Thinking Particularity: Scotus and Heidegger on Metaphysics

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	4
1. Ontological Commonality and Divine Difference: Scotus between Univocal Speech and Onto-Theology	
Univocal Speech and Ontological Commonality Scotus on the God of Theology Radical Particularity and the Divine Essence	21 31 38
2. Particularity and the Critique of Generality in Technology and Metaphysics	
Technology and Generality Metaphysics and the One Radical Particularity and the Critique of Metaphysics	44 51 59
3. The Possibility of Anti-Metaphysical Truth in Heidegger and Scotus	
Truth in Metaphysics: Representation, Adequation, Certainty, Challenging Aletheia as a Particular and Dynamic Event of Truth Scotus on Truth: Intuitive Cognition, Particularity, and Aletheia	69 83 98
Conclusion	112
Bibliography	121

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INTRODUCTION

But the First Principle [the philosophers hold] is one in every respect. The world, however is composed of varied things.

—Al-Ghazālīⁱ

The connection drawn here between John Duns Scotus and Martin Heidegger is bound to seem, if not unjustified, then at least eccentric. What possible connection could there be between an early 14th century theologian-philosopher and Heidegger, the founder of so many distinctly modern and postmodern schools of thought? And yet, the hints leading to such an investigation are scattered throughout Heidegger's work. Heidegger often refers to Scotus—having written some early pieces, including a doctoral dissertation, on him—and this has provoked numerous historical studies of Scotus's influence on Heidegger. Although a great deal of work remains to be done regarding this influence, no such historical analysis will be attempted here. Rather, this is a philosophical study, which will focus less on Heidegger's references to Scotus than on the deep conceptual connections between their thought. Ultimately, I will argue that Scotus motivates Heidegger's later work on the overcoming of metaphysics.

To claim an anti-metaphysical role for Scotus might seem strange because Scotus *was* a preeminently metaphysical thinker. He is usually discussed by commentators and historians of philosophy as an advocate of many innovative metaphysical (in Heidegger's sense of the word) positions; most importantly, univocity and its corollary, common Being. I will argue, however, that there is a strong connection between Heidegger's later thought and a number of radically anti-

metaphysical moments in Scotus, which present readers with the possibility of a dynamic and immanentist thought. This central tension between the metaphysical and the anti-metaphysical strands of Scotus's thought is the prime motivating factor in the analysis of Scotus in this work.

Scotus is therefore doubly-positioned with respect to the Heideggerian critique: on the one hand, he represents the metaphysics Heidegger looks to overcome, and on the other, he prompts this overcoming in the first place. This is interesting for a number of reasons. First, an understanding of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics and his development of an alternative account of the possibilities of authentic thought will allow for new readings of Scotus. Secondly, these new readings of Scotus will enable us to challenge Heidegger's almost wholly negative historical account of the western philosophical tradition. In fact, this study will hopefully reveal that even the most "metaphysical" of thinkers, in Heidegger's particular sense, is still engaged meaningfully with the problem of metaphysics. Lastly, our reading of Scotus will let us read Heidegger's thinking of metaphysics in new ways. Although Heidegger's critique of metaphysics takes many forms, a new focus on immanence and particularity is the crucial connective.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) has certainly been one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century. But this influence is as disparate as Heidegger's work itself. Heidegger argued that his thought was centrally an attempt to deal with the question of Being, iii but because Heidegger's career spanned such a long and fruitful period, it is difficult to generalize about his work. Heidegger started out as Catholic thinker, and this early work was explicitly engaged with Scholastic

philosophy. Heidegger later disavowed this work and consequently, not much attention has been paid to Heidegger's Scholastic influences (as we will see, however, these influences remain pervasive). Heidegger has never been read primarily for his work in this period, and readers have tended to accept Heidegger's own statements that this work had little relationship to his later work.

Heidegger began a new phase of his philosophical development when, in the early 1920's, he came increasingly under the influence of the philosopher Edmund Husserl. Husserl's phenomenology had a great influence on Heidegger's magnum opus, Being and Time. In Being and Time, Heidegger deals with a number of themes in relation to Dasein (used by Heidegger in reference to human beings, those beings for whom Being is an issue). The work as published represents only the first two divisions out of a planned six. The first of these parts represents an analysis of the structure of the world, while the second is more centered on the ethical problems which confront Dasein (this second division would be greatly influential with the French existentialists). Centrally, Being and Time is systematic structural investigation of the way in which human beings are in the world around them. Heidegger attempts to rigorously describe the structures of man's existence, in the most general sense (Being and Time presents, after all, not an investigation of a particular Dasein but of the entire type), with an elaborate system of technical terminology.

After publishing *Being and Time* in 1927, Heidegger started to change the focus of his thought. Particularly in the mid-1930's he began, in works such as "The Origin of the Work of Art" (written between 1935 and 1937 and published in 1950),

Contributions to Philosophy (notes dating from the years 1936-1938, published later), and Heidegger's lectures on Freidrich Nietzsche (on different subjects almost every year between 1936 and 1942), to take his thought in a number of new directions. This new phase of Heidegger's thought finds its most explicit starting point in Heidegger's post-war essay "Letter on Humanism," in which he explicitly lays out a new project for philosophy: the destruction of metaphysics. Commentators have traditionally called this period of Heidegger's thought die Kehre (the turn) in reference to perceived new dimensions to Heidegger's thought and the break with the project of Being and Time, although Heidegger denied that any such turn had taken place. This claim seems in some ways disingenuous. While Heidegger makes frequent references to Being and Time in his "Letter on Humanism," these are clearly of a revisionary nature, and the elucidation of the passages which Heidegger quotes in support of his position are often interpreted in a way that is difficult to reconcile with the explicit project of *Being and Time*. It is probably necessary to speak of a distinct transitional phase between the publication of Being and Time and the work of the mid to late 1930's.

This turn is also apparent in Heidegger's new philosophical style. Heidegger broke *stylistically* with the project of *Being and Time* in two ways. First, Heidegger adopted the short philosophical essay as his new genre of choice, and, simultaneously, greatly changed his mode of expression. Where *Being and Time* often employs technical neologisms to construct a larger theoretical framework, the later writings are instead characterized by a much more theoretically fluid style (characterized by fluctuating word choice, indefinite terms, and a tendency toward

circumlocution). The later works present, therefore, a clear break with the system-building of *Being and Time*. Even though Heidegger continues to create new words as he writes, these are no longer always used in a systematic and technical fashion. Instead, Heidegger warns his readers that

Questioning builds a way. We would be advised, therefore, above all to pay heed to the way, and not to fix our attention on isolated sentences and topics. In line with this destabilizing method, Heidegger keeps shifting terms and employing multiple words for the same phenomenon. More importantly, for our purposes, he turns to a re-examination of the tradition in his later works. So, while *Being and Time* was greatly influenced by a number of canonical thinkers, these influences remain unacknowledged because they are subsumed into the greater structure of the work. The later works, conversely, represent both a more explicit and a more critical engagement with the historical tradition of philosophy in the West.

Ultimately, though, the extent to which the new themes of Heidegger's philosophy represent a decisive philosophical break with *Being and Time* and not simply a new emphasis is not particularly relevant here. What is essential are the new *themes* that Heidegger introduces in these later essays: a concern with the problem of metaphysics, a new historical approach to the history of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*), a much more developed and central account of truth as unconcealment, a critique of technological thinking, an interest in the working of art, an emphasis on language, a positive focus on early Greek thought, and a radically new style of doing philosophy. Some of these themes lie outside the provenance of this project and some will be the focus of much discussion, but it is important that, for Heidegger, this is not simply an accidental list of concerns, but rather the many facets of a new central project: an

engagement with the metaphysics as a problem. Heidegger's critique of metaphysics is the central theme of his later work, the problem that motivates all of his later thinking.

In Heidegger's later thought, the problem of metaphysics is raised in the context of the new project of *Seinsgeschichte* (the history of Being). Instead of attempting to approach the problems of philosophy from an a-temporal or a-historical perspective, Heidegger sets out to explore the problem of being in a historical context. Unlike Hegel, who was trying to think historically about the totality of that which has been thought, Heidegger announces that he is thinking what has *not* been thought, which is to say, Being. For the later Heidegger, thinking is necessarily historical and there is no point outside of time from which we can approach philosophical questions.

Metaphysics is, for Heidegger, not, or rather not only, a set of philosophical doctrines about how the world is constructed and about how philosophy should be practiced, but, also a phase in *Seinsgeschichte*. In reading the history of being, Heidegger concludes that the vast majority of Western thought, from Plato until the present, has been an epoch of *Seinsvergessenheit* (the forgetting of being), which has been characterized by the rise of metaphysics. Instead of engaging with the question of being, Western thinkers since Plato have been engaged in metaphysics—a method of philosophizing that always seeks to find the absolute truth (both the most universal and the most immutable) behind everything. Metaphysics always seeks therefore to create, in the terminology of metaphysics, some transcendent ground which can justify its system-building. Heidegger situates metaphysics, the central problem

confronting man in the modern world, as a vast epoch of thought which has dominated the last 2,500 years of occidental thought.

This is a radical claim, and, at first glance, it is likely to seem not only simplistic, but overtly reactionary. Heidegger's claim is actually far more nuanced than this simplistic account would make it seem; he recognizes that this period a period which is obviously replete with a great variety of philosophical perspectives. The project of defining the necessary features of metaphysics necessarily leads to overgeneralization. To see why Heidegger thinks that the whole of philosophy from Plato on has been characterized by a basically unitary metaphysical approach to the questions of philosophy, we will have to step back and examine Heidegger's account of the essential features of metaphysics.

From a phenomenological standpoint, the world around us is characterized by great variety. Things confront us in a variety of forms and, at first glance, the world seems to be composed of irreducible diversity. For the metaphysician, however, this external diversity is merely superficial, and the world, at least the super-sensory world that grounds phenomena, is in fact characterized by unity. Metaphysics is, therefore, characterized above all by the search for some 'ground' which will justify its claims about the world and reveal the essential unity that characterizes every distinct phenomenon, a ground which is general or universal enough to encompass the common features of all beings: "When metaphysics thinks of beings with respect to the ground that is common to all beings as such, then it is logic as onto-logic." This search for a ground may take many forms, and metaphysics has, historically, sought this ground in a bewildering variety of places, for instance "as spirit after the

fashion of spiritualism; or as matter and force, after the fashion of materialism; or as becoming and life, or idea, will, substance, subject, or *energia*; or as the eternal recurrence of the same events." All of these disparate attempts to make sense of the world and to ground its intelligibility in some external source of meaning have the search for this eternal and general ground as a common feature.

This ground must both justify the claims of the system, in the sense of placing them beyond the reach of doubt, and discover the unitary and unchanging reality that is assumed to underlie our ever changing and heterogeneous world. The dual impulse of metaphysics is therefore to posit both a 'more real' non-physical world that justifies our claims about this world and always to search for the explanatory ground of the world, on the principle that everything happens for a reason:

But metaphysics represents the beingness of beings [die Seiendheit des Seienden] in a twofold manner: in the first place, the totality of beings as such with an eye to their most universal traits but at the same time also the totality of beings as such in the sense of the highest and therefore divine being [göttlichen Seienden]. vii

This crucial passage points not only to the way in which metaphysics is defined by its inevitably unsuccessful search for the 'more real' and the doubtless, but also to the way in which every metaphysical understanding of God is yet another attempt to find some unshakeable, eternal, and unchanging foundation on which to build a philosophical system. The ground of metaphysics has therefore always dictated the essential features which metaphysics requires of its 'God.' The 'God' of metaphysics is therefore purely conceptual—just a metaphysical projection—that serves as the embodiment of every theoretical need of metaphysics.

First, then, metaphysics is always characterized by the search for the most general truths. This is reflected, for instance, in the stress placed on essences—common or general natures—in traditional philosophy. The Scholastics always sought, in inquiring after the nature of a particular thing, to discover its essence, what it shared with other similar things. And this search for generality did not end with the end of the talk of essences in the Early Modern period. Instead, this search was transformed from the search for essential natures to the scientific and philosophical search for rational laws, logical or physical, which would be maximally general and capable of explaining the behavior of everything. Ultimately, this search for generality is representative of the drive in metaphysics to discover the essential unity that these ever more general essences and laws embody. With this ultimate goal in mind, Heidegger says:

For this reason my inaugural lecture *What is Metaphysics?* (1929) defines metaphysics as the question about beings as such *and* as a whole. The wholeness of this whole is the unity of all beings that unifies as the generative ground. To those who can read, this means: metaphysics is onto-theo-logy. viii

Onto-Theology is the union of Being and God that metaphysics uses to justify the order of beings as such. The ultimate commonality of all beings is predicated upon the existence of an absolute Being (in the guise of God) that unites everything in itself. The search for ultimate generality is, therefore, constitutive of metaphysics as such.

Closely tied to this metaphysical program of unity and generality, is the metaphysical search for an eternal and unchanging ground. The real is defined not only in terms of generality among existent things, but also in terms of general applicability through time. This stress on eternality and immutability is most clear in

metaphysics' understanding of truth. Equating truth representation means that metaphysics seeks the true in the general and eternal form of a thing, and then compares any particular and transient thing to this unchanging standard. So, for instance, a particular tree is 'true; or 'real' only insofar as it is resembles the common nature—'treeness'—of which it is an instantiation. Likewise, metaphysics always seeks the truth of an action in some universal moral code, and the truth of the proposition in some objective external state of affairs to which it is compared. In all of these examples metaphysics defines truth representationally. Taken together, generality and immutability form the essential constitution of metaphysics.

In discussing these aspects of metaphysics, we arrived at Heidegger's characterization of metaphysics as "onto-theology." Again, metaphysics is constituted onto-theologically, meaning it installs the highest being as a God to hold beings together. In "In the Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics," Heidegger defines onto-logic as thinking which seeks the common ground of all beings and theo-logic as the drive to unite all beings under one highest being. In other words, Onto-theology designates, for Heidegger, the stage of metaphysics that uses the "God of the philosophers" to justify its system-building. Specifically, a philosophical conception of God as the eternal, unchanging unity behind all creation grounds both the real existence of things and our knowledge of them. Heidegger famously declares concerning this conceptual misuse of God that:

This [the *causa sui*] is the right name for the god of philosophy. Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god.^x

This God represents, then, not a truly religious attempt at an engagement with the divine, but rather a metaphysical appropriation of the divine in order to satisfy the demands that there exist some ultimate singular and eternal ground of thinking. We can immediately see in these features why Heidegger ultimately connects metaphysics with a certain allied conception of theology, arguing that they are, in fact, a common project of thinking. It is this union between theological and metaphysical concerns that justifies Heidegger's move to describe the project of metaphysics as onto-theology.

Metaphysics is, then, the historical rise of thought which is characterized by the drive toward some general and immutable ground. For Heidegger, this period begins with Plato and continues to be the dominant way of thinking today. An analysis of Heidegger's approach to metaphysics reveals that, though it always has these same common features, it is manifested in a variety of ways. So, the thought of Plato and Aristotle, and the basically metaphysical assumptions they share, are both reflected and changed in medieval philosophy as a whole. These same themes are both repeated and further transformed in Western philosophy since Descartes, the period of modern metaphysics that is characterized more than anything else by the basic division between subject and object. As modern as this dualism may seem, Heidegger argues that it is merely another historical instantiation of the phenomenon of generalization into absolute substances. Finally, as we will see, metaphysics reaches its culmination in the thought of Nietzsche and in the advent of modern technology; both of which embrace a representational attitude towards truth and seek to subsume everything particular under some overriding value (determined, in the

case of modern technology, by the needs of the human being, and in the case of Nietzsche by the value-positing will).

This trajectory therefore enacts a growing anthropomorphism—the human being is gradually enshrined as the discerner, the guarantor, and finally the bestower of all truth. Ultimately, metaphysics is always reflected in some understanding of the human being. In this sense, every philosophy is a kind of 'humanism' insofar as it attempts to determine the essence of the human being as some general, unchanging, and exterior value to which every particular human being must strive. Metaphysics fails to really engage with the Being of beings because an interpretive ground is already presupposed:

Every humanism is either grounded in a metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one. Every determination of the essence of the human being that already presupposes an interpretation of beings without asking about the truth of being, whether knowingly or not, is metaphysical.^{xi}

This conclusion brings us face to face with the 'problem' of metaphysics: its aggressive striving to appropriate beings. Metaphysics refuses, in Heidegger's terms, to "let beings be," instead seeking to understand them in terms of some predetermined range of acceptable meanings. This is the insidious aspect of metaphysical thinking, and the reason that metaphysics is, for Heidegger, not simply a neutral phase in the development of human thought. Hopefully, this work will go some way towards making clear what exactly is lost when beings are predetermined in this way and what could be gained by a new thinking that would let beings be.

Heidegger calls this new kind of thinking, which would arise through the overcoming of metaphysics, "originary" thinking, in reference to the thought of the Pre-Socratic thinkers; Heraclitus and Parmenides in the particular. The search for this

"origin" motivates all of Heidegger's later thinking and is itself often at the heart of a wide variety of new themes in Heidegger's later essays. If the basic problem is that metaphysics has never thought its origin, then going back to the beginning will open it onto a new way of thinking. The concept of truth, for instance, as we will see in chapter three, undergoes a radical reinterpretation in Heidegger's work in order to fit into a new project of anti-metaphysical thought.

Falling squarely in the middle of the metaphysical tradition Heidegger lambastes is John Duns Scotus (1265/66-1308). Scotus was one of the preeminent philosophers of the medieval period, and the founder of a great school of thought, the influence of which extended into the 17th century. Scotus became a Franciscan early in his life, and then spent the better part of his adult life teaching (in Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, and Cologne). He was, by all accounts, a fabulous intellect, and his thought (squarely in the Franciscan tradition) was a highly original synthesis of Aristotle and Augustine which continues to spur discussion today. Nevertheless, Scotus's early death in 1308 meant that his works remain in large part unfinished. Scotus's undisputed works consist primarily of two series of lectures (edited by students and existing in a variety of manuscript traditions), a few short treatises, and a Quodlibet (the edited transcript of free disputation held by Scotus in which anyone in the audience could pose a question). The incomplete character of most of these works means that Scotus's body of work consists largely of questionable manuscripts and inauthentic texts. In the years between Scotus's death and the rise of textual criticism, a great number of spurious works were attributed to Scotus. In fact, one of the two works on which Heidegger wrote his dissertation is now attributed not to

Scotus, but to Thomas of Erfurt, a later speculative grammarian. This illustrates the difficult position of historical scholarship on Scotus (for Heidegger, this was never a problem—he always claimed that his was a work of philosophy and that the name of the author was therefore irrelevant to the ideas contained within). Today, the complete critical works of Scotus have only been begun. In light of this situation, the present work relies solely on the unassailably authentic works mentioned above.

The distinctly Franciscan synthesis of Aristotle and Augustine created by Scotus has traditionally been treated by commentators as the culmination of a great tradition of medieval philosophical and theological thought. Simultaneously, these readers have seen in Scotus the beginning of the end of medieval philosophy, insofar as Scotus was taken to occupy an unstable middle-ground between the thought of the High Middle Ages and the nominalism of William of Ockham (1288-1347). In this regard, Scotus has always occupied an ambiguous place in the history of thought, and his complex and subtle thought has often been read uncritically as the apotheosis of one position or another.

Throughout the course of this work, the two most important of these positions are Scotus's theory of univocity (and the related argument that Being is a common property) and his account of particularity (and the related theory of intuitive cognition). These ideas will be developed in greater detail in the following chapters, but, for now, it is important to see that these two ideas constitute a central tension in Scotus's work. The theory of univocity refers to Scotus's argument that names predicated of God must be used univocally, that is, these names have the same meaning when applied to God as they do when applied to objects of everyday

experience. Basically, this theory embraces the metaphysical understanding of the world as an ontological continuum, in which everything differs only quantitatively and not qualitatively. At the same time, however, Scotus argues for a new theory of particularity which affirmed a radically singular essence in every particular thing that undermines any hope of metaphysical generalization. These two ideas represent the basic tension in Scotus's thought between the project of metaphysics and its overcoming, insofar as one installs onto-theological generality and the other ruptures the possibility of generality. Scotus is therefore at once the instantiation of metaphysics and the possibility of "another beginning."

The present work is structured around the basic features of metaphysics discussed above. The first chapter deals with the problem of onto-theology as it relates to Scotus's understanding of the nature of God and the distinction between theology and philosophy. Recent discussions of Scotus have tended to position Scotus as the perfect target of the Heideggerian critique. Ultimately, however, it will become clear that Scotus's thought is not only not a caricature of onto-theology, but that it also involves a deeply anti-metaphysical use of radical particularity.

The second chapter turns to the problem of generality and unity as essential features of metaphysics and their opposition in a new thinking of particularity. This problem is discussed first in relation to Heidegger's critique of modern technology as an aggressively metaphysical approach to the world. This is followed by an elucidation of the nature of generality in metaphysics and the decisive role played by this tendency in constituting metaphysics. Finally, Heidegger's understanding of particularity and immanence is fleshed out in relation to Scotus's central and

groundbreaking discussion of the nature of particularity. This discussion of the role of particularity is centered around an attempt to see how a new thinking of particularity might be essential to any attempt to get back behind metaphysics.

