2022, 1–2).[2] According to this thinking, in his subsequent work, Heidegger abandoned the previous approach and shifted his focus to the actual matter (*Sache*), namely, being itself. Fortunately, we know what Heidegger thought about the distinction between Heidegger I and II. In the preface that he wrote to Richardson's cited work, Heidegger writes:

> The distinction you make between Heidegger I and II is justified only on the condition that this is kept constantly in mind: only by way of what [Heidegger] I has thought does one gain access to what is to-be-thought by [Heidegger] II. But the thought of [Heidegger] I becomes possible only if it is contained in [Heidegger] II. (Richardson, 2003, xxii)

What Heidegger writes here must be read with great caution. What he is saying is certainly not an agreement with the proposed divide between 'Heidegger I' and 'Heidegger II'. On the contrary, what he means is that such a distinction would remain baseless if what one seeks is a 'Heidegger II' that completely abandoned 'Heidegger I'[3] or a 'Heidegger II' that was already present as such in 'Heidegger I'. Heidegger's point is rather that his work can be read neither only teleologically—as if it were always becoming more perfect as Hegel's philosophical concept of absolute knowledge implied—nor retrospectively—as if it already contained all of its elements already from the beginning which could be discovered by simply looking back. Reading Heidegger means constantly moving back and forth between his writings—and even this by no means guarantees a proper understanding—only to find out that there are no fixed ends of his thought, but only ways or paths which always remain open, and that includes paths that sometimes lead to *nowhere* (*Holzwege*). Without accepting the possibility of arriving at nowhere, in fact, Heidegger's thought would not be as revolutionary as it is, and the contemporary ambition to force Heidegger to fit in narrow academic or metaphysical molds or oblige him to arrive at a predesignated place—be that the holy academy of phenomenology or the holy shrine of being—is precisely what continues to lead us astray.

Reading Heidegger Topologically

While Heidegger often alludes to a unity in his thought, the so-called unity must not be confused with univocality either, which is why the intrinsic nature of that unity demands a scrutiny. In the 1969 Le Thor seminar, in recapitulating the pathways of his philosophical trajectory, Heidegger suggests the following on September 6:

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[2] What the 'turn' implies for Heidegger's thought continues to be a hot debate (Malpas, 2006; Sheehan, 2015; Young, 2015; Nelson, 2015).

[3] I do not mean to suggest that Capobianco reads only the later Heidegger, or that he disagrees with everything that the early Heidegger has to say, as he clearly finds some hints of Heidegger II in Heidegger I (2014, 23-4).

Three terms which succeed one another and at the same time indicate three steps along the way of thinking: MEANING—TRUTH—PLACE (τόπος). If the question of being is supposed to become clarified, what binds together the three successive formulations must necessarily be disclosed, along with what distinguishes them. (Heidegger, 2012, 47)

This is only four days after he said:

[…] in order to avoid any falsification of the sense of truth, in order to exclude its being understood as correctness, "truth of being" was explained by "location of being" [*Ortschaft*]—truth as locality [*Örtlichkeit*] of being. This already presupposes, however, an understanding of the place-being of place. Hence the expression topology of be-ing [*Topologie des Seyns*]… (Heidegger, 2012, 41)

In both passages, Heidegger is being perfectly clear: There are no 'two Heideggers', but only three steps along the one and same way of thinking. A clarification, or at least a thematization of the link between these three notions appears to be the primary measure for any proper account of Heidegger. The main question to be answered, then, is not wherein and whereby the meaning of phenomena appear to us, but wherein and whereby the *appearing itself* occurs. Although I already referred to these passages in my other writings,[4] an odd disregard or even an indifference in Heidegger scholarship continues to triumph when it comes to acknowledging the significance of the 'place-being of place' (*Ortseins des Ortes*) (Heidegger, 1986, 73) which is perhaps why Heidegger himself saw the necessity of repeating himself. Indeed, it is often the case that the more fundamental aspects of his thought which concern the essential questions of ontology, hermeneutics, and phenomenology are put aside and more attention is paid to the connection between poetic imagery and spiritual experiences of landscapes, thus in ways that do not touch upon the essential features of Heidegger's ontological thought of place as linked with poetry (*Dichtung*). Therefore, what Heidegger's statement addresses must constantly be brought back in view.

Otto Pöggeler was one of the first commentators who perceived the centrality of the last stage of Heidegger's thought, which brings us to what is today called Heidegger's 'topology of being',[5] most notably explored by Jeff Malpas (2006, 2012, 2022) in contemporary Heidegger studies, but also explicitly discussed by Joseph Fell (1979) and addressed by Krzysztof Ziarek (2013). Pöggeler's concise description of the meaning of the topological is key:

[…] topology means a saying (*legein*) of the region or site (*topos*) of the truth, a determination of the region which unfolds as places of gathering, and gather-

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[4] I came across this passage for the first time in Malpas's work on Heidegger's topology (2006, 223).

