

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is to provide a new account of the fundamental concepts and arguments that define Heidegger's early work; specifically, my focus will be on the period from 1919 to 1935. I am interested in three sets of issues in particular, and in the interaction between them. The first concerns the interpretation and validity of the various philosophical theses which Heidegger advances. How, for example, should we understand his theory of intentionality? In what sense, if any, does he regard linguistic or propositional meaning as a secondary phenomenon or even a distorting one? What exactly is Heideggerian "understanding" or "anxiety" and what, if anything, do these ideas imply for current debates over conceptualism or 'know how' or normativity? How do his views on these and other topics relate to those of other phenomenologists, or to contemporary analytic research? The second set of issues concerns the complex links between Heidegger's own thought and his extensive and vastly detailed commentaries on the philosophical canon. Why, for example, does he place such emphasis on Kant's Schematism? How does the role of society in texts such as *SZ* mirror or diverge from its role in Heidegger's predecessors such as Hegel? Why are Heidegger's remarks on Plato, whether pages or years apart, so often deeply conflicted, hedged, alternately hesitant and overlaid? I will place particular stress on Kant, an author whom Heidegger knew in huge detail and to whom he devoted more than a thousand pages of intricate commentary: examining the tripartite relationship between Heidegger himself, his reading of Kant and an orthodox view of the Critical system will prove an important exegetical tool, one which throws into relief many of the unspoken assumptions that underpin Heidegger's own thought. The third set of issues

concerns Heidegger's distinctive conceptual apparatus and its connection to the development of his philosophy. What *exactly* does he mean by "being" and what are the implications of that answer for doctrines such as the ontological difference? What is the distinction between discoveredness [*Entdecktheit*] and disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*], or between the different senses of temporality marked by "*Zeitlichkeit*" and "*Temporalität*"? What work is being done by those distinctions? Could they be articulated in another philosophical vocabulary – if not, why not? Similarly, what does he mean by "freedom" and how does he ultimately come to see it as "prior even to being and time"?¹

My plan is to look in detail both at the core questions within each of these three sets of issues and at the interaction between them. I argue that the picture of Heidegger which emerges is radically different from that currently dominant, especially within the Anglo-American literature. To take a single case, I deny that Dasein's primary level of experience is nonconceptual: I defend this view against the widespread treatment of Heidegger as a pioneering nonconceptualist. I also argue, however, that the picture of Heidegger which emerges from my reading captures what is distinctive in his thought, what sets his theory apart from any other philosophical position. To stick with the same case, for example, I contend that whilst Dasein's primary intentionality is conceptual, it is *nevertheless* nonpropositional. I thus present Heidegger as attempting to mark out a distinctive logical space, one missed by both conceptualists and nonconceptualists in so far as they equate the conceptual and the propositional. Further, I show how his attempt to defend this move is closely tied to the unfinished, and I suggest unfinishable, project of *SZ*, and I chronicle his attempts to shore up that project in the years after 1927.

The structure of the book is as follows. I begin in Chapter 1 with Heidegger's theory of intentionality. I argue that this is best approached via two claims: that propositional intentionality is in some sense explanatorily derivative, and that propositional intentionality is in some sense linked to a particular ontology, that of the "present-at-hand". I canvas ten existing accounts of these two claims as defended by Dreyfus, Carman, Wrathall and others. I argue that despite their sophistication no existing account meets the twin criteria of exegetical and philosophical plausibility. In Chapter 2, I therefore offer a new interpretation of the supposed link between

¹ Ga31: 134.

the propositional and the present-at-hand as sketched in texts such as *SZ*§33. Locating Heidegger in relation to Russell and Frege, I claim that his point does not concern propositional intentionality itself, but rather only a subset of propositions, those that have been subjected to a particular meta-linguistic analysis. I contrast my view with those of Blattner, Dahlstrom, Carman, Wrathall and others and argue for its advantages. In Chapter 3, I turn to the other claim through which I approached Heideggerian intentionality, the claim that propositional content is in some sense explanatorily derivative. This chapter is the longest in the book, and it is the most complex. The key to Heidegger's position, I suggest, lies with his idea of understanding 'something as something', or, as he puts it, understanding 'a as b'. To grasp his argument one needs to look closely at each component here: the 'as' and the *a* and *b* variables. After discussing the 'as' in relation to Heidegger's work on meaning and on the idea of a context, I address the *a* variable: I distinguish several distinct representationalist theories of intentionality and I contrast Heidegger's position with those, with the West and East Coast readings of Husserl and with contemporary analytic disjunctivism and relationalism. My main focus, however, is on the *b* variable, which I argue plays a foundational role in Heidegger's system, determining his understanding of concepts such as meaning, the ontological difference and the a priori. I support these claims by looking closely at Heidegger's work on Kant and on Plato: in both cases, I provide a new interpretation of the relevant texts. My conclusion is a novel one: propositional intentionality is derivative for Heidegger on a mode of experience with a unique *grammar*, a mode of experience that is conceptual and yet nonpropositional. I show, further, how his thinking on this issue is decisively influenced by, and indeed constitutes a "repetition of", in *SZ*'s distinctive sense of that phrase, Kant's Schematism and Plato's doctrine of ideas.

In Chapter 4, I shift from intentionality to metaphysics in the broadest sense. I contend that Heidegger's work on truth and his definition of "being" both mesh with my approach. I also argue for a realist interpretation of his work and contrast my views on this with those of Blattner, Carman and Lafont. But the results of this chapter do not, I warn, change the fact that the underlying position which Heidegger defends, the position set out in Chapter 3, faces significant philosophical problems. I propose, in Chapter 5, that we thus see a development in Heidegger's thinking as he attempts to work through these

problems in the late 1920s and early 1930s.² This shift culminates in an increased emphasis on freedom: I argue that this emphasis is designed to articulate the central role of normativity within Heidegger's system and I show how this both fleshes out and extends strands present in *SZ*. I support my claims here by looking closely at Heidegger's work on Kant's philosophy of action: I stress the importance for both philosophers of the link between normativity and the first-person perspective. I close in Chapter 6, by showing how those questions of freedom, of the first person and of "mineness" link to authenticity. I contend that for Heidegger authentic agents possess a distinctive awareness of the limitations of normative space, of the "space of reasons" to use the Sellarsian metaphor. Heidegger refers to those limitations as *Dasein's* "finitude" and unpacks them through discussion of existential concepts such as death and guilt. I explain and critically assess the way in which Heidegger connects those discussions to issues such as perfectionism, *phronesis* and 'the one': I contrast Heidegger's position with Hegel's, and my account with those advanced by contemporary commentators such as Crowell and Carman. I end by indicating how the various lines of argument I have sketched might be brought together to overcome the problems which ultimately undermine texts such as *SZ*.

Heidegger's philosophy, as I see it, is an innovative and highly unusual one. My goal in this book is to try to set out and assess some of the distinctive inferences, assumptions, influences and errors that drive it.

² I regard claims about this shift as independent from more familiar debates about the *Kehre* as it is usually understood; for example, I make little appeal to texts such as Ga65. Generally, the time frame on which I focus means that I take no particular view on either the existence or nature of a 'later Heidegger', although I find any suggestion of a binary change extremely implausible. Where my arguments support or clash with some specific thesis regarding texts or terms after 1935 I will note this (see especially p. 254).