Lastly, chapter three undertakes a discussion of Heidegger's critique of metaphysical understandings of truth. He argues that the diverse and complex approaches taken to the nature of truth in metaphysical thinking all share central metaphysical features. This is followed by a discussion of Heidegger's alternative account of truth as unconcealment and Scotus's ambiguous relationship to both metaphysical truth and truth as unconcealment. This is, in the end, an attempt to discuss the problem of eternity and immutability in metaphysics under the rubric of truth. This discussion of truth will allow us to see how metaphysics (the thought of Scotus in this case) is always internally destabilized. In fact, Scotus's account of particularity profoundly troubles metaphysics insofar as it presents the means of overcoming metaphysics within metaphysics itself.

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i Al-Ghazālī *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* Trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, UT: Brigham Young Press, 1997), 65.

Warious scholars have noted such links between Scotus and Heidegger, throughout his work (Heidegger even wrote his dissertation on two works then believed to be by Scotus), but almost nothing has been written concerning these connections. The only major work dedicated to these connections remains McGrath's survey of connections between Heidegger's early work and medieval philosophy in general. (McGrath, S. J. *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the Godforsaken*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006.) iii I have chosen to capitalize the word "Being" throughout this work. Translators of Heidegger have historically been undecided as to whether to translate *Sein* as Being or being (Heidegger's texts make no such distinction since all nouns are capitalized in German). Nevertheless, when quoting from published translations of Heidegger, I have followed the usage of the translator. No significance should be drawn from this alternation in usage.

iv Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik" (1953) *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (GA 7). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000, 7; as translated in: "The Question Concerning Technology" *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York: Harper & Row, 1977, 3.

^v Heidegger, "Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik" (1957) *Identität und Differenz* (GA 11). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006, 76; as translated in: "The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics" *Identity and Difference*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, 70.

vi Heidegger, "Einleitung zu »Was ist Metaphysik?«" (1949) *Wegmarken* (GA 9). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976, 365; as translated in: "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics" Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1975,

vii Heidegger, "Einleitung zu »Was ist Metaphysik?«," 378/275. viii Heidegger, "Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik," 63/54.

ix Ibid., 76/70.

^x Ibid., 77/72.

xi Heidegger, "Brief über den Humanismus" (1946) Wegmarken (GA 9). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976, 321; as translated in: "Letter on 'Humanism'" *Pathmarks*. Trans. Frank A. Capuzzi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 245.

CHAPTER ONE

Ontological Commonality and Divine Difference: Scotus between Univocal Speech and Onto-Theology

Ein Wort nur fehlt! Wie soll ich mich nennen, ohne in anderer Sprache zu sein.
—Ingeborg Bachmannⁱ

I. Univocal Speech and Ontological Commonality

Duns Scotus is taken to be, in many contemporary debates, the prime example of a certain philosophical position: his name is invoked whenever contemporary philosophers or theologians want to either attack or defend the univocal predication of divine attributes which Scotus is assumed to have held in a simple and straightforward manner. Scotus's controversial account of univocity—that is, the seemingly unproblematic claim that when we predicate terms to God we know the meaning of the words we are using—is at the center of many contemporary philosophical debates. For these thinkers, the position of 'Scotus' is either a crucial moment in the possibility of natural theology and meaningful speech and thought about God or the very essence of onto-theology as characterized and attacked by Martin Heidegger. It is usually assumed that Scotus's conclusions about divine predication necessarily involve a conception of God which sacrifices the idea of divine difference for a conception which affirms essential commonalties between God and creatures. These debates, though, tend to harden lines according to modern conceptions of philosophical thought and, unfortunately, often turn Scotus into a caricature of a thinker.

I want to argue that Scotus's conception of God is far more complex than is usually assumed. Not only does Scotus have a robust theory of divine ineffability, but

the theory of univocity which Scotus advocates is far more nuanced than is usually argued. In fact, Scotus balances his radical theory of univocity and all of its philosophical implications with a deeply held and carefully constructed theory of divine difference. This will become clear first through a discussion of what, exactly, the theory of univocity means to Scotus and into which conceptual realms it extends. This discussion of univocal speech will allow for an examination of the distinctions Scotus draws between reason and faith and metaphysics and theology, as well as his claim that metaphysics and theology do not exhaust the possibilities of our understanding about God. Instead, Scotus uses his innovative theory of intuitive cognition to point to a kind of thinking which is above both philosophy and theology. It should then be clear how Scotus is able to advocate a theory of divine ineffability which is consistent with his account of natural theology and univocity. Moreover, this theory of divine ineffability does not, as might be assumed, flow directly from Scotus's distinction between metaphysics and theology, but, rather, from sources which underlie, and therefore exceed, this distinction. Scotus uses the idea of a radical, positive particularity to articulate a distinct picture of a God whose essence is beyond all characterization, thought, and language, because of his real difference from creatures.

The nature of divine predication was an important topic in Medieval philosophy. The central question concerned the status of the so-called divine names, such as Being, Truth, and Goodness, which philosophers and theologians, drawing on the Biblical narrative, applied to God. Although the debate is certain to seem somewhat pedantic today, it was of central importance, not only because of its

implications concerning the nature of God and belief, but also because of its wider ramifications on the nature of language and meaning. It seems that there are two possible positions which a thinker could take on this issue: either the names of God are applied equivocally, meaning that their use in reference to God bears no relation to our ordinary use of the same words, or these names are applied univocally, meaning that they have the same meaning when applied to God and creatures. Both positions have had supporters: more mystically inclined thinkers, supporters of the socalled via negativa, argued that the absolute transcendent otherness of God meant that human language and thought could never adequately grasp the essence of God, while more constructive theologians, concerned for the loss of any possibility of explicit philosophical or theological thought about God, argued that God's relation to humanity meant that we were able to intelligibly speak about the divine essence. Against this dichotomy, Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent argued, albeit in different ways, that the divine names should be understood to relate analogically to the attributes of entities in our world. According to this theory, the word Good has a different meaning when applied to God than when applied to a person or a thing, but there remains some element of commonality, so that there is not a total lack of correspondence. This view allowed these thinkers both to preserve the ineffability of God, and to speak meaningfully about God. As we will see, however, Scotus argued that this theory of predication was ultimately untenable, either degenerating into equivocal or univocal speech under close examination.

When Scotus argues that Being is predicated univocally of God and creatures, he is usually seen to have broken radically with earlier traditions of thinking about predication. Most immediately, Scotus is responding to an analogical theory of divine predication, specifically that of Henry of Ghent. In the *Ordinatio*, Scotus defines univocity using logical tools, saying:

I call that concept univocal that has sufficient unity in itself that to affirm it and to deny it of the same subject suffices as a contradiction. It also suffices as a syllogistic middle term, so that where two terms are united in a middle term that is one in this fashion, they are inferred without a fallacy of equivocation to be united among themselvesⁱⁱ

The basic principle of predication is, then, non-contradiction, and this is representative of Scotus's basic attitude towards analogical predication. At this basic level, univocal speech means, for Scotus, meaningful speech, and he takes it as a given that any predication that uses the same word with different referents must be ultimately nonsensical.

Having defined univocal speech, Scotus makes the strong claim that this sort of speech is not only superficially descriptive of God, but, that it describes God in his very essence. In other words, univocal speech does not simply allow us to postulate the existence of God but, in addition, to describe the actual essential attributes of God. Scotus says that we can "have not only some concept in which God is known incidentally, for example, in some attribute, but also some concept in which he is conceived of per se and quidditatively." This means that "God is thought of... in some concept univocal to himself and creatures." This univocal concept is Being, and it is, for Scotus, an essentially common attribute of all beings, a neutral qualifier of both infinite and finite beings; that is, of both God and human beings. This conception of Being as a neutral abstractable qualifier is, as will be explored later, not

only intimately connected with Scotus's theory of cognition and his understanding of particularity, but it is also the central element of Scotus's theory of divine predication.

Scotus is, therefore, motivated to champion univocal speech because he is convinced that it is the only reasonable position for meaningful speech about the attributes of God. He argues that, at its root, analogical speech is simply illogical and that the concept of analogical speech cannot stand up to any sort of rigorous analysis. This is because it attempts to say that something both is and is not the same as something else. Instead, analogical speech is viewed by Scotus as a sort of ambiguous middle ground which will, upon proper examination, be classified as either univocal or equivocal according to the logical criteria described above. Scotus argues, therefore, that analogical speech is simply not a meaningful option, that only univocal and equivocal speech are logically possible, and that since we can speak meaningfully about Being, this speech must be univocal.

Although Scotus's argument proceeds along primarily logical grounds, its conclusions do not remain purely in the realm of logic. Instead, Scotus grounds the universal predication of Being in a wider ontological frame. Because of these arguments, some readers have been moved to argue that Scotus's theory of univocity is wholly logical or semantic and that it has no ontological ramifications. So, for instance, Thomas Williams argues that "the whole point, the very core, of Scotus's separation of the semantic from the metaphysical is precisely the claim that our possession of a concept under whose extension both God and creatures fall does not imply that there is any feature at all in extramental reality that is a common component of both God and creatures." On the basis of this, Williams summarizes

Scotus's univocity thus: "Notwithstanding the irreducible ontological diversity between God and creatures, there are concepts under whose extension both God and creatures fall." This seems a strange claim. How can Being be divorced from ontology? If we accept this interpretation of Scotus's argument, then Being, which is predicated of both God and creatures, must not have any extramental reality in the thing in question. But Being is not, for Scotus at least, a concept which exists only in the mind, but is, as described above, a real quality of a thing which, although it may have distinguishing qualities like finitude, is both a real aspect of a thing and abstractable by the mind.

This means that Being is a quality shared by all beings, and it is this commonality which has led Catherine Pickstock to conclude that Scotus's theory of univocity is inevitably a univocal ontology, meaning that it necessarily involves ontological commonality between God and creatures. According to this reading, there must be some ontologically common features of God which allow univocal speech to function. The usual answer to this criticism of Scotus is that the difference between infinite and finite Being is great enough that their univocal application as concepts to both God and creatures does not mean that the same quality exists in both; that, in fact, a large enough quantitative difference separates God and creatures as to be a qualitative difference. This will not, though, forestall the conclusion that some essential point of commonality must remain. Scotus himself seems, at times, to use this qualitative reading of infinity as a means of differentiation between ontologically common characteristics, but, perhaps because he developed a much more effective account of divine difference as he developed his theory of intuitive

cognition, this theory of infinite difference is not very developed in Scotus. In his account of infinite difference Scotus begins with a quantitative model and uses this to illustrate his point that the infinity of God's qualities, here Being, is qualitative. God's Being is not simply bigger than that of any creature, it is infinitely more perfect, but does this introduce a substantive difference?^{vii}

According to Scotus's own logically rigorous univocity, we must conclude that it does not. In the end, we conclude either that the infinite qualitative difference between God and creatures means that univocal speech is impossible or that despite this infinite difference there is some common trait, with ontological ramifications, which legitimizes this speech. That God and creatures have Being, even as a neutral and undifferentiated concept, in common necessitates that there be some sort of ontological commonality between them, if only for the simple reason that having Being in common means, by definition, sharing some ontological characteristic. Without this real ontological commonality, Scotus's theory of univocity would fail on its own terms: if predication is approached logically, then we must be unable to either correctly affirm and to deny that a quality exists in a thing. The statements "the chair is" and "God is" must be predicated on some commonality, lest they descend into equivocity (this is, in fact, Scotus's own criticism of analogical theories of predication). The predication of Being represents a real commonality between God and creatures, and if there is no commonality, then univocal speech must fail.

This basic picture of univocal speech as described by Scotus raises a number of crucial criticisms. At the same time as this theory of predication, and, ultimately, of ontological commonality, enables natural theology by proposing a straightforward

understanding of both how and why meaningful speech of God functions, it threatens to undercut the ineffability of God, the difference between God and creatures, and, in the end, the very essence of the divine. Because of this, it is often argued, that Scotus's vision of God is simply a parody of creaturely characteristics; that God becomes just a very large human being in the sky. This line of criticism has been advanced along both theological and philosophical lines. Theologically, such a conclusion is troubling because of its apparent failure to adequately distinguish the divine from the human, and to suitably ground the ultimate difference of God. Philosophically, univocal speech, as discussed by Scotus in relation to Being, is premised on an understanding of Being and God which is basically onto-theological, and therefore 'metaphysical,' in a Heideggerian sense because it connects all beings together by means of the Being of God. From this position, it seems natural to view Scotus as simply a development in a failed tradition of metaphysical thought which rationalizes Being itself as a part of a totalizing system of calculative thought. So, for instance, Catherine Pickstock argues that "the shift towards univocal ontology, knowledge as representation, and causality as primarily efficient, is philosophically questionable and has negative implications for the upholding of a Christian vision". viii For Pickstock, theologizing the Heideggerian critique, it is univocal ontology, the result of logically univocal predication, which is foundational for both modern representational theories of truth and the modern stress on efficient causation, along with all the philosophically problematic results of these theories.

Others have argued that Scotus's position is necessary, despite its inherent limitations, because it enables not only meaningful speech about God and natural

theology, but also, with respect to Being, meaningful speech in general. These readers are willing to admit that Scotus's position leaves him open to attack on the very same issues raised above, but are unconvinced there is a better option on the issue. Bluntly put, readers of Scotus seemed to be convinced that one can either be engaged in doing theology and philosophy, and ultimately in using meaningful speech in general, or in engaging in a critique of traditional metaphysical thought and so-called onto-theology. So, for instance, Richard Cross concludes his discussion of Scotus on predication by granting that although "an uncharitable account would be that Scotus's God is just a human person writ large," "Scotus's account of religious language and the divine attributes is important and worthy of serious consideration. In fact, it seems to me that a theory like Scotus's is required for theology—natural or revealed—even to get started." ix

Similarly, Thomas Williams has recently argued, in his "The Doctrine of Univocity is True and Salutary", that Scotus's univocity is a worthwhile doctrine mainly because it allows not only for intelligible speech about God, but also "a demonstrative proof for God's existence". In the end, Williams' defense of Scotus's position rests mainly on its conclusion that to deny the force of univocal speech is to unacceptably limit the possibilities of human thought and understanding. So, although he rejects analogical speech along the same logical lines as Scotus himself, he is content to argue that the results of a theory of divine predication which denies the possibility of meaningful speech, rejecting the possibility of analogical speech on logical grounds, is simply too pernicious to be considered, precisely because such a position does not allow the project of speculative theology to even get off the ground.

Williams thinks that Scotus can hold his doctrine of univocal speech without the resultant ontological conclusions which Pickstock draws, but, as argued above, Scotus's position must, inevitably, entail such conclusions. Ultimately, then, the debate over Scotus's doctrine of univocal speech and its ontological results is centered around a sort of calculus about the costs and benefits of two very different conceptions of God. To those readers who take Heidegger's critique of metaphysics and onto-theology seriously, whether they argue for the necessity of the *via negativa* or adopt an analogical theory of divine predication, it is difficult not to read Scotus's doctrine of univocal speech as exactly the target of this critique. How is Scotus's theory of univocal speech not simply the apotheosis of generalizing, calculative thought? Equally, though, to those who are concerned for a valid philosophical and theological exploration of the divine, the rejection of Scotus's doctrine is the embrace of meaningless and thoughtlessness itself.

Is there a possible response that Scotus could give to Cross's "uncharitable reader"? This "uncharitable reader" argues that from univocal speech, univocal ontology must follow, the natural conclusion of which is the flawed "God" of ontotheology, and that the onto-theological character of Scotus's thought is therefore so deep as to be decisive. Scotus's defenders have approached this Heideggerian line of critique largely with the argument that Scotus's conclusions about univocity are necessary arguments to preserve the possibility of natural theology and, on a larger scale, meaningful theological speech at all. They argue, essentially, that the Heideggerian critique loses more than it preserves and that the critique is too extreme. Is this an all-or-nothing choice? Must we choose between natural theology and

meaningful speech on the one hand and a robust theory of divine ineffability on the other? Scotus presents a perfect example of why these readily applied dichotomies are bound to fail. For, as will be shown, there is, in the work of Scotus, a moment of critique in which the project of metaphysics is balanced by a deep concern for the ineffability and difference of God. This systematic delimitation of a moment of total divine particularity is not an aberration but an essential feature of Scotus's philosophy. But, only after exploring Scotus's distinctions between faith and understanding, metaphysics and theology, commonality and particularity, and abstractive and intuitive cognition, will we be in a position to examine the kind of God which Scotus ultimately gives his readers.

II. Scotus on the God of Theology

It seems natural that Scotus's theory of divine ineffability and difference would stem from his distinctions between philosophy and theology. Indeed, a traditional approach is to use this division, interpreted as a division between reason and faith, as the crux that separates univocal and equivocal speech into their proper spheres: philosophy, which operates within the realm of reason, relies upon univocal speech, while theology, operating upon the dictates of revelation, retains a sense of the ultimate ineffability of God. An examination of Scotus's conception of philosophy and of theology will make clear, though, that Scotus did not map philosophy onto reason and theology onto revelation, but conceived of the distinction between these two sciences very differently, and argued that both are, in the end, reasonable, abstractive sciences. Beyond the realm of philosophy and theology,

Scotus posited a type of cognition which does not operate along scientific lines at all. Before we can explore Scotus's defense of the ultimate difference of God, we must examine his notions of intuitive and abstractive cognition, and their relation to philosophy and theology.

The first crucial distinction that Scotus makes is between metaphysics and theology. Scotus carefully distinguishes these, even as he argues that theology, like metaphysics, is a science, meaning that it is a rational abstractive pursuit that accounts for its conclusions. Whereas metaphysics has Being as its primary object, theology has God as its primary object: "I say that God is not the first subject of metaphysics, for... there can be but one science about God as its first subject, and this is not metaphysics." Theology also proceeds from revealed truths and not natural knowledge of the world, and this difference is the basis for one of Scotus's crucial distinctions:

Some truths about God can be known naturally and some cannot. For whatever we can know of God from his effects, we know by a demonstration of the simple fact and that is *a posteriori*, namely from an effect; many such truths however can be known about God from his effects, as is evident from the scientific knowledge of the philosophers. There are also many truths we can know about God which cannot be known by natural reason. For whatever we know about regarding a cause that cannot be inferred from its effects, cannot be known by natural reason. Many truths of this kind can be known about God, such as the trinity of persons and unity of essence and such articles as pertain to deity; therefore etc. Supernaturally, however, we can know these. xii

Since this natural knowledge of the world is the foundation of metaphysics and since "Every natural cognition of ours about God is indistinct" metaphysics can never arrive at a clear and distinct understanding of God. Theology is, then, distinguished

from metaphysics primarily on the basis of the starting material from which it proceeds and its ultimate object.

Nevertheless, metaphysics and theology have a basic harmony as rational abstractive pursuits. It is, in fact, the abstractive basis of theology which justifies its scientific status:

This act of understanding, which can be called "scientific," because it is a prerequisite condition for knowing the conclusion and understanding the principle, can very appropriately be called "abstractive" because it "abstracts" the object from existence or non-existence, from presence or absence. **iv*

Both rely on univocal speech and commonality to function (and they are conducted from an essentially human perspective). Here, I would like to return to Cross's comment cited earlier: "In fact, it seems to me that a theory like Scotus's [univocal speech] is required for theology—natural or revealed—even to get started."* This fits exactly with Scotus's conception of the nature of theology and its univocal, in Heideggerian terminology, metaphysical, basis. Theology, both natural and revealed, is basically metaphysical and univocal, and Scotus argues not just that it should be, but that it must be so. But, there is another kind of access to the divine essence open to humans which exceeds all of our human capabilities, fulfills all of our human possibilities, and which is ground in radical particularity and difference.

One of Scotus's most innovative ideas, one for which he remains well known today, is his distinction between abstractive and intuitive cognition. Scotus distinguishes these two sorts of intellection in our direct apprehension of a simple object, in which both types of cognition are used. For Scotus, abstractive cognition is what we usually characterize as cognition in general, the process by which we abstract common characteristics from the particular to universal categories. Scotus

says of this sort of cognition in his *Quodlibet* that it "is indifferent as to whether the object is existing or not, and also whether it is present in reality or not." This occurs whenever we consider the general nature of a thing, and, in fact, "we often experience this act in ourselves for universals and the essences of things we grasp equally well whether they exist extramentally in some subject or not or whether we have an instance of them actually present or not." This is a standard picture of cognition in which the intellect understands universal characteristics of objects.