[5] The two of the most notable appearances of the expression are from the *From the Experience of Thinking* (*Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* [GA 14]) in 1947 and *Seminars* (Seminare [GA 15]) in 1969 (1983, 84; 1986, 335, 344).

ing-together (*logos*) of guiding-terms (*topoi*) of European thought and in this way a gathering of the basic terms of one's own thinking. (Pöggeler 1981, 184)

Put differently, how being is to be *placed* in 'discussion' (*Erörterung*) and, in turn, wherein the discussion will situate (*erörtert*) us, is precisely what matters for Heidegger. This is a two-fold hermeneutic inquiry, one that simultaneously delves into the *topos* of *logos* as well as the *logos* of *topos*, or as Malpas puts it, 'a saying of place (*Ortreden*)' (2006, 33), which also refers to the place of saying. It must be pressed that the idea of place as *topos* at issue here, however, does not imply an architectural, ecological, geographical, geopolitical, or even a physical notion of place, even if Heidegger's conception certainly has crucial implications for these various dimensions of place. Moreover, Heidegger does not have an explicit 'philosophy of place' as such, in a way that could be compared with, for instance, the fourth book of Aristotle's *Physics* or Gaston Bachelard *Poetics of Space*. Of course, in his 1924–25 *Plato's Sophist* lecture courses (GA 19) especially §15 offers a preliminary account of Aristotle's *topos* in relation with *peras* (limit) and *thesis* (position) (Heidegger, 1997, 72–6). And though one might surely find close links between Heidegger's idea of place, finitude, movement (Cf. GA 53) and Aristotle's *topos* as 'the first immovable limit of what encompasses the thing' (Aristotle, 2018, IV 4 212a5–6a), it is also obvious that Heidegger's discussions of place belong to a larger context in comparison to Aristotle's physical discussion of the location of a being.

Instead of having place as a thematic focus on its own, it is rather that Heidegger's *entire* thinking, as a 'situated-discussion' (*Erörterung*), is a thought of place. If the 'early' Heidegger can write that 'The place is the ability a being has to be there, in such a way that, in being there, it is properly present' [*Der Ort ist das Dortseinkönnen eines Seienden*, dergestalt, daß es, *dortseiend, eigentlich da ist*] (Heidegger, 1992, 75, 109), this is because his thinking of place already commences in the 1920s and guides him all along the way. As I see it, Heidegger's thought of place nourishes from three important sources: it is part of a hermeneutic project of situating the question of being (this is also the sense in which it is historical [*Geschichtlich*]), it constitutes the basis of his phenomenology as a thinking of the locus of meaningful presencing-becoming manifest of phenomena, and it follows a strictly ontological mode of reflection in attempting to explicate how that presencing constitutes the basis of the question of being. Heidegger's account of place, or put more succinctly, his idea of *being-placed* in the clearing—our exposedness to the hiddenness of being—,[6] concerns the essence of the relational, open, finite (bounded), and particular 'region' or 'open country' [*Bereich, Gegend*] that from which the manifestation of being can be experienced (Heidegger, 2001, 129).

Starting from the 1930s, it becomes more and more clear that this region is language (*Sprache*), and more specifically, the poietic essence of language—not merely poetic in the sense of the aesthetic, embellished written or spoken poetry (*Poesie*), but *poietic* in the sense of 'clearing projection' that lets happen the open country at

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[6] Being is hidden because it is not only a being—a present thing——thought substantively, but rather is the clearing which lets things be—come to presence—thought verbally.

issue (2002, 44). Of course, poetry cannot un-conceal being itself, no more or less than science, but it can bring us into the region where an encountering with this (un) concealment can become possible. Therefore, it needs to be granted that his topology of being is also a topology of language, as first proposed by Ziarek (2013, 135). The significance of our human existence lies in our capacity to open ourselves up to this opening by thinking and poetizing (*denken und dichten*) the world, which is a correspondence (*Entsprechung*) that leads back to the saying-showing (*sagenzeigen*) of that situatedness itself. Being situated gives us the necessary perspective, opens us to the clearing, where we can conceive what manifests itself in its manifestation- and take things as the things that they are.

As such, from his Dasein analysis—Dasein as the openness of being—to the notion of the Fourfold (*das Geviert*)—as the site of the mutual belonging of the earth, the sky, mortals, and immortals—, from his notion of the clearing (*die Lichtung*)—as the concealed source of letting-be—to the idea of language as the 'house of being', an idea of place or situatedness, whether implicit or explicit, is always there as that which makes the experience of the appearing—presencing at issue a possibility. Heidegger's thought of place is an articulation of the finite, 'temporal' experience of being-(situated)-in-the-world (*Welt*), which leads to the attempt of bringing the self-concealment of being into language by heeding the poietic interplay between concealment (*lēthe*) and un-concealment (*a-lētheia*) on the earth (*Erde*) as a mortal. This is the context in which the shift from 'truth' to 'place' needs a closer look. Without reducing the (truth of) being neither to some kind of metaphysical-cosmological entity or process such as God, nature, or spirit, nor to the meaning-making capacities of the human being, understanding Heidegger beyond the hierarchical antagonism of 'transcendental activity' and 'passive receptivity' is necessary and possible by a topological mode of thinking.

Experiencing the Manifestation of 'Being Itself'

At this point, I would like to discuss the matter by engaging with the contemporary philosopher Richard Capobianco's reading of Heidegger. Capobianco proposes to offer a full picture of Heidegger's philosophy and identify the core issue of his thinking. Getting in a dialogue with him will allow me to problematize the critical link between 'truth' and 'place' that constitutes the second and third steps of Heidegger's philosophy. In this section, I will outline the most significant aspects of his thinking of being before moving on to analyzing his view of the correspondence (*homolegein*) between *logos* itself and human *logos*, which will illuminate the understanding of language as the place of the saying-laying-gathering (*legein*) of being.

Capobianco claims that 'being itself' (*Sein selbst*), not meaning (*Sinn*), remains the single issue of Heidegger's entire thought and he bases his Heidegger interpretations on this central idea,[7] which already situates his main interest in what is called

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[7] Writing the word 'being' with a capital B, Capobianco distinguishes the verbal meaning of 'being itself' as be-ing from 'being' as a substance (as *ousia*). I prefer to employ the lower case 'being' for two reasons. First, while Heidegger wishes to emphasize the verbal sense of being, he also wants us to

the later Heidegger. To clarify the meaning of the notion of being at issue, he differentiates being as beingness (*Seiendheit*) (2014, 40),—being as a metaphysical substance—from the 'being itself' as *alētheia*—the manifestation, coming to presence of being. What matters to Heidegger, then, is the happening of 'being itself' rather than a being in the sense of a Christian onto-theological entity (2014, 35, 92). Reminding the critical question of metaphysics as first raised by Leibniz, that is, 'why *is* there being but not nothing?', Heidegger's response, according to Capobianco, is the following: because things spontaneously emerge out of darkness, which connotes the 'manifestation' of being (*Offenbarkeit*) that brings everything into their own. In other words, the source of the meaning of being lies shows itself through its spontaneous manifestation, whose glimmering and gleaming (*das Glänzen*) emergence is independent from the performance of human subjectivity (Capobianco, 2014, 10, 29). The passage below captures Capobianco's thought in its entirety:

> All beings, in their own particular way, have this relation-as belonging to the primordial *Logos* that lays them out and gathers them. In this way, according to his (Heidegger's) vision, all beings, including human beings in a special manner, move along the Way as 'reaching out and bringing back' within the Open/Way (Being- *physis- Logos*). This dynamic of reaching out / bringing back' (*ausholen / einholen*) that he describes has several dimensions, but we may observe more broadly that this motif points to and points out once again (but in a novel way) his abiding insight into the way of all things, that is to say: All beings are on the way as they are moved along by the Being-way, and along their own way, at the heart of their wayfaring, is this perpetual, rhythmic flowing 'out and in' within the primordial 'out and in' of the Being-way itself. All things – the tree, the stone, the cabin; the flower, the child, the basket – all things 'breathing' in their own way within the 'breathing' of the Being-way itself. (2014, 89)

It turns out that 'all is one', for phenomena are different manifestation of the same source, namely 'being', or the 'overflow of presence' (2014, 44). This is why, according to Capobianco, we come across different names of being, such as *logos*, *kosmos*, *alētheia*, *Ereignis*, and *Seyn*, which all refer to the same—being itself (*Sein selbst*). If 'being itself' amounts to the truth of being, which Heidegger came to thematize by reinterpreting the early Greek thinkers in his lecture courses mainly between the 1930s and 1940s (2014, 19), the starting point of our thinking must not be Dasein, but the manifestation of being itself in relation to Dasein (2014, 8). If *Being and Time* spends more time on the first part and drifts away from its ultimate goal, Capobianco argues that the main project gets back on track when Heidegger

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Footnote 7 (continued)

be able to hear the substantive. Being is be-ing, and this manifests itself via the presencing of present beings. Thus, the 'ontological difference' is not a strict division between, on the one hand, 'Being' as a deistic spirit, or force and on the other, being(s) as mere entities. What needs to be thought is the unity of the be-ing of the being of beings. Put in another way, the presencing of the presence through what is present.

designates the meaning of *being* '[…] as manifestive, as showing itself from itself, as unconcealing, as shining-forth, as opening and offering itself, as addressing us and claiming us' (2014, 9). In other words, rather than dealing with transcendental conditions of the *apprehension* of being, the focus remains on explicating the experience of the truth of being that makes possible any apprehension as such, which is the meaning of being itself. With this argument, Capobianco sets out to explain the transition from 'meaning' to 'truth'.