The innovative aspect of Scotus's theory is his account of intuitive cognition, which he connects closely with his discussion of particularity. Intuitive cognition "is knowledge precisely of a present object as present and of an existing object as existing... Such knowledge is of the existent *qua* existent." Intuitive cognition is, then, an intellective process whereby we conceive of the actual existence of an object and not just its general qualities. It is the direct apprehension of a thing, as a particular individual thing. In apprehending an object, we employ both of these types of cognition. This distinction is directly relevant to Scotus's account of theology, but in an unexpected way. Instead of equating philosophy with abstractive cognition and theology with intuitive, Scotus uses his distinction to justify his claim that both philosophy and theology are abstractive sciences, and that intuition is something else altogether. xix

His essential claim is that theology is a rational science which proceeds from revealed truths to a perfect conception of God. There are, in this account, three claims about theology: that it is a science, that it proceeds from God's revelation, and that it can give us, in this life, a perfect understanding of God. Scotus distinguishes

philosophy and theology by their starting points. So, while philosophy proceeds from our natural knowledge of the world, theology can only proceed from revealed truths (Scotus gives the Bible, tradition, and God's revelation to the prophets as examples). This revelation is itself faith, and this faith is the starting point for the more perfect understanding of God, which theology brings: "This cognition [theology], which the pilgrim can have about God under the aspect of the deity, is more perfect and more certain than any cognition based upon faith." In fact, for Scotus "We can have some knowledge of God [theology] that is even more perfect than what natural sources can give us and we can have it in our present state."

Thirdly, Scotus argues, in a radical move, which seems to only reinforce the perceived onto-theological constitution of his thought, that "the object [God] of this science [theology] can be understood and known distinctly by the intellect of the pilgrim at least abstractively, although not intuitively. For no abstraction is repugnant to the pilgrim qua pilgrim." This means that the theologian can gain a perfect abstract understanding of God. This "perfection" still falls short of the beatific vision, though, and so Scotus distinguishes, by the relatively greater understanding of God which they give the human being, between faith, the understanding of the theologian (aided by God), and the beatific vision.

These two claims, taken together, point to two important possible criticisms: either that Scotus has compromised the integrity of the beatific vision by allowing that we can gain a perfect understanding of God in this life as the object of a science, or that he has equated metaphysics and theology. This is because this conclusion seems to place theology in an uncertain position between metaphysics as the science

of God and the beatific vision as the perfect understanding of God available to the human soul. It is in this context that Scotus argues that metaphysics does not have God as its primary object, and that theology alone is the science of God. The possible false equation of theology, as a perfect understanding of God, with the beatific vision, is answered by Scotus using his distinction between abstractive and intuitive cognition. So, while the theologian can know everything there is to know about God abstractively, the direct intuitive apprehension of the divine particularity is reserved for the beatific vision.

So, although we might have thought to look first to Scotus's account of theology and faith to discover Scotus's account of the ineffability of God and the difference between God and creatures, his account seems only to reinforce this univocal picture of God. This is because Scotus is convinced that not only is theology a science that proceeds from revealed religion to conclusions about God, but also that the wayfarer, the human being in this life, can have, through theology, a perfect conception of the very essence of God. Scotus himself raises the key criticism here: "I raise an impediment in this way. If the science of the pilgrim has God for its object under the aspect of the deity, then it extends itself to all that is knowable about him, and thus a pilgrim as a pilgrim could be beatified. implication is evident, because a science about a subject extends to all those things to which the notion of the subject extends." The only reason that this understanding of the theologian does not mean that God and creatures must be united by a common reality and the only reason that Scotus is able to give an account of this difference is his distinction between abstractive and intuitive cognition. This distinction allows

Scotus to argue that the beatific vision, which is denied to the human in this life, consists likewise of a perfect conception of the divine. The beatific vision is the direct apprehension of the divine essence, and "the beatific act of the intellect *cannot* be one of abstractive cognition; it must be intuitive. Since abstractive cognition concerns equally the existent and the nonexistent, if the beatific act were of this sort one could be beatifically happy with a nonexistent object." The true nature of the divine simply exceeds the possibilities of human language and ontological commonality.

Scotus uses this distinction to argue that, while the theologian can gain a perfect conception of God, it is incomplete and derivative. How can it be, though, that a perfect conception of the essence of God is incomplete? The exact mechanism by which Scotus effects this distinction will be discussed in the next section, but here, it is important to note the difference between the abstractive and the intuitive cognition of God. When the theologian understands God abstractively, through human concepts and speech, Scotus says that he has come to a perfect understanding. This means that the pilgrim has, in his mind, an accurate conception of what God is, derived rationally from true revelation. The intuitive cognition of God, the beatific vision which is denied to the human in this life, consists likewise of a perfect conception of the divine, but, in contradistinction to the indirect understanding of the theologian, the beatific vision is the direct apprehension of the divine essence. The abstractive understanding of God is perfect but operates in the absence of God and this lack is a crucial point of differentiation between abstractive and intuitive perfection.

Scotus's account of this difference between God and creatures is not a cheap concession to the theological doctrines of divine ineffability and the beatific vision, but, rather, a crucial aspect of his thought. Scotus contends both that theology, whose scientific character is clear in its reasonable and abstractive approach to revealed truth, can give us, in this life, a perfect understanding of the divine essence which is clear to us through its essentially common features, and also that a true and complete vision of God will never be possible on purely human terms—that it is, in fact, an experience which exceeds all of our logical possibilities. Scotus's account of the particularity of God is therefore radically anti-metaphysical: God ultimately exceeds all efforts to account for him—even perfect ones. Does this mean, though, that Scotus's thought remains an attempt to balance the concerns of shared ontology on the one hand and radical difference, on the other? Or, more radically, does this antimetaphysical moment in Scotus undercut the entire project of univocal speech and the thoughtful, meaningful connection to God which it promises? The answer to this question lies in Scotus's account of particularity and its ramifications for the nature of God and our knowledge of the divine essence.

III. Radical Particularity and the Divine Essence

As discussed above, Scotus is assumed to have advanced a very problematic theory of univocal speech and to have, therefore, left his whole philosophy open to an anti-metaphysical critique. Even Scotus's defenders have been willing to grant critics that his positions seem to indicate a weakening of divine ineffability and difference. Scotus's thought seems to bear this criticism out; as Scotus writes, in the *Ordinatio*,

"I say that God is thought of not only in some concept analogous to that of a creature, that is one entirely different from what is predicated of a creature, but also in some concept univocal to himself and to a creature" This claim seems to be borne out by a close examination of this issue in Scotus's thought. The argument that Scotus's theory of univocal speech leads necessarily to a kind of univocal ontology was found to be convincing, and Scotus's distinctions between faith and reason and between metaphysics and theology have seemingly left him with no way to defend the ultimate difference between God and creatures. And, yet, despite this all, Scotus affirms the radical otherness of God, writing a little further in the Ordinatio, "I say that God is not known naturally by one in the present life in a particular and proper way, that is under the aspect of his [unique] essence as it is in itself and as it is just this."xxvi But how can Scotus continue to hold both, that God can be understood perfectly by the theologian in this life, because of God's revelation and the ontological commonality which underlie our univocal thought about God, and, simultaneously, that God is basically other and beyond our unaided grasp, that the difference between God and creatures is so vast as to be bridgeable only through God's initiative in the beatific vision?

The answer lies in Scotus's celebrated account of particularity, or *haecceitas*, and its corollary, intuitive cognition. Scotus argues that "a material substance is determined to being this singularity by something positive and to other diverse singularities by diverse positives." This means that there is, in everything, a particular quality which is entirely unique, and which is the source, not of numerical singularity, but of particularity and individuality. With regard to two distinct objects,

this quality is "the ultimate basis of their difference." It is this quality which is the object perceived by intuitive cognition, and it is, in part, because of Scotus's radical new account of particularity that he is moved to advance such a position.

When we read Scotus's account of particularity and intuitive cognition along with his claims of God's ultimate difference, the connection between these seemingly disparate theories should be clear. Scotus claims that the ultimate difference of God is justified by the *particular* quality of *this* God. Confronted with this radical particularity, univocal speech inevitably fails, for "there is no essence naturally knowable to us that reveals this [unique essence] as just this, whether by reason of a likeness of univocation or of imitation. Only in general notions is there univocation; imitation also is deficient, because it is imperfect, since creatures imperfectly imitate him." This is, then, a moment in Scotus which separates God from any possible onto-theological misinterpretation, and this moment is not simply an irrelevant assurance of the validity of theological doctrine of the beatific vision, but also an attempt at a meaningful philosophical engagement with what this promise means about the way in which both God and creatures are constituted and interrelate.

In a lengthy passage at the end of the second question of the prologue to his *Reportatio*, Scotus classifies the possible kinds of knowledge of God into a hierarchical scheme:

the cognition of God has five degrees. The first is to know intuitively the truths knowable of God and know them distinctly under the subject intuitively and distinctly known, and this grade is not commonly possible for the pilgrim. — The second grade is to know something certainly in some representation that is distinctly known, and this grade is possible to a pilgrim. The third grade is to know something with certitude so that its certitude is not subject to an act of the will, and this grade was in the prophets. **xxx**

Here, Scotus identifies faith, understanding, and vision as increasingly perfect ways of understanding God. This scheme maintains the privileged position of univocal speech, and the possibilities of theological engagement which it allows, while keeping the conception of God, which it necessarily entails, from descending into a model of pure ontological commonality. Ultimately, Scotus gives us, in Pascal's famous construction, not the God of faith, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ("for the prophets have been illuminated by this habit [faith, the third degree in Scotus's construction]"xxxii), and not the God of the philosophers (which must also be, in the end, the God of the theologians in Scotus's terms), but a God who transcends every possibility of human understanding and language. Despite his critics, Scotus manages to combine a rigorously logical account of univocal speech that endorses every possibility of theology, and an account of an utterly transcendent God, whose radical particularity guarantees that no human thought could ever grasp his very essence.

But, Scotus's account of this difference is also open to a more Heideggerian reading, according to which, this account of the radical particularity of God would undermine any conception of univocal speech and its metaphysical ramifications. This reading would see in this anti-metaphysical moment in Scotus, the key philosophical ideas needed for such a radical deconstruction of the very onto-theological conception of God which Scotus's account was seen to support. In either account, Scotus's God is much more complex than is usually allowed, and his philosophy is far more than a straw-man account of univocal speech. In fact, Scotus gives his readers a complex, nuanced God, which defies any of the assumed

dichotomies. At the very least, it should be clear that Scotus's work contains a substantive response to those critics who decry the irreducibly onto-theological nature of his thought.

¹ Ingeborg Bachmann, *Darkness Spoken* (Brookline, MA: Zephyr Press, 2006), 290; translated by Peter Filkins as: "Words fail! How shall I name myself/Without living in another tongue."

ⁱⁱ Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, nos 25-30; as translated in: *Duns Scotus, Metaphysician*. Trans. William Frank and Allan Wolter. (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1995), 109.

iii Duns Scotus, Ordinatio I, d. 3, nos 25-30; as translated in: Duns Scotus, Metaphysician, 109.

iv Duns Scotus, Ordinatio I, d. 3, nos 25-30; as translated in: Duns Scotus, Metaphysician, 109.

^v Williams, Thomas. "The Doctrine of Univocity is True and Salutary" *Modern Theology* 21, no. 4 (2005), 577.

vi Williams, Thomas. "The Doctrine of Univocity is True and Salutary," 578.

vii This response to the critique of Scotus's God as the ultimate onto-theological construction is explored in some depth by Denys Turner in his book *Faith, Reason and the Existence of God* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004). There Turner argues that Scotus's qualitative conception of the infinity of God's qualities moderates the presumed leveling of God and creatures inherent in the project of univocal speech, while still allowing for meaningful speech about God. He ultimately concludes, though, that Scotus struggles to "have it both ways" and that the notion of qualitative infinity threatens to overwhelm the basic premises of univocal speech.

viii Pickstock, Catherine. "Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance" *Modern Theology* 21, no. 4 (2005): 544.

ix Cross, Richard. Duns Scotus. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 45.

^x Williams, Thomas. "The Doctrine of Univocity is True and Salutary" *Modern Theology* 21, no. 4 (2005), 581.

xi Duns Scotus, *Reportatio* I-A, Prologue, Question Three, 218; as translated in: *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A*. Trans. Allan Wolter and Oleg Bychkov. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University, 2004), 76.

xii Duns Scotus, *Reportatio* I-A, Prologue, Question Three, 227; as translated in: *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A*, 80. xiii Duns Scotus, *Reportatio* I-A, Prologue, Question Three, 221; as translated in: *The Examined Report*

Duns Scotus, *Reportatio* I-A, Prologue, Question Three, 221; as translated in: *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A*, 78.

xiv Duns Scotus, *Quodlibet*, 6.18; as translated in: *God and Creatures; the Quodlibetal Questions*. Trans. Allan Wolter and Felix Alluntis. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 135. xv Cross, Richard. *Duns Scotus*, 45.

Duns Scotus, Quodlibet, 6.18; as translated in: God and Creatures; the Quodlibetal Questions, 135.

xvii Duns Scotus, Quodlibet, 6.18; as translated in: God and Creatures; the Quodlibetal Questions, 135.

xviii Duns Scotus, Quodlibet, 6.19; as translated in: God and Creatures; the Quodlibetal Questions, 136.

xix Stephen D. Dumont's paper "Theology as a Science and Duns Scotus's Distinction between Intuitive and Abstractive Cognition" (*Speculum* 64, no. 3 (1989): 579-599) has been particularly useful to me, and readers interested in a more historical treatment of Scotus's innovative use of intuitive cognition and its relation to his account of theology are encouraged to look here.

xx Duns Scotus, *Reportatio* I-A, Prologue, Question Two, 195; as translated in: *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A*, 68.

xxi Duns Scotus, *Reportatio* I-A, Prologue, Question Three, 226; as translated in: *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A*, 79.

xxiii Duns Scotus, *Reportatio* I-A, Prologue, Question Two, 185; as translated in: *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A*, 65.

xxiii Duns Scotus, *Reportatio* I-A, Prologue, Question Two, 189; as translated in: *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A*, 66.

translated in: Duns Scotus, Metaphysician, 115.

xxiv Duns Scotus, *Quodlibet*, 6.20, my emphasis; as translated in: *God and Creatures; the Quodlibetal Questions*, 137.

xxv Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, nos. 25-30; as translated in: *Duns Scotus, Metaphysician*, 109. xxvi Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, nos. 56-57, my emphasis, Wolter's braketed clarification; as

xxvii Duns Scotus, *De Principio Individuationis*, Question VI, 164; as translated in: *Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*. Trans. Allan Wolter. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University, 2005, 81.

xxviii Duns Scotus, *De Principio Individuationis*, Question VI, 167; as translated in: *Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*, 81.

xxix Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, nos. 56-57, Wolter's braketed clarification; as translated in: *Duns Scotus, Metaphysician*, 115.

of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A, 68. Scotus continues his enumeration of these degrees, saying: "The fourth grade is to know explicitly those things which are contained in Scripture whereby one supports the pious and defends against the impious by knowing how to solve doubts of others and provide them with good reasons, and this grade is for the elders in the church. The fifth grade is to know those things which are necessary for salvation, which is for the simple folk, because they cannot investigate all that is contained in Scripture." A particularly interesting manuscript variation introduces after the words "commonly possible for the pilgrim" the short qualifying statement "except by special revelation or rapture", which seems to introduce the idea that the intuitive cognition of God, reserved canonically to the beatific vision, is a real, mystical possibility for the pilgrim.

xxxi Duns Scotus, Reportatio I-A, Prologue, Question Two, 196; as translated in: *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A*, 68.

CHAPTER TWO

Particularity and the Critique of Generality in Technology and Metaphysics

What seems to be given to us a priori is the concept: This.

—Ludwig Wittgensteinⁱ

I. Technology and Generality

In the preceding chapter, it became apparent that Scotus's account of intuitive cognition, and the theory of particularity that underlies this account, were crucial aspects of an anti-metaphysical moment in Scotus's thought. But, although this was noted, it is not yet clear what the fundamental connection between Scotus's account of particularity and Heidegger's "destruction" of metaphysics is. I will argue that, for Heidegger, unity and "belonging-together" [Zusammengehören] are essential elements of metaphysics. Particularity, therefore, unsettles metaphysical generality, and insofar as this is the case, it is a crucial component of any possible overcoming of metaphysics.

Particularity's interruption of metaphysical generality will be made clear through a close examination, firstly, of Heidegger's account of technology and of technological thinking, and, secondly, of Heidegger's connecting of "the One" and metaphysics. Heidegger argues that technology and technological thinking are the culmination of metaphysical thinking, and his exposition of the essence of technology will provide an excellent starting-point for our discussion of the essential character of metaphysics. Once the character of metaphysics as generality and abstraction from the immediacy of the particular is clear, we will be in a position to examine the role that Scotus's innovative account of particularity might play in any overcoming of

metaphysics. Scotus, despite his commitment to an essentially metaphysical theory of univocal ontology, argues that particularity is an essential and unavoidable aspect of beings, and, in so doing, profoundly challenges metaphysical paradigms.

Heidegger often makes references to the essence of modern technology, or the way in which modern technology 'reveals' [entbirgt] throughout his later essays, but his most extended engagement with the issue of technology are his two essays "The Question Concerning Technology" and "The Turn." Here, Heidegger stakes out the position that there is something fundamentally wrong with our current way of thinking about technology, and that the rise of modern technology is a symptom of the larger issue of Seinsvergessenheit, the failure to engage with the question of Being. Heidegger has often been taken on the basis of these essays to be simply an anti-modern reactionary, and there is, at first glance, some weight to these criticisms: Heidegger does share many of the concerns of the romantic reactionary. Like these thinkers, Heidegger argues that technology is not simply a neutral instrument, whose (mis)use reflects the choices of free human beings. Rather there is something fundamentally sinister about technological instrumentality in the first place. Unlike other critics of modern technology, however, he does not argue against the instrumentalist understanding of technology out of a concern, for instance, for the destruction that it can reap, or because of a concern about our loss of connection with nature (this, at least, is not his primary concern). Instead, Heidegger's critique of modern technology is intimately connected with his critique of metaphysics. It is not the physical examples of modern technology that we encounter on a daily basis which are problematic, but rather the new way of thinking that enables these devices to function. Heidegger calls this new way of thinking the culmination of metaphysics.

Metaphysics as a whole is, for Heidegger, necessarily related to the problems of transcendence and generality. But, before examining Heidegger's account of metaphysics in its entirety, it will be useful to first examine the determinative role of these concepts in modern technology, where they function most brazenly. Because technology is the culmination of metaphysical thinking, it is an excellent place to see the role played by generality and unity in grounding metaphysics. Heidegger says in "The Question Concerning Technology" that "the merely instrumental, merely anthropological definition of technology is... in principle untenable," and the rest of the essay represents Heidegger's attempt to clarify the metaphysical character of modern technology. This metaphysical character is rooted in technology's approach to beings in the world.

Modern technology, then, is not a neutral force, but is representative of a particular kind of thinking. Understood in this way, technology does not consist of a certain set of physically existent entities like damns or power plants, but is, instead, characterized by a distinct way of approaching the world. Technology reveals the world in a determinate fashion and is a particular way that human beings relate to the beings around them. Specifically, the essence of technology is its attempt to bring the world into a resourceful unity that can be tapped to satisfy human needs.

The rise of modern technology is predicated upon the triumph of efficient causation over the other three causes of Aristotelian philosophy. Early on, in "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger gives an account of the four causes as

understood in Greek philosophy. As developed by Aristotle, the four causes (teleological, material, formal, and efficient) were understood to be four different reasons for a thing being the way it was. Looking back on the rise of technology within this framework, Heidegger argues that the moment when "the *causa efficiens*, but one of the one among the four causes, sets the standard for all causality," the crucial moment in the transition to technology. Instead of attempting to understand the genesis of a thing within the larger framework of the four causes, modern technology views the thing only under the category of efficient causality, the causality of modern science. This stress on a singular type of measurable causality is essential to Heidegger's account of the role of unity in technology, because this singular understanding of causality puts everything on a calculable scale.

Heidegger's discussion of technology is centered on the related themes of the standing-reserve [*Bestand*] and of Enframing [*Gestell*]. The fundamental characteristic of modern technology is the way in which it represents the world, or the way in which it dictates that world must be represented. Heidegger calls this revelatory demand Enframing. Of the relationship between the various machines of modern technology and Enframing, Heidegger says:

The assembly itself, however, together with the aforementioned stockparts, falls within the sphere of technological activity; and this activity always merely responds to the challenge of Enframing, but it never comprises Enframing itself or brings it about. vi

Because "Modern sciences' way of representing [Art des Vorstellens] pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces," it can only bring what is able to be fitted to this model into view. Modern technology predetermines the character of beings as that which is calculable and, in so doing, excludes from consideration any

aspect of beings which cannot be incorporated into this general model, or, for that matter, the incalculable event of being itself. The laws of nature, taken to be eternal and general, are necessarily understood as common, and in fact, the principles of modern science are based on the assumption that any experiment not be particular, that it be repeatable *ad nauseum*. So, while technology *thinks* that it is hyper-specific, it eliminates any possibility of real difference by only allowing what is calculable to be appreciated as the real. In this way, modern technology refuses to accept even the possibility of particularity: understood in this way, only the most general is real.