Capobianco offers that the experience of 'being' as 'manifestation' demands from us to get rid of all sorts of idealisms and transcendental perspectives that deceive us to think that all that there is in the world hinges on our subjectivistic sense-making capacities. According to the Husserlian mind, 'being' is only a human construction in the consciousness. What truly matters is that 'things are made present by us', yet what concerns Heidegger is that 'things present themselves to us' (2014, 9). In that regard, Capobianco suggests that the Husserlian practice of the 'reflective, theoretical phenomenology' is a philosophical position that the later Heidegger abandoned. Even the early emphasis on the 'meaning of being' was only a formal indication, a marker whose goal was to reflect on the manifestness of being (2014, 10). For Capobianco, the role of the phenomenologist cannot solely be to examine the structure of subjectivity that makes sense of 'being', but also tell us what things really *are*, what it means to *be*. Capobianco claims, 'In other words, for Kant, as for Husserl in his own way, what is determinative – and therefore decisive – is the human being's construction or constitution of appearance' (2014, 45). This is precisely the reason why Heidegger turns to the first thinkers of Western philosophy, Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, only to show that the early Greeks were living in that very openness of 'being', the 'overwhelming thrust of presencing (Capobianco, *physis is* in its pure giving, which is 'what allows the human being to open a world of meaning' (Capobianco, *through* the clearing of being, the human being itself is not the clearing as such. Therefore, 'Only insofar as there is manifestation, emergence, is there meaning. This is also to say that Being qua manifestation is structurally prior to, and the ontological condition of, any "constitution" of meaning' (2014, 11). This is the basis of Capobianco's refutation of interpretations of Thomas Sheehan, who underscores Dasein's capacity of sense-making, and Hubert Dreyfus, who stresses Dasein's absorbed, skilful coping practices (I will come back to that topic in the closing section). For Capobianco, such accounts are incapable of capturing the Greek experience of being (2014, 47) as *logos*, *physis*, or *hen.*

Capobianco's reading of Heidegger puts forward the necessity of freeing human beings to encounter being itself as 'the holy' and 'the divine' (Capobianco,). The driving force of human existence, as experienced by the Greeks, must be the joyful 'awe' and 'wonder' before the manifestation of being. *Alētheia* as the 'truth of being' is the self-manifestation of being itself which was an 'immediate' (*unmittelbar*) experience (2014, 44). The immediacy of the pure-giving (*Es gibt*) of *physis*, which is something we have forgotten over time, remaining stuck in different versions of human subjectivity. The main issue that needs to be addressed here, then, concerns how—and where—the 'pure giving' of Heidegger's *physis* is to be

experienced by the human being as the holy (*das Heilige*). In other words, how—and where—is the pure giving of *Es gibt* to be 'received' or 'apprehended' (*vernehmt*) by the human being?

Language and Logos as 'Being Itself'

If 'being itself' implicates an endless event and unfolding of self-manifestation,[8] Capobianco infers, its meaning can never be exhausted by human signs. In its self-manifestation, being conceals itself (2014, 75–6). This is where he introduces the issue of language:

> In his distinctive way, what Heidegger appears to be vigorously arguing against is all philosophical conceptions of the 'sign' (language) as merely a subjective, mental phenomenon. His insistence is that the 'sign,' in Greek *sema*, *semeion*, *semainein*, must be thought, along with the earliest Greek thinkers, as 'giving' Being itself as *physis* as *alētheia*. (2014, 77)

While Capobianco admits that our relation to the 'being itself' is a 'languaged' (2014, 4) or 'wordable' (2014, 79) one, he presses the idea that *homolegein* of human *logos* is only a response to *logos* as 'being itself'. This is in line with his critique of various versions of idealism and his insistence on the move from 'meaning' to 'truth', as Capobianco claims that for Heidegger *logos* does not amount to human intelligence, logic, or the spoken word. He writes: 'The essencing of *Logos* is not reducible to formal statements or assertions or propositions or any form of meaning; nor is it reducible to any kind of human 'saying' (*Sagen*) or activity of the human being (Capobianco, 2014, 85). The human being appears as the passive, obedient 'responder' to the self-manifestation of being, *alētheia*, *physis*, *kosmos*, and *logos* (2014, 65–68). The hermeneutic role of the human existence is to be the messenger of that self-disclosure, constantly listening and responding to the emergence of the 'being-way'. The human being must learn to become the interpreter of *physis* in its endless gleaming and endless motion of breathing in and out (2014, 67; 89). Yet, if our experience of being itself is to be an 'immediate' (*unmittelbar*) one, then where should we locate (our being in) language?

According to Heidegger, if traced back to their origins, it could be seen that all philosophies of language share three key characteristics: first, methodologically, in approaching language as an object of knowledge, one already predetermines the essence of language as if it could be treated like an *object* standing up and against human subjects. Second, theoretically, one presupposes the Aristotelian view of language as the correspondence between articulated sounds and their associated meanings (Heidegger, 1971, 97). Third and finally, one thinks of language as a mere tool of communication between human subjects. In that regard, Heidegger certainly

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[8] Capobianco oddly relates this with Whitehead's process metaphysics, which makes the reader question whether Capobianco's reading of Heidegger is based on a problematic interpretation of Hegel, or even a Hegelian reading of Heidegger's Heraclitus.

differentiates between his thinking of language and various 'philosophies of languages'. Why and how come we say 'philosophies of language' and not specify a particular theory of language? Not only because Heidegger disagreed with the 'correctness' (*Richtigkeit*) of the representation of language proposed by philosophers of language—such as Wilhelm von Humboldt—(Heidegger, 1985, 12), but because he thought that the way in which we examine language scientifically and subjectivistically determines and transforms the essence (*Wesen*) of language, which makes up the essence of modern approaches such as meta-linguistics that are bound to remain metaphysical (Heidegger, 1971, 58). For Heidegger, what needs to be regarded is the ontological dimension of language wherein and whereby we can ask the presencing of being in and through language. Even if language must not be thought as the mere process of signification between the signifier and the signified, as Capobianco himself highlights, the relationship between the human being and the presencing at stake *always* occurs by way of language, which would render language an intermediary element. The experience of the presencing of meaningfulness can never be immediate, if what we mean by immediacy is the lack of the between. In underlining the way in which language and thinking is so deeply attached, Heidegger writes:

> When we go to the well, when we go through the woods, we are always already going through the word 'well', through the word 'woods', even if we do not speak the words and do not think of anything relating to language (2001, 129)

Heidegger's statement entails that we cannot deem language to be a mere container that is to be filled with our experiences of being. As he explicitly writes in his essay—translated as—*The Nature of Language* (*Das Wesen der Sprache*),[9] 'language is, as world-moving saying (*als die Welt-bewëgende Sage*), is the relation of all relations' (1971, 107; 1985, 203). This relation, somehow, only addresses mortals. Precisely for not being a mere expression of the human being, the event of language, which gathers together mortals, immortals, sky and earth in their mutual belonging together, clears a way of dwelling. This very event of language, which is not dependent on human signs but cannot be detached from them either, is a generative one on its own. In that regard, in the attempt of rescuing language from being a mere mental activity of the human being, one must be careful not to attribute to language a solely instrumental or linguistic value. Unlike how Capobianco takes it to be the case, we do not simply leave the 'limits' of human language, listen to *logos* itself and bring our passive experience of *logos* back into 'human language' (2014, 94), but *logos* itself already occurs in and through human saying. Saying otherwise would imply locating the occurrence (*Ereignis*) of *logos* in a metaphysical 'beyond', and not in the clearing where earth and sky, mortals and immortals are assembled. *Wherefore* human being's response to the primordial *logos* has to be a 'languaged' one remains to be the central problem here. One way of addressing this issue is by looking into the place-nature of *logos* and the discursive-nature of *topos*.

If we briefly take a look at Heidegger's 1951 lecture course '*Logos*', which is crucial for bringing the relationship between being, language, and place into sharper view, we can better identify why Capobianco's reading misses the significance of

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[9] Another possible translation of the title of this essay would be: *The Being of Language*.

Heidegger's explicit move from 'truth' to 'place' as the link between language and being remains ambiguous. In reiterating Heidegger, Capobianco suggests that logic, as the science of the principle of statements and laws of reasoning, is the metaphysical interpretation of *logos*. Accordingly, the more fundamental meaning of *logos* lies in Heraclitus' fragments, particularly in the fragment 50, which says: 'οὐκ ἐμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφὸν ἐστίν ἕν πάντα εἶναι'. The English translation of Heraclitus' fragment by Snell reads: 'When you have listened not to me but to *Logos*, it is wise within the same *Logos* to say: One is All' (Heidegger, 1984, 59). What would it mean to listen to *Logos* which is not human language? And what is the 'oneness' (*hen*) at issue? Heidegger mentions in number of places that in Greek, *logos* derives from the verb *legein*, which is etymologically related to English 'lay' and German '*legen*' (lie, lay) and '*lesen*' (read), and it has a wide range of connotations that all relate to the *locus* of speaking (*reden*). Heidegger's explication concerns the very essence of his topology of being, as he writes:

> *Legein* properly means laying-down and laying-before which gathers itself and others. The middle voice, *legesthai*, means to lay oneself down in the gathering of rest; *lechos*. is the resting place; *lochos* is a place of ambush [or a place for lying in wait] where something is laid away and deposited. (1984, 60)

Underlining the direct link between laying and saying, he goes on to argue: 'Saying and talking occur essentially as the letting-lie together-before of everything which, laid in unconcealment, comes to presence' (1984, 63). The essence of saying is *letting-lie-together-before*, which implies a showing that is not a mere indication or pointing-towards, but is a beckoning that summons us into its region of gathering. For Heidegger, the region at issue is where we encounter the unity of 'all' (*panta*). Now, as I explicated before, Capobianco's goal in reading Heidegger is to highlight the primacy of being itself over the human being, arguing that the role of the human being in its correspondence with being itself is to be the passive listener of the speaking of *logos*. Yet, the key point here is precisely to realize that in Heidegger's thought of being there is no hierarchy, neither from the direction of being versus the human being nor vice versa. When it comes to the thinking of *hen panta einai*, we can no longer talk about a primary and a secondary pair. Doing so would fundamentally detach the human being from the region of *hen*.