Modern technology shares this insistence on what is most general with all of metaphysics. As we will see, the inability of modern technology to represent particular beings insofar as they are uniquely particular is a feature of metaphysics as a whole, which, as Heidegger situates it, has always sought to discover or create universal transcendent essences. In this regard, modern technology is not unique, but is simply the continuation of a long tradition of metaphysics which makes generality and unity necessary characteristics of the truly existent.

Technology extends this drive towards general representation a step further: technology does not simply mis-represent the Being of beings as general unity; rather, it actively tries to re-fashion beings into this unity. Heidegger calls this functional unity the standing-reserve [Bestand]. Rather than let beings be in their own right, the standing-reserve turns everything into the universal as defined by human needs (resources turned to energy are maximally general—they can be put to any use):

Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve [*Bestand*]. viii

Heidegger differentiates here between older machines that turned one thing into another—running water into power for a mill, for instance—and the use of modern technology to reduce everything in nature into one vast homogeneous source of energy. This is not an empty distinction. The drive of modern technology to reduce everything into a standing-reserve actively destroys particularity by obliterating difference. Under the sway of modern technology, beings are therefore never allowed to reveal themselves as they are.

The standing-reserve is the way in which Enframing as the essence of modern technology reveals the world. Under the dominance of modern technology, the world only reveals itself as the standing-reserve, as neutral general resources for indeterminate and indiscriminate usage. In this way, not only does "the work of modern technology reveal the real as standing-reserve," it makes the further "demand that nature be orderable as standing-reserve." It is precisely this aggressive attempt to refashion the world into a single homogeneous mass that leads Heidegger to criticize the neutral interpretation of technology as simply a pragmatic tool for accomplishing goals that are the result of a distinctly human valuation.

The development of technology is also the development of metaphysics, because it represents a refinement of the basic division of subject and object which is the basic structure of thought for modern metaphysics. Crucially, "whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as objects." Instead of representing beings as essentially different from us, modern technology makes the further move of unification, re-making this binary diversity into a unity of world and human aims. Because of this, "the machine, seen in terms of the standing-

reserve, is completely unautonomous, for it has standing only from the ordering of the orderable," only in light of the universal. This relationship towards the world is, Heidegger says, "a challenging [Herausfordern], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such." This can only mean that under the sway of modern technology, there are no subjects, only objects in this stockpile of a world. Ultimately, this challenging is contrasted with presencing and producing, which Heidegger calls "bringing into unconcealment [Unverborgenheit]," but an exploration of the exact nature of these two different kinds of revealing will have to wait until the next chapter.

Within this larger picture, the essential characteristic of technology, is the new kind of unity and generality which becomes apparent in it. Technology pulls the universal or the general from its transcendent position, its place in traditional metaphysics, into the category of use or value. Heidegger discusses the rise of technology in a mostly descriptive fashion, but it is clear that, insofar as technology represents a particular way of thinking and not merely a neutral productive force, it has an effect on our thinking and our interaction with the world. For Heidegger, modern technology, and its drive towards functional generality, is a symptom of the condition of modern western thought—namely, *Seinsvergessenheit*, our forgetting of Being.

The problem is that modern technology alienates human beings from the world through its aggressive but inadequate process of revealing. Ultimately, "all mere willing and doing in the mode of ordering steadfastly persists in injurious neglect." Technology's way of representing necessarily neglects the Being of

beings, because it ignores the way that beings come to presence as particular imminent things. Technology is therefore a clearly destructive force; it cannot let beings be.

This account of technology presumes an essential connection with metaphysics. As we will see, this connection is predicated upon Heidegger's understanding of the essential connection between metaphysics and generality or unity. In technology, the transcendent unity that metaphysics had always sought is naturalized and brought down into the world as such. In this process, though, technology does not reclaim the status of the immanent world, but, rather, it seeks to remake this world into the transcendent unity that is human need.

II. Metaphysics and the One

Technology, then, is characterized by an aggressive drive to remake the world into a singularity, to obliterate difference. This same basic impulse is represented in the larger historical phenomenon of metaphysics. For this reason, Heidegger says "the name "technology" is understood here in such an essential way that its meaning coincides with the term "completed metaphysics" There is, therefore, an essential relation between technological and metaphysical thought. Although the essence of technology as confrontational generality [the standing-reserve] is more apparent, the essence of metaphysics is similarly determined by its insistence on the privilege of unity, commonality, and transcendence. Just as technology actively tried to refashion the world into a singular reserve of neutral resources, metaphysics in general always seeks the over-determination of beings through totalizing categorization.

Thus, although the singular phenomenon of *Seinsvergessenheit* has taken many forms in the philosophical tradition, all of these divergent approaches have, for Heidegger, embraced a search for the 'more real,' defined in terms of unity and generality. This search has necessarily taken many forms, but it has always had this essential drive. So, for instance, the Neo-Platonic thinkers based their systems on the foundation of the One. This One was taken to be the singular, unified, infinite, immaterial source of all Being, which was the ground of every existent being. The world, understood in this way, consisted of a hierarchical ontological structure, which allowed for greater and lesser degrees of perfection, really degrees of existence, with the highest levels of Being as the most real.

As we saw in chapter one, a similar structure supported the Scholastic construction of a purely onto-theological God. This God was defined by the qualities of unity, singularity, infinity, immateriality, transcendence, and so on. All of these qualities were, for the Scholastic thinkers, indications of the actual existence of God. Insofar as a thing shared in these qualities, it was real, and the more of them or the greater degree of them it had, the more real it was. This metaphysical drive towards unity finds, then, its natural conclusion in the onto-theological project which attributes these transcendent qualities to a singular being which is then taken to represent the real in a way which immanent, particular beings never could.

In modern metaphysics (metaphysical thought since Descartes), this same drive has found its justification in the scientific project, which itself provides the support for the rise of modern technology. Metaphysics since Descartes has sought this same generality in the physical, and later logical laws, that apply to everything.

The search for such laws came to constitute modern philosophy. In the rationalist project, this meant both physical and logical laws that could be assumed to apply generally to every individual being without needing to take particular factors in account. The empiricist critique, in turn, attacked the possibility of such eternal and general physical laws, but advocated such laws in the realm of logic. In both cases, metaphysicians turned to relations of ideas (Hume), truths of reason (Leibniz), or analytical claims (Kant) as claims which would hold true in any possible set of actual circumstances. All of these categories contain the concept of an idea that is both maximally general (applying as widely as possible), and invariable.

Although this quest for unity found expression in a variety of ways in metaphysical thought, the central metaphysical paradigm for this stress on universal or general properties is the distinction between essence and existence. This is, for Heidegger, one of the basic distinctions of metaphysics, and the understanding of an essence as a transcendent universal nature is a crucial concept in the rise of metaphysics. This tradition is inaugurated in Plato's talk of the *idea*, but it finds expression throughout metaphysics as a whole. For Plato, and likewise for later thinkers, the essence of a thing is defined in terms of commonality and eternality: an essence must be shared by many things and must itself be unchanging and transcendent. Ultimately, then, the essence of a thing rests on its perdurance through time:

Socrates and Plato already think the essence of something as what essences, what comes to presence, in the sense of what endures. But they think what endures as what remains permanently [das Fortwährende] (aei on). And they find what endures permanently in...that which remains... in the aspect [Ausehen] (eidos, idea), for example, the Idea 'house.' xv

This understanding of the essences of things became the dominant narrative of the real in metaphysics: the real becomes that which does not change and is self-identical.

Essence, understood in this way, is present throughout the philosophical tradition. This talk of essence or substance originates in Plato and Aristotle, but it becomes determinate for all later thought. In keeping with Plato, the 'real' or the essential is always that which is both most enduring and most common. This thinking finds expression in various ways. For the Scholastic tradition as a whole, the language of *essentia* and *existentia* became standard. Viewed under this rubric, the essence of a thing is indifferent to both individuation and instantiation: the *essential* of any given thing is always a potentially existent universal, which may then be contingently instantiated as a particular, actually existent being. In other words, essence is general and existence particular.

If we examine the continuation of this thinking through western thought, it is never hard to see how this logic develops from the medieval distinction between *essentia* and *existentia* into the totalizing generality of modern technology. Crucially, then, 'essence' became a standard metaphysical concept after Plato and Aristotle. This theme was developed in innumerable ways, but the basic preference was always one of essence (the universal) over existence (the particular instantiation of the universal). We might, for instance, point to the development of the terminology of substance in Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. In all of these thinkers, the search for substance(s), rather than essence, is the basic question of philosophy, and, in each case, substance is defined both by its simplicity and by its irreducibility. Whether this leads to a single infinite substance as in the thought of Spinoza, or to innumerable

distinct but irreducibly atomistic substances as in the thought of Leibniz is unimportant. In either case, we can see the basic divisions of metaphysics between the particular and the universal, between the transient and the eternal, between the changing and the unchanging, and the privilege that metaphysics always accords to the latter half of these oppositions.

This so-called privilege of essence means that Heidegger often approaches the problem of metaphysics through the lens of essentialism. Early on, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger gave a central place to the issue of essence and existence, famously declaring that "the 'essence' of Dasein lies in its existence" (thereby claiming the status previously accorded to God for Dasein) and "the priority of *existentia* over *essentia*." These claims about the precedence of existence play an important role in *Being and Time*, justifying not only the phenomenological project of the first division, but also the more 'existential' line of thought in the second division. Throughout *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that this precedence of existence is a crucial constitutive feature of human beings [*Dasein*] and that this precedence means that human beings are always already in the world:

The 'essence' ["Wesen"] of this entity lies in its "to be" [Zu-Sein]. Its Being-what-it-is [Was-sein] (essentia) must, so far as we can speak of it at all, be conceived in terms of its Being (existentia). But here our ontological task is to show that when we choose to designate the Being of this entity as "existence" [Existenz], this term does not and cannot have the ontological significance of the traditional term "existentia"; ontologically existentia is tantamount to Being-present-at-hand, a kind of Being which is inappropriate to entities of Dasein's character. xvii

Here, Heidegger argues that philosophy needs to make a basic reversal in the accord which it pays to essence and begin, instead, to stress the importance of existence. Heidegger only hints, though, at why this might not simply be the inversion of the typical metaphysical dichotomy. In fact, for objects, the precedence of existence over essence does seem to be nothing more than the inversion of conventional categories. Even in the singular case of human beings, Heidegger argues that the kind of existence which needs to be privileged over essentialism is intimately connected to the traditionally neglected concept of existence, and many of the thinkers who were influenced by *Being and Time*, took this inversion of metaphysical concepts to be the basic project of what came to be called existentialism.

Heidegger, however, developed a different understanding of the problem of essentialism in his later writings. This shift is most clearly visible in Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism," in which he attacks this existential understanding of the problem of metaphysics, mainly with Jean-Paul Sartre's explication of the problem in mind. Here, Heidegger revises his earlier position and uses the positions of *Being and Time* as a springboard to a new understanding, even as he uses extensive references to it, in order to advance the claim that there is a basic continuity to his thought and that *Being and Time* has been misinterpreted. For our purposes, the elucidation of the problem of essentialism which Heidegger provides in the "Letter on Humanism" is of interest primarily insofar as it serves as a clear statement of his attempt to get back behind the division of metaphysics, and not so much as it is indicative or not of a shift in Heidegger's thought. But, whether or not this position is consistent with the project of *Being and Time*, it is clear that Heidegger developed a radical critique which went beyond any simple inversion of metaphysical concepts.

In his "Letter on Humanism" Heidegger attacks the idea that any revision of

privilege alone could undermine the problematic dichotomy. Heidegger characterizers Sartre's philosophy as basically metaphysical:

Sartre expresses the basic tenet of existentialism in this way: Existence precedes essence. In this statement he is taking *essentia* and *existentia* according to their metaphysical meaning... But the reversal of a metaphysical statement remains a metaphysical statement. xviii

Instead of this metaphysically trapped inversion, Heidegger calls for a new kind of thinking which would return to the ground of thought before this distinction. So, while it is true that "it is characteristic for metaphysics that in it *existentia* is always consistently treated only briefly if at all an as a matter of course, if it is treated at all," the overcoming of metaphysics cannot be accomplished simply by reversing this privilege. xix We must, instead, attempt to rethink the "the differentiation of *essentia* (essentiality) and *existentia* (actuality) [which] completely dominates the destiny of Western history. XXX Ultimately, then, the attempt to overcome the metaphysical desire for generality and unity as it is embodied in philosophy's talk of essences and substances seems to be, for Heidegger, a two-step process. It remains crucial that thinking first reverse the metaphysical prejudice against existence, as Heidegger argued early on in *Being and Time*, but it is also necessary, Heidegger argues in his later essays, that thinking go further and confront the metaphysically basic dichotomy between essence and existence.

This new thinking might discover, in this confrontation with the essentialism that lies at the heart of metaphysics, a new understanding of beings and Being that is prior to the distinction between *essentia* and *existentia*. In an important sense, any such discovery would be, for Heidegger, the recovery of an earlier way of thinking that held sway before our forgetting of Being. In "The Question Concerning

Technology," Heidegger characterizes this new understanding as one that would embrace all the transient and immanent aspects of Being (which were neglected in the traditional dichotomy) without neglecting the unchanging or eternal form, which is also an aspect of the thing in question:

"If we speak of the "essence of a house" and the "essence of a state," we do not mean a generic type; rather we mean the ways in which house and state hold sway, administer themselves, develop and decay." xxi

In contradistinction to the "perdurance" definition of metaphysics, essence should be taken to mean not only that which endures permanently, but also that which comes momentarily to presence in a particular being. In the end, though, this perspective is only the sketch of an anti-metaphysical account of presence as the pre-metaphysical union of essence and existence.

Metaphysics and its completion in modern technology are two sides of the same coin; they represent a way of thinking that has become pervasive in the modern world, but which is equally characteristic of the whole narrative of western thought. The core of the thought of both is their relentless drive towards generality and unity, which is harmful precisely because of its destructive potential, because it does not let beings be. The quest of metaphysics to achieve the One is not just a harmless diversion, but is, for Heidegger, the central problem of metaphysics. Heidegger admits, though, that just as metaphysics fails because of its inherent abstraction, "all mere organizing of the world conceived and represented historiographically in terms of universality remains truthless and without foundation." On this analysis, even Heidegger's own analysis fails insofar as it attempts to represent the general phenomenon of metaphysics instead of its specific failures to embrace the particular.

Ultimately, the kind of thinking which Heidegger calls for will search not for historical generalizations, but for concrete realizations of immanent singular beings. The question of what such thinking might look like will have to wait until the next chapter.

III. Radical Particularity and the Critique of Metaphysics

The role of generality and unity in metaphysics finds its natural corollary in medieval discussions of the nature of particularity. As we have seen, Scotus had a strong account of the nature of particularity, which served to re-invision the particular as the essential. Scotus's account of particularity is of a basic 'thisness' which embraces both essence and existence—a formal unity before the abstractive distinction between essentia and existentia. As we saw with Heidegger, such an embrace of particularity is absolutely crucial to any overcoming of metaphysics. So, ironically, a medieval metaphysician anticipates part of the means of overcoming metaphysics. It may seem strange, however, to characterize Scotus's thought as embracing the precedence of particularity over commonality, when, as we saw in chapter one, Scotus develops a univocal ontology; that is, an account in which all beings exist in relation to each other on a sliding scale of Being. As Scotus says in his Quodlibet, "the infinite is measuring everything else as greater or lesser to the degree it approaches the whole or recedes from it."xxiii In many ways, Scotus's thought does reinforce this emphasis on generality.

For Scotus, in what has often been characterized as a position of 'moderate realism,' common natures or essences are distinct from their instantiations and are, in

fact, indifferent to instantiation. A common nature exists before it is instantiated in any particular thing and is capable of being instantiated in an infinite collection of distinct particular beings. Premier among these common natures which are indifferent to instantiation is Being itself, which is in everything that is, including God. In this way, the univocity of Being bears an essential connection to the totalizing sameness of the standing-reserve, and, more broadly, to the metaphysical search for essential unity; there seems to be no qualitative difference between beings—only a difference of quantity. I will argue, though, that Scotus's position on the nature of individuation is a thoroughly anti-metaphysical moment, which undercuts any metaphysical drift towards generality. The importance of Scotus's theory of individuation lies, then, in rejecting the determinate role of metaphysical, transcendental universals.

This can only be understood within the larger debate about the nature of the particular individual thing in medieval philosophy. The nature of individuation was a much debated issue in Scholastic philosophy. This reflects both the extent to which the problem of individuation represented a crucial philosophical problem about the nature of substance, a central concept for medieval philosophers, and the tangled relationship between various theories of individuation and medieval theological debates. The problem of individuation was, simply put, the problem of how particular singular beings could be accounted for within a framework that recognized the common nature in a thing—that nature which it shared with others of its kind—as ontologically basic. For the medieval thinkers working within this framework, the essence of any particular being was taken to be the universal form, of which any

particular thing is only one instantiation. On this account of general or common essences, it is easy to account for the differences between things of different natures: a man and a stone are different insofar as they partake in different common natures; here specifically humanity and what we might call 'stoneness.' A problem arises, however, when we ask, for instance, what makes Socrates and Plato different. They share a common nature and yet they are obviously, at least numerically, distinct. Such a question is of deep philosophical import, for it seems to throw the whole understanding of essences as common natures into question, by allowing that there is some aspect of a particular thing that cannot be explained by its essence.

To this basic question of how something could be particular despite sharing its nature with a possibly infinite collection of other particular things, thinkers before Scotus turned primarily to accounts based on the distinction between essential and accidental properties. This meant that beings were not essentially particular but rather essentially general, and that their status as particular beings was dependent solely on some accidental property. Medieval thinkers disagreed over what these accidental properties were, but there was a basic consensus that it was something inessential and therefore contingent that individuated common natures into particular beings—perhaps only to be expected, considering these thinkers were working within a framework that assumed that universal essences have priority over particular existence.

One of the best known accounts of this process of individuation is that of Thomas Aquinas. To the problem of individuation, Aquinas proposed that there are two principles of individuation. First, all things are differentiated by their nature—a

man and a stone are different because that have different common natures. Secondly, among things that share a common nature (a common nature which has therefore been instantiated in more than one existent thing), matter is the basic mechanism of individuation. In Aquinas's account we can clearly see the basis of Heidegger's comment that metaphysics has never adequately thought through the concept of existentia, since, for Aquinas, particularity is not entirely dependent on existence. Anything which is the sole existent instantiation of its common nature will be particular without the need for the individuating force of matter. In this category Aquinas includes God and the angels. But, individuation is primarily not an effect of instantiation or of actual existence but of matter. This means that everything physical is to be differentiated purely on the basis of material difference. Aquinas argues, following Aristotle, that matter is neutral and that it is formed in particular ways which are then connected through actual existence to common natures as particular instantiations. So, while Plato and Aristotle have a common nature as rational animals, they are to be differentiated by their differing physical characteristics. Aquinas argues that this account of individuation reflects the way we actually differentiate between things in the physical world around us.

This account is representative of everything that Heidegger critiques as the drive towards transcendence and universality in metaphysics. For Aquinas, the material world (which, for Aristotelians like Aquinas, represents the only possible starting point of knowledge) is imperfect and does not reflect the true nature of things. To discover this nature, we look beyond the materially existent world to discover the essential unity which pervades all things. This means, though, that

difference and particularity are nothing more than illusions. In fact, as Scotus points out, this account inadequately stresses the particular on theological grounds insofar as Aquinas's theory fails to account for difference among either angels or souls. Presumably, both angels and human souls after death are distinct despite being multiple beings of a common nature which are not instantiated in matter. Despite these problematic theological conclusions, Aquinas's theory was widely influential, and it is representative of the approach which medieval thinkers before Scotus took to the problem of individuation.

Against this trend to make the particular accidental, Scotus argued that particularity was, in fact, an essential property of any singular thing. Scotus's account of particularity is, therefore, a definitive break with the traditional medieval accounts. In contrast to these thinkers, Scotus makes the radical argument that particularity is essential to the thing in question. Particularity is not a privation, but rather a positive difference in a thing; that is, its "thisness." On this account, the attempt to abstract from the particular, to consider only commonality, is a necessarily derivative way of thinking.

In line with the innovative nature of his theory of individuation, Scotus devoted a large amount of his writing to the subject. His most extended discussion of the problem and of his theory is contained in the lecture *The Principle of Individuation* (*De Principio Individuationis*). Scotus divides his discussion of the problem into six questions, each of which proposes a possible account of the process of individuation. Scotus contests and attempts to refute each of the earlier accounts, often restatements of earlier positions like that of Aquinas, and finally, in question

six, presents his own theory. The first five questions amount to Scotus's denial of any position that would make particularity or singularity an accidental property. When Scotus finally lays out his own position, he does so against these earlier theories, setting up the problem again and then denying that any accidental account can do full justice to the nature of particularity:

Things that differ are "other-same things"; but Socrates and Plato differ, hence there must be something whereby they differ, the ultimate basis of their difference. But the [common] nature in the one and the other is not primarily the cause of their difference, but their agreement... Hence there must be something else whereby they differ. But this is not quantity, nor existence, nor a negation, as was established. *xxv*

Scotus spends a great deal of time dealing with all of these theories because his new theory was radical in many ways. He takes a position which is completely at odds with the theories of earlier thinkers and, so, throughout his work, he must attempt continually to make his work seems less original. In this vein, Scotus even spends the last few pages of *The Principle of Individuation* attempting to reconcile his new theory with the obviously contrasting position of Aristotle that individuation occurs by means of matter and not form. In this, though, Scotus is representative of medieval thought as whole, where even the most innovative ideas, especially must be made to seem like accepted knowledge justified through reference to the authorities.