When Capobianco argues that saying and meaning equally appear as the 'limits' of our relation to 'being itself' (2014, 47), his notion of limit seems to be a restrictive one, and not Heidegger's idea of limit as *peras* as that from which the presencing of being commences. In turn, Heidegger's explanation of *legein* clearly shows that the mentioned place of the gathering (*Versammlung*) of being is not an encounter between being and human being as if those were two 'beings' separate things from one another; thus, *logos* itself cannot be detached from 'human *logos*'. Human language and *logos* itself are not separate *logoi* for they are gathered in the same *topos*. Otherwise, the human being and being itself would belong to two different *topoi*, which is not the case. This is the sense in which the *poietic* human being maintains the clearing of being, not in the sense of being its 'maker' but in the sense of being the keeper and *way-maker* of that region. It is the poet who knows the different layers and ways that stretch between the same region, which is expressed by Heidegger in

On the Way to the Language as follows: 'way-making puts language (the essence of language) as language (Saying) into language (into the sounded word)' (Heidegger, 1971, 130). *Logos* refers to the primordial place of presencing, where the experience of phenomena *as* phenomena becomes a possibility. In other words, going back to *Plato's' Sophist* lecture course, *logos* as language would be the *topos* of being, if we consider *topos* as the 'limit of the *periechon*, that which encloses a body, not the limit of the body itself, but that which the limit of the body comes up against' (1997, 65). Putting aside the fact that be-ing is not *a* body (*soma*) but the embodiment of that which embodies, language is not the boundary of being itself as if we are cut off from the region of being, but that which the boundary of the experience first touches. If the unity of being 'speaks' to us, it is because only the—poietic—human being is capable of hearing the saying of language *as* saying. Place is always accessible by way of its boundaries and ways: it is in that sense a being is bounded by the be-ing of language. But as Heidegger underlines in the concluding section of his lecture, Greeks never experienced language in this way. Let us consider the following passage:

> In fact, the Greeks dwelt in this essential determination of language. But they never thought it—Heraclitus included. The Greeks do experience saying in this way. But, Heraclitus included, they never think the essence of language expressly as the *Logos*, as the Laying that gathers. What would have come to pass had Heraclitus—and all the Greeks after him—thought the essence of language expressly as *Logos*, as the Laying that gathers! … Nowhere do we find a trace of the Greeks' having thought the essence of language directly from the essence of Being. (Heidegger, 1984, 77).

In fact, the Greeks turned their attention language as tongue, *glossa*, and expression voiced by sound and voice (*fonē*). This makes it clear that Heidegger's idea was not to naively to return to the Greek experience of 'being' and stop there, but to explicate what remained unthought for them and make an issue of it for the thinking of future. In this context, Heidegger concludes his words by saying that 'being remains the provisional word' (78), as the essence of be-ing is nothing but 'presencing: enduring-here-before in unconcealment'.

The Clearing: Metaphor and the Thinking of Place

Thus far, the need to get outside of the vicious circle where we are forced to choose between 'active' projecting and 'passive' receptivity of being becomes clear. In the *topos* of *logos*, there is no place for such a hierarchy. Nonetheless, the vigorous debate that took place between Sheehan and Capobianco on the meaning and the truth of being reveals us that this point still does not receive sufficient attention in contemporary Heidegger scholarship. Without getting into the specifics of their dispute, I would like to summarize the overall differences and parallels in their respective readings, which can situate my discussion of Capobianco's reading of Heidegger in a wider context.

In response to the line of thinking offered by Capobianco, Sheehan takes the opposite position of what he calls the prevailing *Seinology*, which hypostatizes being as

a 'Super-phenomenon' like a God or a cosmological force of nature, endowed with agency (2015, 229, 237). Thus he states that 'Underlying all of his work is a phenomenological reduction of things to their significance for human beings' (2015, 190). For Sheehan, being (*Sein*) was never the actual matter of Heidegger's thought as it was always about 'meaningfulness and its source' (Sheehan, 2015, xi). Put more precisely, the core issue of Heidegger's thought is the fundamental hermeneutic-existential source that gives rise to an understanding of being, namely, *whatever it is* that allows Dasein to be able to perceive phenomena in respect of their being. Accordingly, without the hermeneutic sense-making capacities that we possess, the question of being would not even enter our hermeneutic horizon. We, and things 'out there', would still *be* present, but our and their being would not be intelligible as a question concerning presencing. Accentuating the place-nature of the source of meaningfulness, Sheehan writes: 'He was after what allows for meaningfulness (*das Anwesenlassen*), the "whence" of significance' (*die Herkunft von Anwesen*) (Sheehan, 2015, 189). With that idea, one would think that Sheehan's account of Heidegger acknowledges the significance of the topological dimension at stake. If what Heidegger was after was neither *Sinn* (meaning), nor even *Sinnlichkeit* (meaningfulness), but the place (*topos*) (2015, 9), or the *open space* of meaningfulness, as Sheehan himself explicitly puts it, then, one would have to come to the conclusion that the main issue of Heidegger's thinking was to thematize this very place of meaningful disclosure, which is what Heidegger himself claims in Le Thor seminar in 1969. But, oddly enough, this is not the conclusion at which Sheehan arrives, and as such, the topological Heidegger is not the one that he prefers to feature. What Farin notes on the matter is thought-provoking:

> By blocking out this part in Heidegger's work, Sheehan effectively concedes that, contrary to his plan, the real scope of his study is not Heidegger's entire oeuvre. Instead, it is a very partial view on Heidegger's work from the assumed centrality of *Sein und Zeit*. (Farin, 2016, 123)

Accordingly, Sheehan's determination to get rid of the 'old' paradigm appears to be what prevents him from proceeding to the 'new' paradigm that he announces, which would have to be a discussion of the place-being of the clearing; the third and final step of Heidegger's thought –*topos*– would demand a discussion of the '*whence* (*woher*) of meaningfulness', and not only the 'whence *of meaningfulness*, of course, insofar this 'source' could be pondered within our hermeneutic capabilities.

Now, inasmuch as Capobianco and Sheehan disagree on a host of fundamental issues, they agree on a curious matter, which is that they both identify Heidegger's place-oriented thinking to be based on spatial metaphors and images. Having already critically dealt with Sheehan's account elsewhere,[10] here I will only look at Capobianco's reasoning. Like Sheehan, who insistingly considers notions such as the thrown-open, open space, clearing, countryside, among others, metaphors (2015, xvi, 21,101, 144, 222), Capobianco assesses *die Lichtung*, arguably one of the most central and intricate topological words in entire Heidegger lexicon, along with *das Geviert*, to be 'spatial metaphors' (2010, 114;

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[10] See Karamercan (2019) for a critical engagement with Sheehan's interpretation of Heidegger.

130). In *Engaging Heidegger*, Capobianco elaborates on the development of Heidegger's concept of truth as *alētheia* by drawing on the shift from the metaphor of lightning to the *Grund*-metaphor of the 'spatial image', namely the clearing (2010, 88–100). According to him, Heidegger's attempt was to overcome the imagery of 'lightning', which was overly burdened with the onto-theological connotations of the concept of the *lumen naturale*. Thus, towards the 1960s, Heidegger saw the necessity to move from one 'metaphor' to another, namely from a 'visual' one to a 'spatial' one (2010, 99). While the former 'metaphor' draws upon certain aspects of the metaphysical understanding of truth as *veritas*, Capobianco suggests, Heidegger formulated a more comprehensive account of truth as *alētheia*, in the sense of the temporal-spatial self-manifestation of being, which resonated with the Greek experience of being as *physis*.

It is peculiar that Capobianco's treatment of the idea of 'metaphor' in *Engaging Heidegger* contradicts Heidegger's own understanding of metaphors, as most systematically explained in his *The Ister* lecture course on Hölderlin's hymn *Der Ister* (1996, 16–27). In the *Letter on Humanism*, elaborating on the meaning of language as the house of being, Heidegger articulates that Hölderlin's thinking of dwelling and its poetic essence cannot be thought metaphorically:

> The talk about the house of being is not the transfer of the image 'house' onto being. But one day we will, by thinking the essence of being in a way appropriate to its matter, more readily be able to think what 'house' and 'dwelling' are. (Heidegger, 1998, 272)

In the following passage, Malpas puts why the place-related notions must not be thought metaphorically:

> […] to assume that space and place are used literally *only* when employed in relation to the 'objective' language of physics is, once again, already to assume the priority of certain quite particular ways of understanding these terms […] The claim that 'place'…can remain only a metaphor is simply a reassertion of a particular and fairly narrow view of the nature of place – a reassertion that seems to ill-accord with the complex character of the concept. (Malpas, 2018, 36)