Despite this structural attempt to associate his account with the project of metaphysical thought, Scotus does have something new to say about individuation. When he finally presents his own view that "the specific nature is not of itself this; therefore it becomes this through something positive; not through quantity and the same with the other [accidents], hence it must have something in the substance category," this is not a small cosmetic change of terminology, but an attempt to

rethink completely the traditional metaphysical emphasis on the determinative role of universal or general natures.

Scotus, then, advocates the position that the particularity of any thing, what makes it 'this' and not any other, is a positive existent aspect of the essence of the thing. By moving the locus of individuation from the category of accident to that of substance, Scotus makes a break with the metaphysical tradition of substance or essence which defined the essential properties of thing as those which endure permanently and which are shared. Having set forth the essentiality of particularity, Scotus raises an objection to his own account. Why does his account of individuation not mean that everything is basically different and that there can be no similarity?**

This is the basic problem that any account of basic difference must face: essential particularity seems to immediately necessitate basic diversity, complete fragmentation. To this objection, Scotus responds,

This is false [that things agree in nothing]. For the things so constituted also have a [common] nature, in which they primarily agree. But this is not the case with their differences... which agree in nothing."xxviii

In Scotus's own terms, the common essence and the particular 'thisness' in a thing create a formal unity; although we can speak about them as separate entities or properties, they are inexorably bound together and can never exist without each other. Ultimately, this means that all things essentially have both a ground of commonality (in Scotus, this is preeminently Being) and particularity. The common nature in a thing allows us to speak about and understand the thing abstractly, because, for Scotus, language itself is predicated on commonality. Particularity, conversely,

defies abstraction. The particular 'thisness' of a thing, is, in fact, beyond or before the possibility of speech:

Individuals have no proper attributes or definitions or means [whereby anything can be demonstrated of them, as one demonstrates attributes of a subject by means of its essence]. Hence artistic and scientific knowledge must halt at the level of the most special species. **xxix**

For this reason, we cannot even speak about the particular essence of anything. This particularity is divorced from any possibility of abstractive speech, and is, therefore, inherently divorced from the abstractive project of metaphysics. It is this formal union of both sides of the divide between essentia and existentia in the particular thing that represents the possibility of a thinking which would lie before the distinction between these concepts. Scotus, then, attempts to complicate the univocal grounding of metaphysics in ontological commonality even as he constructs a model of ultimate universality. Scotus's account here attempts to straddle the divide between particularity and generality by giving an essential role to both in the constitution of the particular thing.

Heidegger's discussion of the nature of technology and, more broadly, of metaphysics, makes clear that the essential feature of both is the privilege each accords to the general and the unitary. All of metaphysics can be viewed in this way, as the search for the One that exists somehow underneath the apparent diversity in the world. Understood in this way, the overcoming of metaphysics would necessarily entail an embrace of transient particulars, of understanding the beings in our world as embodying difference essentially. Particularity in Scotus, then, bears an essential connection to the critique of technology as metaphysical thinking. The essential element of technology is the absorption of the particular into the general: abstraction

from the particular, the basic problem of language, which must always rely on commonality, is the basis of metaphysical thinking, which is challenged by the concept of a radical "thisness" basic to every entity. Because of this, Scotus, the preeminent metaphysician of univocal ontology, the ultimate commonality of Being, equally represents the real possibility of a new understanding of the particular, originating from within metaphysics. Scotus's account of particularity is, in fact, metaphysics collapsing under the weight of its own unsustainable conclusions.

The word stellen [to set upon] in the name Ge-stell [Enframing] not only means challenging. At the same time it should preserve the suggestion of another Stellen from which it stems. namely, that producing and presenting [Her- und Dar-stellen] which, in the sense of poiesis, lets presence come forth into unconcealment. This producing that brings forth-e.g., the erecting of a statue in the temple precinct—and the challenging ordering now under consideration are indeed fundamentally different, and yet they remain related in their essence. (Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 21-22/20-21)

¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein *Notebooks 1914-1916* Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979), 61; German: "Das, was uns a priori gegeben scheint, ist der Begriff: Dieses."

ii The metaphysical hope of transcendence is closely linked to notions of essence. The transcendent, understood in metaphysics as the super-sensory, is one ground of the generality which dominates metaphysics and its natural corollary is the 'God' of metaphysics. In both cases metaphysics has not attained the position it thinks it has, and these terms serve as metaphysical projections of philosophical needs. Throughout this work I have used the word "transcendent" to represent metaphysics' hope for transcendence as opposed to immanence; a hope that for Heidegger is never realized in metaphysics.

iii Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 22/21.

iv Ibid., 10/7.

V Heidegger writes that although "compared with demands that Plato makes on language and thought...the use of the word Gestell as the name for the essence of modern technology, which we now venture here, is almost harmless. Nevertheless, perhaps on account of this troublesome 'almost,' Heidegger proceeds to construct an elaborate network of inter-related meanings for his new coinage:

vi Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 21/20.

vii Ibid., 22/21.

viii Ibid., 17/17.

ix Ibid., 22/21 and 24/23.

^x Ibid., 17/17.

xi Ibid., 17/17.

xii Ibid., 15/14.

xiii Heidegger, "Die Kehre" (1949) *Identität und Differenz* (GA 11). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006, 122; as translated in: "The Turning" The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays. Trans. William Lovitt. New York: Harper & Row, 1977, 48.

xiv Heidegger, "Überwindung der Metaphysik" (1936-1946) Vorträge und Aufsätze (GA 7). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000, 79; as translated in: "Overcoming Metaphysics" The End of Philosophy. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, 93.

xv Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 31/30.

- xxiii Duns Scotus, Quodlibet, 5.57; as translated in: God and Creatures; the Quodlibetal Questions, 129.
- xxiv The word "thisness" is used here as the literal rendering of the Latin word "haecceitas," a word which Scotus invented but rarely used. Its technical use was reinforced by later systematic developers of Scotus's thought.
- xxv Duns Scotus, De Principio Individuationis, Question VI, 167; as translated in: *Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*, 81-83.
- xxvi Duns Scotus, *De Principio Individuationis*, Question VI, 167; as translated in: *Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*, 83.
- xxvii "You may object: if individual differences are primarily diverse; then one can not abstract any "one" form them. Hence the things constituted through such differences would be primarily diverse." Duns Scotus, *De Principio Individuationis*, Question VI, 175; as translated in: *Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*, 87.
- xxviii Duns Scotus, *De Principio Individuationis*, Question VI, 175; as translated in: *Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*, 87-89.
- xxix Duns Scotus, *De Principio Individuationis*, Question VI, 184; as translated in: *Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*, 93.

xvi Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (1927). Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001; 42 and 43; as translated in: *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1962, 67 and 68.

xvii Ibid., 42/67.

xviii Heidegger, "Brief über den Humanismus," 328/250.

xix Heidegger, "Überwindung der Metaphysik," 74/89."

xx Heidegger, "Brief über den Humanismus," 329/250.

xxi Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 31/30.

xxii Heidegger, "Die Kehre," 123/48.

CHAPTER THREE

The Possibility of Anti-Metaphysical Truth in Heidegger and Scotus

The greatest virtue of the mind is... to understand things by intuitive knowledge... So he who knows by this kind of knowledge passes to the greatest human perfection.

—Benedict de Spinoza¹

I. Truth in Metaphysics: Representation, Adequation, Certainty, Challenging

Heidegger's account of truth is both central to his thought and, often, quite obscure. It can sometimes appear that Heidegger's account of truth is merely negative or critical, but on the contrary, Heidegger has a robust understanding of the possibility of truth as *aletheia* or unconcealment in contradistinction to the representational understanding of truth which he attributes to metaphysical thought. To explicate Heidegger's account of truth as unconcealment, it will first be necessary to examine his criticism of the theories of truth expressed in metaphysics and Heidegger's implicit claim that all of these diverse theories express a singular understanding of representational truth. In doing so, we will first examine Heidegger's analysis of the historical development of representational truth, starting with Plato and culminating in the understandings of truth which are essential both to modern technology and to Nietzsche's nihilism. Second, we will extract from this historical account the essential features of representational truth and examine their problematic associations with the central elements of metaphysics as a whole.

In the next section, the positive features of Heidegger's contrasting development of the idea of truth as *aletheia* will be examined. This is a crucial theme in Heidegger's later work, and, I will argue, a proper understanding of the role of

aletheia helps clarify Heidegger's entire project. But the issue is complicated because Heidegger's development of this theme is both often obscure and is spread throughout his later essays. I have therefore first attempted a more detailed exposition of the argument of a single essay: Heidegger's extended engagement with the problem of truth in his "Plato's Doctrine of Truth." Again, doing so will allow us to examine the nature of unconcealment as a whole in Heidegger's thought by focusing on a particular example and using this example to clarify Heidegger's remarks in other essays.

Finally, this explication of Heidegger's account of truth will allow us to give a new and stronger account of the role and nature of truth in Scotus's thought, and to give an account of the crucial role of intuitive cognition both in Scotus's thought and as the beginning of a long trend in Western philosophy which culminates in Heidegger. Investigating Scotus's thoughts about truth in light of Heidegger's discussion of unconcealment will help us approach Scotus in a novel way which makes clear that Scotus actually has a much more complex account of truth than is usually assumed. Scotus's development of the theory of intuitive cognition anticipates, in many ways, Heidegger's construction of truth as unconcealment. This new understanding of the radical possibilities of truth inherent in Scotus's thought will allow us to trouble what is, in the end, Heidegger's rather simplistic account of the historical dominance of representational theories of truth.

Throughout Heidegger's work, readers are continually confronted with references to truth, and it quickly becomes clear that the new kind of thinking at which Heidegger seeks to arrive will require a very different conception of the nature of truth than the one metaphysics offers. In fact, Heidegger thinks that the history of metaphysical thought has been intimately connected with the rise of a particular understanding of truth: "In metaphysics reflection is accomplished concerning the essence of what is and a decision takes place regarding the essence of truth." But how does Heidegger characterize the truth of metaphysics, and why does he argue that only this one understanding of truth has been dominant in philosophy? Especially when it seems obvious that, from Plato, the nature of truth has been a source of great debate and that many thinkers have held widely divergent views about truth?

Heidegger characterizes the understanding of truth that dominates metaphysics in various ways. It is clear, though, that Heidegger has in mind a singular understanding of the essence of metaphysical truth. That this phenomenon is essentially unitary becomes apparent when its essential connection to metaphysics is made clear: just as the history of metaphysics is the history of a singular phenomenon, understood variously as metaphysics, onto-theology, or technology, the history of representational truth is a singular phenomenon variously understood as representation, adequation, certainty, and, finally, challenging.

Just as Heidegger understands metaphysics as an aspect of Seinsgeschichte, he also approaches representational truth historically. In all of his diverse references to metaphysical conceptions of truth, Heidegger is always concerned with the larger chronological picture of the development of these theories. Heidegger divides this development into major periods of thought in which different aspects of metaphysical truth came to dominate. The first of these periods is the crucial transition from what

Heidegger takes to be the more authentic understanding of truth as *aletheia* in the Pre-Socratic thinkers to the static representational theory of truth elucidated by Plato and Aristotle.

Heidegger uses the aphoristic thoughts attributed to the Greek thinkers before Plato to develop an account of pre-metaphysical truth. This earlier understanding of truth (*aletheia*), he claims, is simply the self-revealing of beings as they are, instead of the attempt to compare beings to some 'more real' standard of truth. *Aletheia* in the Pre-Socratics is, as we will see, closer to the meditative appreciation of the event or process of the unconcealment of beings, than to the metaphysical representation of truth as an abstract standard. Heidegger defines this more primordial theory of truth against the rise of metaphysical thought in Plato.

The new Platonic theory of truth continues to be identified by the Greek word aletheia, but an important new sense of truth emerges. The central role of the Platonic idea determines the nature of metaphysics as the exploration of the supersensory as the real. This is a decisive moment in the understanding of truth, for "since Plato, thinking about the being of beings has become—'philosophy,' because it is a matter of gazing up at the 'ideas.' But the 'philosophy' that begins with Plato has, from that point on, the distinguishing mark of what is later called 'metaphysics.'" This new sense of aletheia as adequation between the material thing and the immaterial idea is developed by the medieval philosophers as the theory of truth as adequatio rei ad intellectum. Finally, this metaphysical approach to truth is solidified in the modern subjective approaches to truth, beginning with Descartes, who subordinates the truth of a statement or of an object to the intellect of an

observing subject. It is this approach to truth which, Heidegger argues, is foundational for all calculative and technological truth.

The connection between representational truth and the rise of metaphysics is not accidental. For Heidegger, the new understanding of *aletheia* as adequation (as distinct from unconcealment) both enabled and was made possible by the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle. This transition reveals itself initially as linguistic change:

The "true" is still called *alethes*, the unconcealed; but what is true, namely the proposition, is true not because it itself as revealing is something "unconcealed," but rather because it establishes and thinks what is unconcealed by the adequation of reason."

This transition is, however, essentially connected to the features of metaphysics. The most important of these features for the new understanding of truth is the crucial distinction between whatness and thatness (forerunners in Heidegger's understanding of the medieval distinction between *essentia* and *existentia*). This distinction allows for the separation of the essential features of a thing and its presence, in other words, for the rise of the Platonic *idea*. Heidegger characterizes this development as the moment, in metaphysics and in metaphysical truth, when:

whatness [as authoritative Being] usurps the realm of Being, namely Being in the primal determination lying *before* the distinction of what and that, which preserves for Being the fundamental characteristic of originating and emerging and presencing, thus of that which subsequently appears as thatness (*hoti estin*), but first and only in contrast to the precedence of whatness (*idea*). vi

For Heidegger, this connection between the *idea* and the true is the most important feature of the rise of metaphysical truth. Plato's reliance on the *idea* determines all of the essential features of representational truth, for, without the *idea*, adequation is

impossible: adequation must be the adequation of the thing to the *idea*, whether understood as Platonic form, as the essence of the thing, as God's idea, as the observing subject's idea, or as the thought of the proposition. The history of truth as adequation is, then, the history of the development of these differing conceptions of the *idea*.

This separation between whatness and thatness, and "the precedence of whatness brings the precedence of beings themselves in what they are." At this point, therefore, "the eminent character of metaphysics is decided. The one as unifying unity becomes authoritative for subsequent determination of Being." This totalization effects another crucial change in the understanding of the true: under the character of unity, truth becomes tied to the universal, the eternal, and the objective. Just as metaphysics, expressed in a univocal ontology, brings every being under the sway of commonality, representational truth forces the true into a general and static form of truth.

These characteristics of truth as adequation are gradually reified in the Scholastic formulations of truth. Although the great medieval philosophers held widely divergent theories of truth, Heidegger argues that all of these theories are characterized by the essential feature of adequation. This is readily apparent in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, and Heidegger uses Aquinas' formulation of adequation as the basis for his standard medieval formulation of truth:

"This [the traditional definition of truth: *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*] can be taken to mean: truth is the correspondence [Angleichung] of the matter to knowledge. But it can also be taken as saying: truth is the correspondence of knowledge to the matter. Admittedly, the above definition is usually stated only in the formula *veritas est adaequatio intellectus ad rem* [truth is the adequation of intellect to thing]. Yet truth so conceived,

propositional truth, is possible only on the basis of material truth [Sachwahrheit], of adaequatio rei ad intellectum [adequation of thing to intellect]. Both concepts of the essence of veritas have continually in view a conforming to...[Sichrichten nach...], and hence think truth as correctness [Richtigkeit]."

Here, the pre-eminent feature of truth is adequation or correspondence. From this, it might seem that Heidegger is too quick to assimilate one over-arching theory of truth to the Scholastic tradition as a whole. In fact, this correspondence theory of truth is often associated with Aquinas in contradistinction to other thinkers of the period.

Heidegger, however, argues that the essence of truth as adequation is played out more broadly in medieval thought than any narrowly conceived correspondence theory of propositional truth. Adequation underlies all particular conceptions of truth in the medieval period, regardless of how distinct they might appear. This is because the more basic sense of adequation that is implicit throughout medieval thought is one of correspondence between beings and their ideas in God. Because the God of the Scholastics (in a thoroughly onto-theological sense) is both Being and Truth, the truth of any being must be discovered in its relation to God. It is this deeper sense of adequation which enables the correspondence theory of propositions:

"Veritas as adequatio rei ad intellectum does not imply the later transcendental conception of Kant—possible only on the basis of the subjectivity of the human essence—that "objects conform to our knowledge." Rather, it implies the Christian theological belief that, with respect to what it is and whether it is, a matter, as created (ens creatum), is only insofar as it corresponds to the idea preconceived in the intellectus divinus, i.e., in the mind of God, and thus measure up to the idea (is correct) and in this sense is "true." The intellectus humanus too is an ens creatum. As a capacity bestowed upon human beings by God, it must satisfy its idea. But the understanding measures up to the idea only by accomplishing in its propositions the correspondence of what is thought to the matter, which in its turn must be in conformity with the idea."

This means that even, or especially, so-called ontological theories of truth, which are usually directly contrasted with correspondence theories of truth, express the logic of adequation. We might, for instance, look at Anselm of Canterbury's thought as a paradigmatic example of this. In his *De Veritate*, Anselm argues that truth is essentially rectitude. This means that something is true insofar as it is what it should be: an object when its being corresponds to its essence, an action when it is in accord with God's will, and a proposition when it both does what it should, simply indicate in a meaningful way, and when it indicates correctly (when it corresponds to the way the world is). On Heidegger's account, even Anselm's ontological theory of truth expresses the logic of adequation (in this case, as rectitude), because truth is always the static adequation of a thing to its *idea* in God.

This medieval understanding of truth undergoes further revision, Heidegger argues, in modern philosophy, whereby the structure of adequation is applied to the new paradigm of subject and object. In the Scholastic conception of truth,

If all beings are "created," the possibility of the truth of human knowledge is grounded in the fact that matter and proposition... are fitted to each other on the basis of the unity of the divine plan of creation. *Veritas as adaequatio rei* (*creandae*) *ad intellectum* (*divinum*) guarantees *veritas as adaequatio intellectus* (*humani*) *ad rem* (*creatam*). Throughout, *veritas* essentially implies *convenientia*, the coming of beings themselves, as created, into agreement with the Creator, an "accord" with regard to the way they are determined in the order of creation. xi

The medieval understanding of truth is composed of both the adequation of the proposition (correspondence truth), and the adequation of the thing to its *idea* (ontological truth). Paralleling this distinction is modern metaphysics' dual understanding of truth in propositions and natural objects. Modern metaphysics, then, thinks of truth both subjectively and naturally, and, for Heidegger, both of these have

their roots in adequational thinking. In both cases, the crucial transition is the humanization of the medieval structures; that is to say, modern metaphysics attributes to humanity the truth that the Scholastics reserved for God.

In the case of the natural component of this understanding of truth, the created order characteristic of medieval philosophy enables a new logic of totalization, in which "the theologically perceived order of creation is replaced by the capacity of all objects to be planned by means of a worldly reason [Weltvernunft] that supplies the law for itself."xii It is this logic which replaces the Scholastic reliance on universal essence in order to make truth claims about objects intelligible. Instead of a world order given structure by God, modern metaphysics relies on an inner theology of physical composition.

But the more important development in modern metaphysics is the development of the other component; that is, subjective truth. For modern metaphysics, truth must be thought not only in relation to the whole world order, but also in the context of the metaphysically basic notion of subject and object. Truth emerges by means of the relationship between and subject and object, beginning with Descartes. In the Scholastic conception, the created nature of the intellect ensured the truth of understanding. By contrast, Descartes secures truth by means of clear and distinct ideas. As long as Descartes is thinking clearly and distinctly about an object, he writes in the *Meditations*, he cannot err. In "Metaphysics as History of Being," Heidegger explains that, by means of this Cartesian shift, "truth, meanwhile in metaphysics changed to the distinctive trait of the intellect (*humanus*, *divinus*), comes to its ultimate essence which is called *certainty*."

understanding of truth is solidified in the sense that certainty is now the distinguishing feature of truth. Heidegger says elsewhere that "at the beginning of modern times Descartes sharpens the previous thesis by saying: 'Truth or falsehood in the proper sense can be nowhere else but in the intellect alone.'" The true is true insofar as it is correct or certain in the intellect.^{xv} The rise of the subject is therefore both the essential aspect of truth in modern metaphysics and the culmination of the trend toward locating truth in the human being alone which begins with Plato.

In other essays, Heidegger argues that this development of metaphysical truth reaches its culmination in modern technology and in Nietzsche's thought. In modern technology, the division between the viewing subject and the object becomes even starker. As technology pursues a program of challenging, the object is revealed not just as other, or as outside the subject, but as *against* the subject. Because "modern science's way of representing pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces," the drive toward truth is no longer the passive absorption of the object but the active attempt to refashion in the object in the image of man. This striving for total control brings out the oppositional aspect of the relationship between subject and object which is implicit in Descartes.