To return to Capobianco's way of putting the matter, arguing that the clearing is a 'spatial metaphor' stems from the belief that the clearing in the wood, as a physical-real entity, is projected upon what Capobianco takes to be the 'truth of being' (*alētheia*), which is not the designated physical entity at issue. Such a move in thinking is suggestive of a rigid metaphysical separation between the 'ideal' from the 'real', the 'sensuous' from the 'non-sensuous', the 'mind' from the 'corporeal'. The etymology of the word 'metaphor' (*meta-pherein*) indicates a 'transfer', 'deportation', and 'carrying over' of the original meaning of words. Yet, in what sense the clearing could imply such a transfer of meaning, when the very word clearing is precisely what constitutes the essence of the presencing at issue? Yet, as also recently discussed by Malpas (2022, 102–4), that does not mean that the clearing is *literally* the same as 'being itself' since what 'literality'

means here is quite problematic on its own. Conceiving the matter in terms of the opposition between literality and metaphoricity does not solve the problem, but only renders it more difficult to grasp. Part of the trouble here lies in the fact that the literal is usually considered to amount to the physical, the concrete, the real, whereas the allegoric naming of being is considered to convey some sort of conceptual imprecision. Yet, let alone employing the 'place of being' as a spatial metaphor, Heidegger instead drops the word 'truth' and moves to the expression *Topologie des Sein/Seyn* in his later thought, so that we no longer think *alētheia* in terms of 'truth', which, being a metaphysically loaded notion, could prevent us from penetrating the most basic and important element of being, in terms of the unity of the laying-gathering-saying (*legein* of *logos*).

Eventually, while one might argue that Capobianco is sympathetic of the thinking of place at issue in Heidegger, as in engaging with Heidegger he explicitly refers to the idea of the 'love of place' (*topophilia*) of Gaston Bachelard and explicitly mentions Norberg-Schulz's notion of the 'spirit of place' (2010, 125), Capobianco's thinking hardly goes beyond a spiritual admiration of various locations and landscapes. While such an ontic thinking of place occasionally figures in Heidegger's thought as well, it is not the core of his topology as such. Although Heidegger often refers to the significance of his Todtnauberg hut for his thought, how his philosophy draws elements from the simplicity of the Swabian countryside, how nature, and not the hustle and bustle of a city determines the rhythm of his thinking (Heidegger, 1981, 28), an extensive exposition of the link between the ontological essence of place (*Ort, topos*) and particular locations (*Stellen*) is absent in his writings.[11] This is one of the shortcomings of Heidegger's thinking, which not only leads to the ongoing confusion regarding the role of his thinking of place, but also encourages a host of readers to make irrelevant connections between his topology and his so-called 'spiritual' and certainly senseless version of National Socialism.

Even though Capobianco challenges the contemporary technological-calculative essence of modernity and liberate the human being towards the holy experience of being, the claim concerning the 'immediacy' of the luminous experience of 'being itself' exceeds the limits of Heideggerian territory. While Capobianco cannot be simply countered by the line of thinking that Sheehan proposes—by going back to mere 'meaning' or 'sense'—for Sheehan's position is subject to a critique that comes from Heidegger—the attempt to make sense of being by appealing to the immediacy of experience succumbs exactly to the danger of 'ontological mysticism'—the other danger being 'self ruinous subjectivism'—, which was voiced by Gilbert Ryle as early as 1928 in his review of *Being and Time* (Ryle, 1978, 64).[12] After all, how far the promised immediacy of experience can take us *today* also needs to be

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[11] The most pertinent writing of Heidegger in that respect would be his *Sojourns: The Journey to Greece* (2005) where he goes back and forth between the ontological, historical, mythological considerations and everyday impressions of Greece. It is evident that even in actual locations Heidegger constantly looks for the ontological experience of place.

[12] To what extent Capobianco's Being differs from Plotinus's *henology* (presencing as mere temporal-spatial emanation from the One) or Spinoza's pantheistic *Deus sive natura* (the sameness of God and nature) remains questionable.

questioned. Somewhat ironically, the immediacy of experience has become one of the defining characteristics of our technological age, which leads but to the pretension of an *immediate* and *infinite* access to phenomena. The technological world of boundless relations is indeed the place of various life experiences (*Erlebnis*), be it mystical, religious, holy, or technological, but not the sober place of the experience (*Erfahrung*) of the presencing of being. Where Capobianco's thinking brings us is a spiritually a rich and resplendent place, but Heidegger's abode is not the same one.

Heidegger's thought of place shows that 'being' is neither dependent on the human being, nor it is independent from it. Since there is not a structural 'priority' at issue, place does not ground 'meaningfulness' or 'truth' either. Place is not an onto-theological principle, not a mere location of being (as the here or the there) but it is always attached to the dwelling that occurs in that place –dwelling as 'in-dwelling' (*Inständigkeit*), standing in the openness of the presencing of being. Heidegger's thinking of place provides us with the possibility of interpreting and understanding that what we take things *to be* depends on our nearness to them. Without learning to stand in the appropriate nearness of things, we are not only bound to misinterpret them, but we cannot even understand that we misinterpret them. Thus, Heidegger's topology, as a 'discussion that situates', opens a valuable window to consider the significance of phenomena, e.g., events, relations, entities, persons, in terms of their situatedness. Only by traversing this region we can access what and who they are.

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