This development is consumated in Nietzsche's thought. Here, the role of the *idea* is finally made absolute even as the *idea* is brought down from the super-sensory world into the things themselves. In Heidegger's landmark essay, "Nietzsche's Word: God is Dead" (the distilled core of Heidegger's lectures on Nietzsche in 1937 and 1938), he argues that Nietzsche's oft-quoted remark "God is dead" expresses just this trans-valuation of the supersensory into the worldly: "God is dead" means that

the supersensory world has ceased to be of value so that we need to posit new values from within this world. What had been entirely other-world *ideas* in the metaphysical tradition are, in Nietzsche, re-interpreted under the rubric of value, and all his efforts to the contrary notwithstanding, Nietzsche's retention of value completes the very trajectory he attacks:

Insofar as "value" and interpretation in term of "values" are what sustains Nietzsche's metaphysics—in the absolute form of a "revaluation of all values"—and since for him all knowledge takes its departure from the metaphysical origin of "value," to that extent Nietzsche is the most unrestrained Platonist in the history of Western metaphysics." "xviii

Nietzsche's nihilism, in other words, is not the destruction of representative truth but the final theory in a long tradition of metaphysical systems which represented truth as adequation. The truth of the thing is still always determined through the static comparison with the normative value which should correspond to it. The difference is that Nietzsche brings the *ideas* down into the material things themselves—he still has a representative theory of truth, but now actuality, or the value of life, is the objective measure of truth.

Although, as we have seen, the historical development of metaphysical theories of truth has taken many forms, Heidegger argues that there are essential features of metaphysical truth which are present in all these different phases of historical development. In many of his references to the core of truth contained in metaphysics, Heidegger characterizes representational truth as more of an attitude toward truth than as simply any one particular theory of truth among others. So, although we might argue, for instance, that the correspondence theory of truth is just one among many theories that have been advocated through the history of

metaphysics (alongside ontological, coherence, or pragmatic theories, for instance), all of these different theories embrace, in Heideggerian terms, a representative attitude toward truth. This means that the understanding of truth which is characteristic of metaphysical thought has certain common features: adequation or correspondence, the importance of some Platonic *idea* that grounds the true, the obliteration of difference in pursuit of unity, and the static or general status of the true.

The most prominent feature of metaphysical truth, then, is the extent to which it is basically adequational. Heidegger characterizes every particular theory of truth in metaphysics as emblematic of this aspect. From the very beginning of the rise of representational truth in Plato, the true is seen as lying outside the thing in question. To investigate the truth of a thing, whatever it is that is in question, there must therefore be something to which that thing can be compared. For the object, this "something" is its essence; for the proposition, it is an external set of circumstances. This means that inner-worldly things can never be true 'in themselves,' but can only be so with regard to some external circumstance. It is because of this drive towards analysis on the basis of some constructed ideal that Heidegger criticizes metaphysical truth for always refusing to "let beings be," although it remains to be seen what this would entail.

It is this adequational aspect of metaphysical truth which dictates the rise of essentialism. As we have seen, the division between essence and existence is critical to Heidegger's account of metaphysics. This division takes on many forms, but the basic notion of an eternal and universal essence grounds the adequational character of

metaphysical truth, by making it possible to investigate the degree to which the thing corresponds to its essence; that is, what it should be. All metaphysical theories of truth are characterized by their appeal to some sort of Platonic ideas or forms, the supersensory, which justify the "objective" nature of truth. Simultaneously, this condition justifies the normative character of metaphysical truth. Lastly, the centrality of the platonic *idea* means that every metaphysical truth already involves a judgment about the 'real.' Something outside of the thing to be investigated must be set aside before the investigation as the 'real', and this real predetermines the truth of the thing in question.

This predetermination of the real means that difference is antithetical to metaphysical truth. Heidegger argues that the "essential constitution of metaphysics is based on the unity of beings as such in the universal and that which is highest." In order to make general claims, metaphysics relies on the common properties of beings, and it was this very tendency which made Scotus's assertions about univocity so troubling. The importance of the division between essence and existence for the structure of adequation, and the necessity for some eternal *idea*, is constitutive of the tendency of metaphysical truth toward commonality and generality. Because the true is true in relation to some external essence, which is constituted by persistence or independence, the truth of anything can be assessed using the same criterion. As for the truth of anything else, the true proposition, like the true object, must therefore be true regardless of its context: truth remains an objective feature of things.

Ultimately, all of these elements (the split between *existentia* and *essentia*, or external ideas, and the generality of truth) mean that any theory of representational

truth posits a static relationship between the thing and its *idea*. The eternal, unchanging essence is called upon to ensure that the true be general and universal, that it apply in every case. For Heidegger, this is the crucial paradox of the rise of metaphysical truth: that even while this new understanding of the relational meaning of truth came to the fore, the dynamic nature of truth was lost. Because metaphysics demands that truth become a calculative tool which can gauge the truth of any situation, it is called upon to create a new real which can ensure the stability which objective truth requires. Although it seems that truth could not be anything other than a static relationship, and this is, in fact, characteristic of every common understanding of truth, Heidegger argues that a new or reclaimed understanding of truth as *aletheia* would present the prospect of a fundamentally un-objective, particular, and dynamic truth.

As we can now see, all the features of metaphysics which became apparent in Heidegger's account of metaphysical thought have their counterparts in representational theories of truth. While these accounts of truth might at first have seemed both widely divergent with respect to each other and neutral with respect to the larger issues raised by the essence of metaphysics, Heidegger argues that, in fact, these theories are intimately connected to his account of the problem of metaphysics. They reflect the same basic elements of metaphysics in their constitution: essentialism, a basic division between subject and object, totalization or generalization, and the supersensory as the real. Importantly, on Heidegger's account, these are not merely accidental features of various theories of truth, but their presence in what is usually thought of as an extremely varied list of common

philosophical theories of truth (correspondence, ontological, coherence, pragmatic) is indicative of the way in which these features are essential to any theory of truth which finds its inspiration in metaphysics.

It is not this list of problematic metaphysical features which Heidegger finds so troubling, but rather the *way* of thinking, which all metaphysical truth opposes to Heidegger's alternative account of truth as unconcealment. In short, representational truth both destroys difference—as Heidegger will say, it does not 'let beings be'—and it turns the dynamic process of truth into the static evaluation of claims. These two outcomes of the rise of representational truth are crucial for Heidegger's exploration of the possibility of an earlier, more primordial truth which lies before these two developments. Heidegger argues, then, that representational truth reflects a central problem of metaphysics and that the solution to this problem is a return to a more primordial understanding of truth; namely *aletheia*.

II. Aletheia as a Particular and Dynamic Event of Truth

Over against the metaphysical understanding of truth as adequation, Heidegger develops his own account of what an anti-metaphysical understanding of truth might involve, with particular reference to truth understood as *aletheia* or unconcealment. Heidegger argues that before the rise of metaphysical thinking, truth was understood in a fundamentally different way. As we have seen, Heidegger's discussion of metaphysical theories of truth is often centered on the issue of the *idea*: all theories of truth involve a determination of the 'real' and therefore have an implicit ontological significance. Heidegger argues that Plato's innovative use of the

idea moved the ground of truth fundamentally from beings to human beings, and that, in so doing, Plato turned the dynamic process of truth into the possibility of static adequation.

Heidegger's essay, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," represents his most extended engagement with the question of truth in the later essays, and, before we examine the nature and role of *aletheia* in Heidegger's thought as a whole, it will be useful to see how he develops the concept in this central essay. Although the essay is ostensibly a discussion of Plato's new conception of *aletheia* as adequation (which, as we saw above, Heidegger sees as the beginning of a new, basically metaphysical, attitude towards truth), Heidegger also gives an account of the possibility of recognizing, even in Platonic truth, the basic structure of unconcealment. So, even as Heidegger critiques Plato's new understanding of truth, he detects remnants of the nature of this earlier truth, noting in closing, "meanwhile we have recollected the original essence of truth." Nevertheless, because this picture is constructed entirely negatively, it requires a somewhat extended engagement with Plato's conception of adequational truth to reveal what exactly Heidegger has in mind.

"Plato's Doctrine of Truth" is a reading of Plato's allegory of the cave, as it is presented in Book 7 of the *Republic*. Heidegger argues that, although the allegory is explicitly concerned with the nature and importance of education [*Bildung*], it more fundamentally sets out Plato's doctrine of truth. Heidegger therefore addresses truth and education in and through one another.

In the allegory of the cave, Plato tells the story of a group of people chained in an underground cave, viewing shadows on a wall. These shadows are cast by various objects behind the prisoners, illuminated by fires behind the objects. Heidegger divides into four stages: initially, everyone can only see the shadows cast on the wall in front of them; second, a person freed from his chains proceeds to turn to the objects and fires behind him; third, he climbs to the surface above the cave and sees the 'real' objects there (illuminated by the light of the sun, at first blindingly bright); and then, finally, he returns to the people in the cave below, readjusting his eyes to the darkness below. Each stage is therefore characterized by a process of acclimation, as the person becomes adjusted to the new brighter or dimmer light, and by new objects.

In his interpretation of Plato's approach to truth in the allegory, Heidegger characterizes each stage as, for Plato, more true (*alethes*). Of each new group of things, Plato says that they will be, to the observer, more 'unhidden.' Initially the "unhidden" are the shadows in front of the chained people, next, the objects which cast these shadows are the "more unhidden," and finally, the things on the surface seen in the light of the sun, are as allegorical representations of the *ideas*, the "most unhidden." The allegory, then, parallels the development of the *ideas* and their new central role in adequational truth. Through this process, the location of truth is moved to the *ideas*, static markers of truth, and the eventual metaphysical primacy of the human intellect is foreshadow by the Plato's stress on the formation of the person in question.

Heidegger's argument here, then, follows the structure of his historical development of truth as adequation that was discussed above. In fact, Heidegger argues at the end of the essay that the transformation of truth, which is apparent in Plato's allegory, is normative for all later thought. The crucial point for us in this

assertion, however, is the claim that while this is a transformation of an earlier understanding of truth, that Plato's doctrine in this allegory nevertheless contains in it the kernel of an earlier understanding of truth as unconcealment. Because of this claim, we are led to explore the nature of unconcealment in contradistinction to Plato's account of truth. For Heidegger, this means exploring the essential properties of truth that allow for this transformation. The three central aspects of Heidegger's account of truth as *aletheia*, which become apparent in his discussion of Plato, are the foundation of truth, not in the human subject or in the *ideas*, but in the process of unconcealment (although truth will happen in the things themselves, it remains primarily an 'event'), the central role of difference in truth, and the essential connection between truth and human education and liberation.

The largest issue that Heidegger raises in his examination of unconcealment is the proper locus of truth. It is clear throughout the work that Heidegger thinks Plato has definitively moved this locus of unconcealment, the place where truth 'comes-to-pass,' to the *ideas*; and that, more importantly, this understanding is only the first step on the way towards a metaphysical understanding of truth in which the human intellect, the viewing subject, is determinative. Where truth was understood to happen in this earlier understanding of truth as unconcealment is somewhat unclear. Heidegger presents two seemingly distinct options: in beings themselves and in the process of unconcealment and revealing which essentially connects the human and the unconcealed being, and endorses both of them at various points.

Heidegger endorses the argument that truth happens in the thing more explicitly. Throughout the essay, he argues that Plato covered up the way in which

truth is essentially an aspect of beings themselves. Plato's transformation of truth is accompanied by a movement of the locus of truth from beings to the forms, and finally, at least implicitly, to the subject:

With this transformation of the essence of truth there takes place at the same time a change of the locus of truth. As unhiddenness, truth is still a fundamental trait of beings themselves. But as the correctness of the "gaze," it becomes a characteristic of human comportment toward beings. **XXI

This seems to express a central tenet of Heidegger's thought: that unconcealment is the essential possession of beings. Unconcealment can only come-to-pass from within beings themselves. On this view, then, truth is the exclusive possession of beings and must be understood there; put in another way, beings are the locus of unconcealment.

But, Heidegger also makes the more radical claim that truth, or unconcealment, is nothing other than the process of revealing that occurs between beings and human beings; in the terms of Plato's allegory, in the painful transition between stages. On this reading, truth is not the beings themselves that are discovered at each stage. In fact, truth is not in anything; rather, it is the process of transition itself. So, while Plato looks to the new objects (allegorically, the *ideas*) at each stage as the true (the shadows in the first stage, the human constructions which cast them in the second, and, finally the 'real' things of the third stage on the surface) Heidegger argues that to view these as three degrees of truth is to miss the fact that "the 'allegory' recounts a series of movements rather than just reporting on the dwelling places...in fact, the movements that it recounts are movements of passage out of the cave into the daylight and then back out of the daylight into the cave." These transitions are not simply a narrative necessity, but represent a crucial insight

into the nature of *aletheia* despite the conclusion of Plato's self-reading of his allegory (that absolute truth lies in the complete unconcealment on the surface):

But in all this what are essential are the movements of passage, both the ascent from the realm of the light of the man-made fire into the brightness of the sunlight as well as the descent from the source of all light back in to the darkness of the cave. XXIII

Instead of being solely a property of beings, then, truth is the dynamic process of unconcealment and concealment.

That both unconcealment and concealment have a role to play in the comingto-pass of truth is made evident by Heidegger's emphasis on the importance of the fourth stage. When the allegory of the cave is read as revealing the essence of truth as the *idea*, then the true is discovered in the third stage: when the prisoner sees the objects outside of the cave, including the sun itself.. The first three stages are the story of the ascent of the mind to an ever greater apprehension of the truth, the apprehension of ever more unhidden things. On this reading, the descent back into the cave (the fourth stage) may have a moral significance, but it has nothing to do with disclosing the truth, since the truth has already been revealed on the surface (outside of the cave). But, as Heidegger explains, "the telling of the story does not end, as is often supposed, with the description of the highest level attained in the ascent out of the cave. On the contrary, the "allegory" includes the story of the descent of the freed person back into the cave, back to those who are still in chains." By focusing on the role of the transition to the fourth stage, Heidegger is able to both show why the *idea* alone, the perfectly positive essence of beings, is inadequate for truth. Truth relies on concealment as well as unconcealment, and difference and the interplay between absence and presence is crucial to the process of aletheia. In Heidegger's words, the final stage "gives us a special glimpse into how "privation"—attaining the unhidden by wresting it away—belongs to the essence of truth."**

This claim, which we will investigate below, means that "like each of he three previous stages of the "allegory of the cave," stage four also effects and enacts aletheia."**

aletheia."**

Yet we seem to be stuck here with two contrasting understandings on the nature of aletheia. Is aletheia in beings or in the process of our discovery of what becomes unconcealed in beings? Ultimately, I think, both of these claims are true, in different ways. For Heidegger, truth is primarily in beings, but this does not mean that truth is a static property of beings, but, rather, that, as Heidegger says, beings are the locus of truth. Truth itself is, as the word *aletheia* implies, the dynamic process of concealment and unconcealment which happens in the interaction between human beings and things. This means that while truth is 'in' beings, this is because beings are where what Heidegger calls the 'event' of truth happens. foundations in the way that beings are, and the unconcealment of beings is a freely given gift which is independent of any human 'challenging,' but the human being is essential to the process of unconcealment, which is essentially a dynamic and interrelated process which connects the human being to the thing itself. In the end, the human being is an essential aspect of the interplay between the concealment and unconcealment of beings to the human being, which is the event of truth.

This complex relationship puts Heidegger's criticism of the Platonic *idea* into context. Although the dominance of the *idea* over other understandings of the process of truth has hopelessly narrowed our understanding of truth, this was only

possible because the *idea* reflects something essential about the nature of truth. Immediately after strongly criticizing Plato's innovation of the language of *ideas*, Heidegger goes on to claim that this language is not entirely mistaken; it has simply misconstrued the relationship between *idea* and *aletheia*:

As a consequence of this interpretation of beings, being present is no longer what it was in the beginning of Western thinking: the emergence of the hidden into unhiddenness, where unhiddenness itself, as revealing, constitutes the fundamental trait of being present. Plato conceives being present (*ousia*) as *idea*. However, *idea* is not subordinate to unhiddenness in the sense of serving what is unhidden by bringing it to appearance. Rather, the opposite is the case: it is the shining (the self-showing) that, within its essence and in a singular self-relatedness, may yet be called unhiddenness. The *idea* is not some foreground that *aletheia* puts out there to present things; rather, the *idea* is the ground that makes *aletheia* possible. But even as such the *idea* still lays claim to something of the original but unacknowledged essence of *aletheia*. *xxvii

The *idea is* an occurrence of truth. Metaphysics' mistake was to generalize the role of *idea*, making a particular kind of presence normative for every revealing, and thereby covering over the importance of absence and concealment.

Second, Heidegger uses Plato's allegory of the *ideas* to argue that difference is essential to *aletheia*: truth happens in the interplay between concealing and revealing, between presence and absence. The metaphysical attempt to justify the true with regard to eternal and unchanging essences is representative of the kind of astuteness characteristic of the surface, which "in contrast to the one in the cave, is distinguished by the desire to reach out beyond what is immediately present and to acquire a basis in that which, in showing itself, perdures." This drive to find what endures in the thing leads to the problematic assumption that only the eternal is the truly present, and that the present is the true. Plato sought to abolish difference from

truth with the *ideas*, "what perdures" in contradistinction to the impermanence of the disclosure of things.

Plato was therefore able to locate truth in the objects of the surface themselves by failing to read the significance of the descent in the fourth stage. For Heidegger, this descent is crucial because it shows us that unconcealment is not the static category of the "most unconcealed," but the process of discovery. This process necessarily involves the continual transition between what is highest, the universal and general, and what is lowest, the absence which is at the core of every particular thing. Heidegger argues, therefore, that the truth has essential privative aspects and that "what is first required is an appreciation of the "positive" in the "privative" essence of *aletheia*." While metaphysics always seeks to destroy difference, this difference is crucial to *aletheia* because it allows for the process of unconcealment, the transition from hiddenness to unhiddenness, which is truth itself:

Truth originally means what has been wrested from hiddenness. Truth is thus a wresting away in each case, in the form of a revealing. The hiddenness can be of various kinds: closing off, hiding away, disguising, covering over, masking, dissembling. **xx*

The process of truth requires a transition from the hidden to the unhidden (this occurs in every transition in the allegory), and in pure sameness and commonality there can be no truth. Metaphysical truth sought, therefore, to generalize one aspect of the process of truth into the static criterion of truth. The static result of commonality is, on its own, never the truth of the thing because it ignores the difference, the privation at the core of every being, which drives the process of truth.

Thirdly, Heidegger draws a connection between education, freedom, and *aletheia*. Plato's allegory is explicitly about education, not truth, and Heidegger

thinks that he has hit upon something essential in his association of the two concepts even if he has misconstrued this relationship. With the introduction of the concept of education into the allegory about truth, Plato has basically begun the rise of subjective truth which becomes normative in modern metaphysics: truth begins to be determined by the subject's perception of it. With this allegory, "what takes place... is a metaphysically determined revolving around the human being, whether in narrower or wider orbits. With the fulfillment of metaphysics, "humanism" (or in "Greek" terms: anthropology) also presses on to the most extreme—and likewise unconditioned—"positions.""xxxii This human-centered view of truth necessarily dictates Plato's understanding of the role of the human being as the bearer of truth, and for Plato, "unhiddenness remains harnessed in a relation to looking, apprehending, thinking, and asserting."xxxiii

Against this critical discussion of the role of education in Plato, Heidegger gives his own account of education along with a discussion of the role of the human in the process of unconcealment. Heidegger argues that the word which he translated as education [Bildung] is centrally concerned with enacting a change in the essence of man, such that truth becomes possible. Education [Bildung] "does not consist in merely pouring into the unprepared soul as if it were some container held out empty and waiting. On the contrary real education lays hold of the soul itself and transforms it in its entirety." Crucially, then, although the process of unconcealment is dependent on the self-revealing of being, it equally requires that human beings be ready and open to the possibility of this truth. It is this attitude of open waiting and truthful interaction with beings which Heidegger characterizes as both the telos of

education and the essence of man's freedom. This attitude is before all thought, before all self-determination, and, for this reason, "no attempt to ground the essence of unhiddenness in "reason," "spirit," "thinking," "logos," or in any kind of "subjectivity," can ever rescue the essence of unhiddenness." "xxxiv"

Plato's allegory is, for Heidegger, the beginning of metaphysical truth. Plato's correspondence theory of truth defines truth as a static adequation of things to *ideas*, and, in so doing, introduces a new understanding of truth which replaces the idea of truth as unconcealment in the Pre-Socratics. But Plato's allegory also reveals essential aspects of this earlier understanding of truth. So, for instance, metaphysics interprets the narrative structure of the allegory to mean that each new level is a new level of truth. Interpreted according to truth as unconcealment, *aletheia* is the dynamic process of truth, revealed in the transitions between stages, rather than the stages themselves. Furthermore, the fourth stage reveals the extent to which truth is dependent not on a static perfection but on the dynamic interplay of difference. Finally, Plato's use of the allegory to explore education reveals the essential role of the human being in the process of truth and the need for the development of man's essence in line with this recognition.

The features of unconcealment which have become apparent in our discussion of "Plato's Doctrine of Truth" represent the core of Heidegger's thought on truth as unconcealment, and these views are fleshed out in various other works. As we will see, for Heidegger, the characteristics of truth which were discussed above are central, but they are changed to some degree by his broader references in other places. The fundamental characteristic of *aletheia* is always, for Heidegger, a concern with

openness and "letting beings be." Whereas metaphysics always pursues a challenging of objects from the point of view of the subject, *aletheia* is concerned to allow beings to reveal themselves on their own terms. Central to this concern is Heidegger's contention that the unconcealment of beings occurs prior to the distinction between essence and existence. Secondly, Heidegger is concerned to show how *aletheia* must be an interdependent dynamic process between beings and human beings. This understanding of truth as an "event" [*Ereignis*], rather than an object, is absolutely crucial. Thirdly, Heidegger spends, as we saw in "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," a considerable amount of time clarifying the complicated role of the human being in the process of unconcealment and distinguishing this from the role of the subject in representational theories of truth.

We saw above that Heidegger argued that representational truth (particularly as expressed in the project of modern technology) has an essentially antagonistic attitude towards beings, the objects of a truth bearing subject. In this way, representational truth pre-determines the results of the investigation into the truth of a thing because it can only find revealed what it has already set up as the real. This attitude towards beings finds its culmination in modern technology, which tries to remake everything under the rubric of human need. *Aletheia*, conversely, does not challenge beings or force them to be something else, but allows them to reveal themselves as they are. In *aletheia*, we recognize that "Being and truth belong to each other just as they belong intertwining to a still concealed rootedness in the origin whose origination opening up remains that which comes." The essential point here is that Being and truth are fundamentally connected, and that only the truth that

is open to this connection is actually the true. *Aletheia* is, for this reason, bound up with the recognition of the need to let beings be: *aletheia* is truth because the occurrence of truth is the occurrence of the Being of beings.

If beings are to be truly allowed to reveal themselves, then they must be able to do so on their own terms, in other words, without the pre-determination of metaphysical categorization. Most importantly, this means before the central distinction of essence and existence has already determined the truth of the thing in question, before the apotheosis of the *idea*:

Beings are. Their Being contains the truth that they are. The fact that beings are gives to beings the privilege of the unquestioned. From here the question arises as to *what* beings are. From the perspective of beings, whatness is thus the being first questioned. Here it becomes evident that Being determines itself only in the form of beingness and then through such determination itself only brings beings as such to presence. Only then is thatness explicitly distinguished from whatness (*idea*). The distinction which becomes familiar under the name of the difference of *essentia* and *existentia* in metaphysics, but hardly becomes visible in its own transformations, is itself grounded in the primal and true distinction of Being and beings, which is not grounded and is at the same time hidden. *xxxvi*

After the metaphysical distinction between essence and existence, there can no longer be the possibility of unconcealment, for the beings themselves have already been covered by the process of division and generalization. Once "aletheia, barely presencing and not returning to the origin, but rather going forth to mere unconcealedness, comes under the yoke of the *idea*," there is no longer the possibility of unconcealment. **xxxvii*

The second crucial point in Heidegger's account of *aletheia* is his rejection of the static and objective nature given to truth in metaphysics. Heidegger attacks the claim that truth is itself primarily something, in favor of the view that truth not only

arises in, but is itself, the interaction between the human being and a self-revealing thing. In his essays, "The Question Concerning Technology" and "The Turning," Heidegger makes this clear through his own particular use of the German word *Ereignis* [event]. For Heidegger, truth is essentially not an object but an event. Heidegger says of the true, that:

The correct always fixes upon something pertinent in whatever is under consideration. However, in order to be correct, this fixing by no means needs to uncover in the thing in question in its essence. Only at the point where such an uncovering happens does the true come to pass [sich ereignet]. xxxviii

The central phrase here is again derived from the word *Ereignis*. Through his repeated use of this word in reference to the process of *aletheia*, Heidegger makes it clear that he understands truth as something that happens, that comes-to-pass. This claim is probably the most important aspect of Heidegger's thought on truth. For if truth is an event, then whole structure of representational truth collapses. Truth can never be abstract, it can never be the specific domain of the intellect, and it can never be an adequation between the thing and anything else.

If *aletheia* is an event, then it relies necessarily on a human perspective because it posits a truth that is a dynamic moment of engagement between the thing and the human. For Heidegger, the event of truth requires the human being but is not located in the human being. This means that truth can never come-to-pass without the interaction between the human being and the thing in question. But, unlike the subject-driven truth of metaphysics, Heidegger's exposition of truth as unconcealment indicates that truth is this interaction between thing and man itself. The true does not lie in the 'correct' representation, but is the process of coming to know the thing itself. This means that truth always remains a live process and is

never reduced to the metaphysically exalted status of eternal unchanging form, which is objective (in metaphysical though objectivity and subjectivity rely on one another). This process is enabled by the human being, and, Heidegger argues, humanity is essential to the event of truth:

As the one so needed and used, man is given to belong to the coming-to-pass [*Ereignis*] of truth. The granting that sends in one way or another into revealing is as such the saving power. For the saving power lets man see and enter into the highest dignity of his essence. This dignity lies in keeping watch over the unconcealment—and with it, from the first, the concealment—of all coming to presence on this earth. *xxxix*

Truth requires the human being as an essential aspect of this process, but the human being can never posses truth—just as beings can never reveal themselves without someone to reveal themselves to. The relationship between the human being and the thing, what metaphysics turned into the division between subject and object, is always one of mutual interdependence:

"But man does not have control over unconcealment itself, in which at any given time, the real shows itself or withdraws. The fact that the real has been showing itself in the light of Ideas ever since the time of Plato, Plato did not bring about."

Viewed in this light, the mutually interdependent relationship between the human being and thing, which is contained in the dynamic process of truth, goes a long way to clarifying some of Heidegger's most cryptic statements about the relationship between Dasein and *aletheia*. This relationship between human beings and things, which is truth itself is, in an important sense, the very process through which man relates to being itself, and, for Heidegger:

At times Being needs human being, and yet it is never dependent upon existing humanity... But human being's claim upon being itself is not always granted by being as the gift through which mankind may have as its own privilege of participating in the appropriation of the truth of Being. xli

The highest goal of the human being is to be found the experience of truth, in the letting be of beings. It is for this reason that Heidegger argued that education had a crucial connection to truth. Because the human being is an essential aspect of the event of truth, human beings must be prepared to embrace the possibility of such a dynamic and particular truth. It is this very possibility that metaphysics, and the understanding of truth which predominates in it, obscures.

For Heidegger, then, *aletheia* is the possibility of truth which is dynamic and responsive to the way beings are, and because it allows them to happen in the first place Being and truth are effectively the same thing. Truth is an event, a dynamic and interdependent process through which beings reveal themselves. While metaphysical truth obscured this process and shifted the true to one static aspect of this relationship, *aletheia* seeks to reclaim the possibility of unconcealment. This originary thinking of truth allows difference to persist as difference even in unconcealment. This is not the triumph of existence as a formal category, but the triumph of the essential difference. Because of this, *aletheia* is not an estrangement from beings, but a reengagement with beings. Heidegger is seeking, with his understanding of truth, to ground his whole critique of metaphysics in the return to the open embrace of the unconcealment of beings.

III. Scotus on Truth: Intuitive Cognition, Particularity, and Aletheia

In examining the relationship between Heidegger's notion of *aletheia* and the place of truth in Scotus we will have to try particularity and unconcealment together. It is perhaps not surprising after our discussion of particularity and intuitive cognition

in chapter one, that these aspects of Scotus's philosophy would have such a critical role to play in the elucidation of the anti-adequational theory of truth in his thought. Nevertheless, commentators have routinely played down the radical significance of Scotus's account of intuitive cognition and the ramifications that the development of this theory must have for Scotus's understanding of truth. This is, in a sense, understandable: Scotus, aware that his position was so original, developed it only intermittently. The fact that Scotus's most extended discussion of the nature of intuitive cognition is closely tied to his discussion of the nature of theology and the beatific vision (an analysis of this discussion formed the core of chapter one) has also tended to limit the perceived scope of this theory. Lastly, that Scotus explicitly advocates such a deeply metaphysical theory of truth can only have lead commentators towards less radical readings of this crucial theory (the same tendency was apparent earlier in the context of univocity and particularity).

Despite this, I will argue that Scotus's insistence of the ultimate irreducibility of difference, which we explored in chapter two, leads inexorably to an antimetaphysical conception of truth. There is, imbedded in Scotus's conception of particularity and intuitive cognition, the possibility of immanent dynamic truth. That Scotus explicitly develops a representational theory of truth, and a thoroughly metaphysical epistemology to support this theory, should not stop us from exploring the ramifications of Scotus's embrace of fundamental difference. Scotus's arguments against skepticism look forward to the pre-eminent traditions of metaphysical truth, so, seen one way, Scotus is a perfect example of the tradition of representational truth which Heidegger critiques. This only makes the internal tension between two very

different understandings of truth all the more pertinent: in Scotus's thought, we see the undoing of metaphysics brought about by its own distinctions.

Scotus presents a robust account of immanent and particular truth. Read in this way, he embraces the possibility of a radically new, or, in Heideggerian terms primordial, understanding of truth and attacked abstraction from the world that is given to us. Scotus sharply distinguished intuitive cognition from sense experience, but he, nevertheless, refused to ground our experience of the world purely in abstract categories. Scotus therefore both enables Heidegger's substantive critique of metaphysical truth and presents a more complex picture of the history of truth in philosophy. Scotus's theory of intuitive cognition challenges the assumption that metaphysics and transcendent theories of truth have been the only possibilities of truth embraced since Plato.

Even more than medieval discussions about truth, the epistemological debates of the 13th century were crucial for Scotus's development of a theory of cognition and its allied conception of truth. Debates about the nature of cognition and the intellect were, along with debates about the nature of particularity and the status of universals, some of the most important philosophical debates of the period. Thinkers in the 13th century were primarily responding to the differing accounts of cognition given by Aristotle and Augustine. Both of these thinkers were read in order to attempt to solve a problem which involved both the cognition of universals and particulars. The problem stemmed from the fact that not only was the human being's conception of particulars inexplicable (the mind was thought to primarily understand the essence or common nature of a thing) but also from the fact that Christian thinkers could not, for

theological reasons, propose the same account of our knowledge of universals that Plato had. Plato argued that the soul is exposed to the *ideas* before birth, but for medieval thinker, this account was unacceptable. Instead, these thinkers had to give some account of how we could perceive and understand the particular existent things around us and the universals of which they instantiate.

One of the most popular theories, advocated by Henry of Ghent, among others, was the so-called theory of divine illumination. For these thinkers, following Augustine's Platonic theory of cognition, the mind directly understood only *ideas* in Plato's sense. These supersensory, general forms were both given to our minds and made intelligible in particular things through divine illumination. For Henry, divine illumination was necessary for our fallen intellects to understand universals and therefore to have *any* certain knowledge, not just theological knowledge. The sun was, like in Plato's allegory, a central metaphor: just as the sun illuminates all of our sensory vision, God illuminates and grounds all of our abstract knowledge. This abstract knowledge is made to relate to the sensible world of particular existent things through a further gift of God. Divine illumination made, then, the claim that God bridged two gaps in our knowledge of the world.

Scotus famously rejected this Augustinian theory of perception and knowledge. His rejection runs, though, in two directions. As we noted above, Scotus both provides a thoroughly metaphysical justification for the certainty of our unaided understanding of the world and advanced the theory that human beings, because of the nature of their intellects, naturally and immediately understood the particular 'thisness' of a given thing. These two different urges in epistemology had natural

ramifications for their connected theories of truth, but Scotus does not explicitly develop either of these aspects in relation to the nature of truth.

Scotus's understanding of truth is explicitly connected to representation, and his epistemology is centered around the justification of certainty or clear and distinct ideas against skepticism. Although Scotus does not deal explicitly with the subject of truth, he is centrally concerned to provide an epistemology which can ground our human claims to certain knowledge about the world. In fact, Scotus's epistemology is a strong defense of both the possibility and the necessity of representational understanding of truth. This becomes clear not so much in the explication of any theory of truth but in Scotus's theories about knowledge. Here, Scotus goes to great pains to justify the ability of the pilgrim to have a correct or certain understanding of universals.

In response to the problem of our access to universals, Scotus advocated a roughly Aristotelian position. Instead of the theory of divine illumination, Scotus argued that our knowledge of universals is simply a result of interaction with the world. We are born without any knowledge of these universal categories (Being, for instance) but, through abstraction from the world of sensory experience we create these categories. In this sense, Scotus occupies a middle ground between those earlier thinkers who gave a strongly Platonic account of the *ideas* as existent things that the human being must have some direct experience of (whether this be before birth, or through divine illumination), and later thinkers, like William of Ockham, who argued that our abstraction from the material world is not the discovery of pre-

existing universals, but the creation, of abstract categories (in what is known as nominalism of conceptualism).

This metaphysical account of our progress to 'true' abstract knowledge is reinforced by Scotus's discussion of the possibility of clear and certain ideas. Here Scotus developed a comprehensive response to the skepticism about the natural faculties of the human being that was regularly attached to theory of divine illumination. These advocates of Augustinian intellection argued that the fallen soul could be certain of nothing, and that human minds are as inconstant as sense perception. Both of these faculties relied directly on God for their stability. Scotus responded that we can be certain of things in three ways. First, Scotus argued that we can be certain of rational truths (what for Kant are analytical truths), because these cannot possibly be false. Secondly, Scotus argued that our perceptual knowledge is verified by its regularity, so that although our senses occasionally deceive us, rational reflection on a larger set of empirical data allows us to sort out our true perceptions. Finally, foreshadowing Descartes, Scotus argued that we can be certain of things we do: even if I am mistaken about what I am doing, I can know certainly that I am doing something. Taken together, these three arguments read like an ultimate list of possible groundings of certain knowledge as metaphysical truth. In fact, Scotus develops some of the most important features of modern metaphysics. All of this, like Scotus's account of univocity, exhibits the basic features of metaphysical truth.

These arguments have tended to blunt the force of intuitive cognition—Scotus's most radically anti-metaphysical innovation. As we have seen, Scotus developed a deeply metaphysical response to the problem of our knowledge of

universals. These theories, taken by themselves, leave open the question of the means by which we understand the particular existent things before us. Earlier thinkers had tended to argue that our intellect acted abstractly and that our experience of particulars was limited to sense perception.

Scotus argued, using the Aristotelian position that a higher faculty always shares the powers of a lower, that the intellect could not be limited to the understanding of universals while a lower faculty (sense perception) was given the power to perceive particulars. For earlier thinkers, this perception had been not a power, but a deficiency. Because only the essence of a thing was 'real,' the ability to perceive accidents was in fact not a power but a deficiency. For Scotus, though, the particular existence of a thing was a crucial aspect of its essence. The understanding of the full essence of the thing, both particular and universal, could therefore not be denied to the intellect.

Scotus seems to have worked out this argument early in his thought, but because of the great difficulties involved in explaining exactly how this faculty functioned, the theory of intuitive cognition was developed slowly over the course of his short life. Basically we can say that, for Scotus, our knowledge of particulars was not a secondary knowledge flowing from our knowledge of absolute essences, but, rather, a primary knowledge to which abstract cognition was necessarily subservient. Through intuitive cognition, we understand the entire thing before us immediately and without reflection. Most importantly, the essence and the actual existence of the thing are affirmed in one process of intellection.

This theory allowed Scotus to address the second problem of cognition (that of particulars and of existence) that had necessitated a further act of divine illumination for earlier Augustinian thinkers. Secondarily, intuitive cognition is used by Scotus to explain how knowledge of our own actions and thoughts is possible. In this sense, intuitive cognition is crucially important in Scotus's attempt to support the possibility of certain knowledge, of 'correct' representational propositions and thoughts. The more basic importance of intuitive cognition lies, though, in its dynamic relation of particularity to the human intellect.

The device by which Scotus grounds the possibility of certain knowledge in this life—the intuitive cognition of particulars—is the same device which undercuts his explicitly metaphysical explication of truth. Intuitive cognition allows for a new understanding of truth which is radically anti-metaphysical, and intuitive cognition shares many of the crucial features of Heidegger's account of *aletheia*. Crucially, intuitive cognition is an understanding of the particular as it is in the moment, and is, therefore, entirely immanent and unabstractable, thoroughly dynamic (it is the truth of the moment in the process of understanding), and lies before the distinction between essence and existence.

Intuitive cognition shares with Heidegger's notion of *aletheia* an emphasis on the dynamic un-abstractable event of truth. For both Scotus and Heidegger, no attempt to represent particular beings in light of some greater transcendent form can ever do justice to the fullness of the being. Scotus's account of intuitive cognition gives us a way to understand how any abstractive cognition is necessarily derivative insofar as it is neither dynamic nor complete. Heidegger's account of technology

goes further in arguing that completed metaphysics is not only incomplete but destructive. This notion of an aggressively general metaphysics is, however, predicated on an understanding of the possibility of dynamic truth.

Just as Heidegger develops *aletheia* as an event which can only be experienced and never reified into a stable system, Scotus develops intuitive cognition as a transient relation between the intellect and the world. The process of intuitive cognition is dependent on the union of both particular beings and the human mind, which can only appreciate the existent thing in the moment of cognition. Any attempt at theorizing this moment relies necessarily on language and is therefore abstractive. Here, Scotus's insistence that the particular 'thisness' of any being is ineffable because language is predicated upon commonality, finds its natural corollary in the inexpressibility of intuitive cognition. The event of such cognition can never be put into words, nor even really reflected on, despite its quotidian character. Instead, such cognition can only be directly experienced.

It is also critical that intuitive cognition involves the intellect's grasp of both particular and common natures. Because Scotus thinks that we can only understand the particular alongside the universal, intuitive cognition is the simultaneous grasp of both the particular 'thisness' of the thing and its place within a larger ontological framework. Intuitive cognition is, therefore, always thought before the linguistic distinction of essence and existence. As in Heidegger's reconstructed notion of *aletheia*, there be can no essence or existence in intuitive cognition.

It is, therefore, not the case that abstractive and intuitive cognition stand simply in opposition to each other. In fact, intuitive cognition represents a richer

thinking which encompasses these dichotomies. The particular truth of Scotus is marked by a dialectical movement between the particular and the universal, between essence and existence. In this way, Scotus's theory of intuitive cognition attempts to overcome the gap between irreducible difference and universal intelligibility. It is the bridging of this gap which is the possibility of a process of truth and unconcealment which does not attempt, as all metaphysical thought, to obliterate difference in the search for totality and generality.

Because beings are always more than just common natures, no attempt to represent the essence of beings as generality can ever succeed. Instead, the proper understanding of truth must attempt to allow the entire being to come into view. This means that adequational theories of truth must always be necessarily incomplete because they require something to which the being can be compared—its more real double. Under the rubric of Scotus's moderate realism, though, this point of comparison is less real. It *does* represent the common or universal nature of the thing in question, but it always fails to account for the whole being because it misses the particular 'thisness' of the thing.

There is, then, a deep connection between Heidegger's hope for a more primordial truth and Scotus's development of intuitive cognition. Both are reactions against a metaphysical tradition which excludes difference (as particularity) from the realm of truth, and in so doing, tries to bring the inevitable process of unconcealment to an arbitrary halt. The essence of this metaphysical truth

consists in a way of thinking that always, indeed necessarily, falsifies the real, specifically insofar as every act of representing halts the continual "becoming" and, in erecting its established facts against the flow of

"becoming," sets up as the supposedly real something that does not correspond—i.e., something incorrect and thus erroneous. xliv

Scotus's theory of intuitive cognition is a rejection of any such theory of truth because it assumes that the true can never be abstracted from the event of encounter between beings and the human being.

Although this ramification for the theory of truth of intuitive cognition has not been prominently approached before, it is a crucial consequence of Scotus's theory. In light of Scotus's avowedly metaphysical development of the epistemological problems of the cognition of universals, it is striking that his account of our cognition of particulars would embrace so many of the crucial aspects of Heidegger's *aletheia*. In fact, these facets of Scotus's thought lead us back to the central tension between metaphysics and its overcoming in his thought. In the first two chapters, we saw that Scotus, even as he advanced a deeply metaphysical account of ontological commonality and univocity, embraced an account of particularity that threw these positions into question. Similarly, Scotus's support of a strongly argued Aristotelian account of our knowledge of universals, and its corollary in his response to skepticism alongside his discussion of intuitive cognition, reflects this central tension. In both cases, we can see that this tension is a reflection of an anti-metaphysical side to Scotus's metaphysical program.

For Heidegger, then, metaphysical approaches to truth are characterized by the privilege they give to one half of a broad set of dichotomies: challenging and presencing, generality and particularity, transcendence and immanence, essence and existence. Every metaphysical theory of truth takes the first term of these pairs as determinative and forces beings to conform themselves to these criteria of truth.

In this sense, truth in metaphysics is always based on adequation and the rejection of difference that this entails; metaphysics rejects difference when it stresses essence as eternal enduring, as commonality, or as transcendence. Representational truth is not wrong in itself—it is, of course, an important expression of the essence of truth—but Heidegger opposes the dominance of representational truth (in keeping with the unifying and totalizing nature of metaphysics) over unconcealment, which is characteristic of metaphysics as a whole.

But, metaphysical thinking cannot simply be overcome by a new sort of thinking which is anti-essentialist or anti-universalist (e.g. Nietzsche's transvaluation of all values, or Sartre's inversion of *essentia* and *existentia*). All of these 'attacks on metaphysics' remain basically metaphysical in their inversion of metaphysical dichotomies. Instead, Heidegger argues, any anti-metaphysical theory of truth will be dynamic and reactive to the way that beings reveal themselves. This project is reflected in Scotus's theory of intuitive cognition. Ultimately, for both Scotus and Heidegger, truth can never be the static adequation of a thing to some pre-determined value of truth. Instead, unconcealment accepts the revealing of beings that is given to us and attempts to position this embrace as a new, or more primordial, kind of truth.

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ⁱ Benedict de Spinoza *A Spinoza Reader* Trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 257.

ii Heidegger dealt with the theory of truth at a number of discrete points throughout his career. One of the earliest extended developments is section 44 of *Being and Time*, in which Heidegger critiques earlier accounts of representational truth but develops a theory of truth as it relates to the authentic existence of *Dasein*. This is followed by a second stage of development in the works after *Being and Time* but before the Nietzsche work of 1936 and on (Most importantly, "The Essence of Truth," and the early lectures on Plato's allegory of the cave). Finally, the theme of *aletheia* finds its mature development in the central essays of this chapter ("Plato's Doctrine of Truth," "The Question Concerning Technology," and the lectures on Nietzsche themselves).

iii Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes" (1938) *Holzwege* (GA 5). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977, 75; as translated in: "The Age of the World Picture" *Off the Beaten Track*. Trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 57.

vii Heidegger, "Entwürfe zur Geschichte des Seins als Metaphysik," 417/55.

iv Heidegger, "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit" (1940) *Wegmarken* (GA 9). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976, 235; as translated in: "Plato's Doctrine of Truth" *Pathmarks*. Trans. Thomas Sheehan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 180.

^v Heidegger, "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins" *Nietzsche II* (GA 6.2). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997, 380; as translated in: "Metaphysics as History of Being" *The End of Philosophy*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, 16.

vi Heidegger, "Entwürfe zur Geschichte des Seins als Metaphysik" (1941) *Nietzsche II* (GA 6.2). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997, 417; as translated in: "Sketches for a History of Being as Metaphysics" *The End of Philosophy*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, 55-56. That *aletheia* reveals truth before the distinction of essentia and existentia is absolutely crucial for both Heidegger's understanding of the possibility of pre-metaphysical truth and for Scotus's attempt to justify his claim that intuitive cognition lies before this distinction.

viii Ibid., 417/55.

ix Heidegger, "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit" (1930) *Wegmarken* (GA 9). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976, 76; as translated in: "On the Essence of Truth" *Pathmarks*. Trans. John Sallis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 138.

^x Ibid., 76/138.

xi Ibid., 77/139.

xii Ibid., 77/139.

xiii Heidegger, "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins," 384/20.

xiv Heidegger, "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit," 232/178. Latin: "veritatem proprie vel falsitatem non nisi in solo intellectu esse posse" attributed by Heidegger to Regulae ad directionem ingenii, Regula VII, Opuscula posthuma X, 396.

xv Heidegger, "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins," 385/21: "That truth becomes certainty in essence is an event whose beginning is inaccessible to all metaphysics. On the other hand, in connection with this essential change of truth, a peculiar preeminence of humanity within what is real soon becomes evident, and at the same time, however, also a corresponding role of what is unconditionally real, thought in a theological manner. As knowing beings, both realities, God and man, are metaphysically the bearers of truth and thus constitute the reality of knowledge and certainty."

xvi Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 22/21.

wii "God is the name for the realm of ideas and the ideal. Since Plato, or more accurately, since the late Greek and Christian interpretations of the Platonic philosophy, this realm of the supersensory has been considered the true and actually real world. In contrast to it, the sensory world is only the unreal thisworldly world, the changeable and therefore the merely apparent world (Heidegger, "Nietzsches Wort "Gott ist tot«" (1943) *Holzwege* (GA 5). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977, 216; as translated in: "Nietzsche's Word: 'God is Dead'" *Off the Beaten Track*. Trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 162)

xviii Heidegger, "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit," 227/174.

xix Heidegger, "Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik," 68/61.

xx Heidegger, "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit," 231/237.

xxi Heidegger, "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit," 231/177.

xxii Ibid., 215/165.

xxiii Ibid., 224/172.

xxiv Ibid., 223/171.

xxv Ibid., 224/172.

xxvi Ibid., 224/172.

xxvii Ibid., 233/179.

xxviii Ibid., 234/180.

xxix Ibid., 238/182.

xxx Ibid., 223/171.

xxxi Ibid., 236/181.

xxxii Ibid., 238/182.

xxxiii Ibid., 217/167.

xxxiv Ibid., 238/182.

xxxv Heidegger, "Die Erinnerung in die Metaphysik" (1941) Nietzsche II (GA 6.2). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997, 439; as translated in: "Recollection in Metaphysics" The End of Philosophy. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, 75.

xxxvi Heidegger, "Die Erinnerung in die Metaphysik," 446-447/81.

xxxvii Heidegger, "Entwürfe zur Geschichte des Seins als Metaphysik," 417/55.

xxxviiiHeidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 9/6.
xxxii Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 33/32; Heidegger's reference here to the 'saving power' is drawn from Hölderlin. The idea of a 'saving power' will discussed in the conclusion of this work as the means of overcoming metaphysics.

xl Ibid., 18/18.

xli Heidegger, "Die Erinnerung in die Metaphysik," 440/76-77.

xlii Scotus's new account of universals is ultimately grounded by the theory of univocity. It is only because Scotus argues that these universal concepts apply equally to every being in which they are instantiated that we can create universal concepts from our experience of limited material things. Allan B. Wolter develops this connection more thoroughly, and with special regard for Aquinas's theory of cognition which, though similar, of course lacks the notion of univocity, in his commentary on Scotus's Ordinatio: Duns Scotus, Duns Scotus, Metaphysician. Trans. William Frank and Allan Wolter. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1995, 137.

xliii This connection has been developed before in Conor Cunningham's Genealogy of Nihilism (Cunningham, Conor. Genealogy of Nihilism: Philosophies of Nothing and the Difference of Theology. London: Routledge (Radical Orthodoxy Series), 2002.). Cunningham uses Scotus's account of intuitive cognition and Heidegger's philosophy of language to bookend his critique of Western nihilism by arguing that both present a vision of the world as inexorably fragmented. This discussion is, though, necessarily negative in light of his larger critique of philosophy since Scotus.

xliv Heidegger, "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit," 233/179.

CONCLUSION

And a sense of heaviness is left in the hand Though the jug

has spilled half-way over

while being carried home.

—Osip Mandelstamⁱ

All of our analysis here has been centered on the problem of metaphysics. I have argued that the critique of metaphysics is the central idea of Heidegger's later thought and that Heidegger's development of this theme is a lens through which we can view the whole body of the later essays. The critique of metaphysics is characterized by a set of connected themes of which Scotus is both emblematic and critical. So, while univocity seems to consolidate metaphysics, the related themes of particularity, immanence, and mutability form a nexus of points which all contribute to Heidegger's hope of overcoming metaphysics. In different ways, each of these themes undermines a central aspect of the metaphysical project, and in looking at these themes specifically, we were able to claim that Scotus's theories might entail the destruction of metaphysics even while they remain deeply metaphysical.

Hopefully, this work accomplishes a number of goals, allowing us to elucidate and flesh out Heidegger's often obscure and mostly critical later work in regard to the project of overcoming metaphysics, to read Scotus in new ways with Heidegger's critique in mind, and to challenge the seemingly hopeless historical account of metaphysics that Heidegger often gives. Firstly, then, the application of Scotus's theories to Heidegger's texts made it possible to get at Heidegger's positive conception of an alternative to metaphysics—to engage in a reflection on what the overcoming of metaphysics might look like and how elements of the metaphysical

tradition might get us there. This positive aspect of Heidegger's later work is often obscure, and Scotus's original and subtle ideas were often helpful in both clarifying and critically appraising this positive project. Secondly, the process of re-examining the thought of Scotus in light of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics allowed for a number of new and important aspects of his body of thought to emerge. Specifically, this Heideggerian reading of Scotus led us to a new interpretation of the relationship between univocity on the one hand and particularity and intuitive cognition on the other, that saw in particularity the undoing of metaphysics. Finally, these new aspects of Scotus allowed us to challenge Heidegger's characterization of philosophy since Plato as 2,500 years of absolute *Seinsvergessenheit*. In fact, the results of this investigation show just how profitable a critical reappraisal of the tradition can be; and, in so doing, help us understand and resolve the tension in Heidegger's thought between his project of the destruction of metaphysics and his continual return to the thinkers of the metaphysical tradition.

Some of Heidegger's strongest rhetoric concerns the possibility of a new kind of thinking which could replace metaphysics. At times, Heidegger posits this "other beginning" as a project completely divorced from any tradition of thought. So, for instance, Heidegger asks when "will Christian theology make up its mind one day to take seriously the word of the apostle and thus also the conception of philosophy as foolishness [Torheit]?" This seems to imply the complete rejection, not only of the tradition, but of rational thought itself. Heidegger has, though, a more nuanced conception of what non-metaphysical thinking might entail. This conception always

remains somewhat indistinct, but we can, with Scotus in mind, sketch the outlines of this project.

In doing so, the first crucial point is that this is a new way of thinking, not a new list of positions. The overcoming of metaphysics cannot not lie in the embrace of a slew of anti-metaphysical precepts. So, if metaphysics is always general, then we cannot overcome metaphysics solely by embracing the particular, but rather by trying to hold on to this motion from the particular to the general and back. In this way, metaphysics was right, in a sense, to look to what is highest, to the most universal, to discover truth. Metaphysics fails, though, when the universal comes to dominate this discourse, when the general [essentia] becomes "more real" than the particular [existentia], the eternal more real than the transient, or the transcendent more real than the immanent. Metaphysics continues to set up these oppositional pairs as the only acceptable categories of thought. Any attempt to get back behind metaphysics must necessarily entail, not only the embrace of these historically unprivileged terms, but a new kind of thinking which does not break the world down into a system of totalizing dichotomies.

Anti-metaphysical thinking would therefore be characterized by an always tentative approach to understanding the world. Thought must give up the hope of the eternal, of the possibility of viewing the world *sub specie aeternitatis* and, instead, embrace the parts of an ultimately irreducible world—a world that is united by a common being but always ultimately filled with basic difference. In imaging this project, Heidegger puts forth a thinking which not only embraces difference theoretically, but in its very method:

Suppose one attempts to make a transition from the representation of beings as such to recalling the truth of Being: such an attempt, which starts from this representation, must still represent, in a certain sense, the truth of Being, too; and any such representation must of necessity be heterogeneous and ultimately, in so far as it is a representation, inadequate for that which is to be thought. iii

This same desire to unify the way and the conclusions of thought is, perhaps, reflected in Heidegger's turn towards historical examinations of the tradition. This turn reflects methodologically, Heidegger's philosophical conclusion that the true can only be understood in the moment. No overarching attempt to understand a phenomenon as divorced from the course of history can succeed, and Heidegger's own structurally limited works (his use of short reflective essays in the place of system building) embraces this theme.

Heidegger developed the theme of a new kind of thinking most explicitly in a short speech he gave in his hometown of Messkirch in 1955. This speech is an explication of anti-metaphysical thinking which Heidegger characterizes as *Gelassenheit*. The word (its usage dates to the thought of Meister Eckhart) is difficult to translate and it has a number of different shades of meaning. Centrally, though, it is etymologically connected to the idea of "letting-be" and Heidegger uses it in this sense. In this speech, Heidegger characterizes the project of thinking as "dwelling on what lies close and meditating on what is closest; upon that which concerns us, each one of us, here and now; here, on this patch of home ground [auf diesem Fleck Heimaterde]; now, in the present hour of history [in der gegenwärtigen Weltstunde]." This new thinking is therefore distinguished by the refusal to force beings to reveal themselves in a particular way. In this context, Heidegger defines the attitude of *Gelassenheit* as one of meditative thinking, and contrasts this with

metaphysical calculation: "there are, then, two kinds of thinking, each justified and needed in its own way: calculative thinking and meditative thinking." Here, unlike above, Heidegger adopts the more nuanced position that calculative and meditative thinking not only can, but must coexist. The attainment of this new thinking is the project of philosophy going forward from Heidegger.

Scotus, for his part, is routinely characterized as the great thinker of commonality, both in regards to his univocal theory of divine predication and to his emphasis on the role of Being as a common property. This characterization, advanced by both supporters and critics of Scotus, has been at the center of recent debates about the position of Scotus in the historical narrative of Western thought, and Scotus is predictably lauded by proponents of natural theology even as he is disparaged by critics of onto-theology, mainly influenced by Heidegger. But, as we saw in chapter one, readers have often focused on one aspect of Scotus's thought at the expense of another (a tendency which is exacerbated by the difficult status of Scotus's corpus and his often, at least superficially, conflicting claims). This process has therefore created a distorted view of Scotus's thought as a whole.

The critics of Scotus's thought, who see in Scotus the collapse of some medieval synthesis or the rise of modern metaphysics, have failed to resolutely face Scotus's often radical theories of particularity and our own capabilities in regard to it. In fact, Heidegger's own thought gives us a new way to understand some of Scotus's crucial ideas and, more importantly, a way of connecting these seemingly disparate ideas in the context of the problem of metaphysics. With Heidegger's critique of

metaphysics in mind, it becomes clear that prevailing readings of Scotus have been woefully inadequate.

Where traditional commentators have seen only ontological commonality, Heidegger's critique lead us to focus on Scotus's rejection of essential and absolute unity; and where these same commentators have seen only a static, representational, and abstract approach to thought, here we saw how a new emphasis on the role of intuitive cognition might lead to the delineation of a radically particular approach to thinking. Ultimately, the emphasis placed on these crucial pivots in Scotus's thought allowed us to find, in Scotus, the tools needed for the destruction of metaphysics. By reading Scotus in light of Heidegger's thought, we were able not only to recast the traditional historical account of Scotus, but to also discover new live philosophical possibilities (a critique of typical debates about natural theology and divine predication, a new paradigm for essentialism, and a dynamic understanding of truth).

Critically, then, we find in Scotus the essential aspects of a radically antimetaphysical thinking. This is important not only in its own right, but also insofar as it sheds light on an important issue in Heidegger's work. One of the strongest tensions in Heidegger's later thought is the continuing value of the philosophical tradition. As we have seen, Heidegger makes the strong claim that the Western philosophical tradition since Plato has been a singular failure, a vast uninterrupted period of *Seinsvergessenheit*. On its face, such a claim seems to dictate the abandonment of the tradition, either for the romantic attempt to reconnect with some imagined primordial past or for an entirely new tradition of thought, untainted by metaphysics. At times Heidegger seems to explicitly embrace such a position. And

yet, Heidegger's later work is dominated by the very tradition he is looking to unsettle. Whereas *Being and Time* sought to construct an entirely new way of understanding the world and the place of human beings in it (despite Heidegger's often unacknowledged debts to earlier thinkers), the later essays are almost all reflections on the thought of other philosophers in the tradition.

The reason that such a turn back into the tradition might be fruitful, or even necessary, despite the new emphasis on the failure of metaphysics, hopefully became apparent in the reading of Scotus engaged in here. In "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger takes the following lines from the German poet Hölderlin:

But where danger is, grows The saving power also. vi

Heidegger often referenced these lines approvingly as embodying his hope for the possibility of overcoming metaphysics. And, in fact, these lines represent the crux of Heidegger's claim that the "saving power" (the thing which would enable a return to originary thinking) would only be found where the greatest danger, here metaphysics, was. Here, then, the only possibility for the reinvigoration of the tradition is to be found within metaphysics. So, in Scotus, a thinker who is in many ways the most metaphysical of all western philosophers, we find not only a thorough critique of the excesses of the metaphysical project, but the development of a variety of antimetaphysical theories. Even while placing all beings on an ontological continuum, Scotus also embraced the possibility of a philosophy which would allow difference to persist, which would revel in the particularities of immanent beings, which would, in the final estimation, "allow beings to be."

Scotus therefore represents an alternative to traditional historical accounts of the intellectual development of the medieval period and an anti-metaphysical side of the tradition Heidegger attacks. This reveals the way in which the overcoming of metaphysics is implicit within metaphysics. This is, I argue, why Heidegger continues to read the tradition. Even when Heidegger moves to the Pre-Socratics—a move of seeming escapism—he always reads in light of, and usually against, the tradition that grew out of them. What the converse action with Scotus shows, is that even in the most metaphysical of thinkers, there are these anti-metaphysical moments which reveal the instability of the metaphysical project. In fact, metaphysics is ultimately unstable and these cracks in the project are bound to show. This is the core of "the saving aspect" to which Heidegger refers. Despite some of Heidegger's stronger rhetoric, metaphysics can only be overcome through a return to metaphysics, and the tension in Scotus between univocity and particularity rewards such a reading.

The present work has attempted to show how letting-be [Gelassenheit] can be understood in light of the thought of Scotus. Doing so has involved the investigation of a number of related themes in Heidegger and Scotus, but much had to be left undone. In this sense, this work has served to point the way to further areas in need of work. So, for instance, the role of language in the overcoming of metaphysics has been touched on only briefly. This is a fascinating and important area of relation between Heidegger and Scotus for a number of reasons and any further work would need to explore how Heidegger's early work on Scotus's philosophy of language as universal categories is connected to both Scotus's denial of the possibility of speech, which embraces the particular, and Heidegger's search for the overcoming of

metaphysics in poetic language. Despite this, we have explored the central issues of Heidegger's later philosophy. By reading Scotus and Heidegger together, the thought of both thinkers became more clear. This, in turn, allowed us to address some of the gravest misunderstandings of both thinkers and to point to some essential features of the anti-metaphysical possibility which always lies underneath the project of metaphysics.

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¹ Translated by Lyuba Azbel. Original Russian: "И в руке остается ощущение тяжести,/Хотя кувшин наполовину расплескался, пока его несли домой." (Osip Mandelstam *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh* (Moscow: Terra, 1991), pg. 106/poem 136.)

ii Heidegger, "Einleitung zu »Was ist Metaphysik?«," 379/276.

iii Ibid., 377/274.

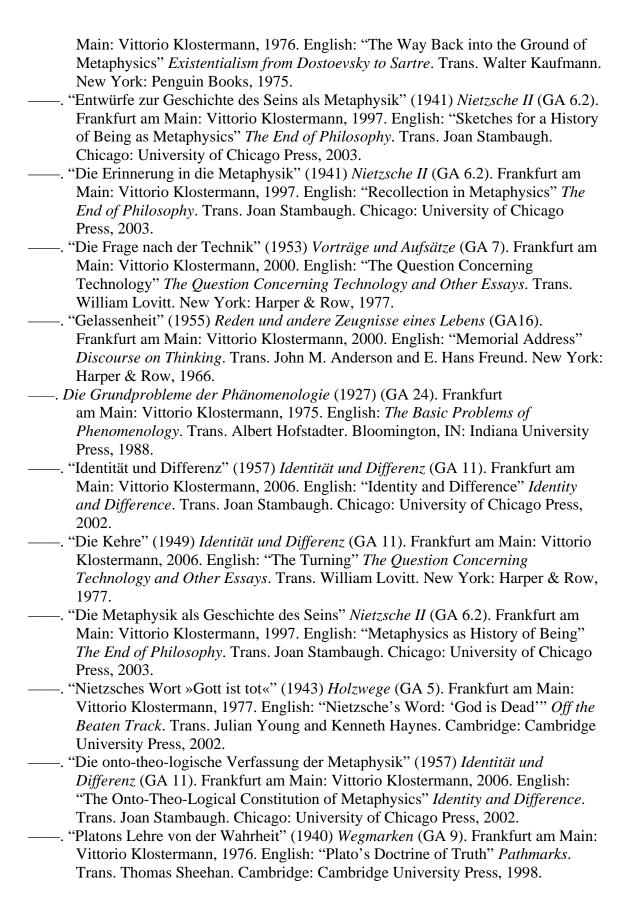
iv Heidegger, "Gelassenheit" (1955) *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebens* (GA16). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000, 520; as translated in: "Memorial Address" *Discourse on Thinking*. Trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund. New York: Harper & Row, 1966, 47.

^v Ibid., 520/46.

vi See Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 35/28.

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