

Aquinas and Heidegger: Personal Esse, Truth, and Imagination

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The theme I want to address is the interrelation of the notions of truth, imagination and being. Our exploration will attempt to look at the relevant phenomena through the eyes of two thinkers: Thomas Aquinas and Martin Heidegger. Beginning with a relatively comprehensive exposition of Heidegger on the notions involved, we will go on to present a preliminary exposition of Aquinas. We will then shift into an interpretive attempt to read Aquinas through Heidegger so as to develop a kind of fusion of horizons between the two thinkers.¹

I

Heidegger claims to think the ground of metaphysics in a level of truth which is said to found the traditional and Thomistic notion of correspondence: *aletheia* founds *orthotes*.² *Aletheia* articulates the being of human reality, *Dasein*, as Being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world is beyond subjectivism, is the way in which the being of things draws near or recedes by being the way the whole opens up as providing the framework of meaning for the beings that appear.³ Being-in-the-world is indwelling, lived inhabitation, and has its own mode of thinking given primordial expression in the arts.⁴ To that extent,

¹ For a fuller discussion of both thinkers and a delineation of the context within which I approach them and others, see my *A Path into Metaphysics: Phenomenological, Hermeneutical and Dialogical Studies* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990).

² Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth" in D. Krell ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 117ff.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 78ff and 249.

⁴ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language and Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 48ff.

imagination has a certain primacy in understanding human existence and the modes of exposure of the totality corresponding to it. Thinking at this level is appreciative thinking, thanking rooted in the *thanc*, the heart, non-sentimentally understood as the unified center of human existence which allows things and persons to draw near within the totality of significance.⁵

The peculiarity of what Heidegger is after can be clarified by his distinction, paralleling the distinction between *orthotes* and *aletheia*, between two modes of thinking, what he calls *representative-calculative thinking*, requiring the peculiar gifts of mathematician or scientist or philosopher who operate at the level of what we have come to call "intellect," and *meditative thinking*, which belongs to humankind as such and which operates in terms of the "heart." The latter mode of thinking is appreciative thinking that indwells in things so that they are allowed to draw near and place their claim upon us. If the former is grasping and conquestive, the latter learns to "let things be," i.e. be manifest in the claim they lay upon us.⁶

What is at stake for Heidegger is thinking the ground of metaphysics, for *Dasein* is the being for whom Being is disclosed.⁷ For traditional philosophy thinking the ground of metaphysics is a meaningless effort since metaphysics is precisely the discipline whose task it is to think the ultimate ground, beyond which there can be no further ground: metaphysics thinks being itself.⁸ Heidegger, on the contrary, claims that metaphysics takes place under the pall of *the forgottenness of Being*.⁹ Again, a meaningless claim for traditional philosophy: metaphysics is precisely the thinking of being qua being, in contradistinction to other disciplines which think being qua quantified or qua biologically constituted and the like.¹⁰ But Heidegger has transformed the question of the meaning of Being: he retains the traditional idea that Being is ultimate, but he denies the traditional idea that metaphysics thinks the ultimate. Heidegger claims that there is an ultimate which metaphysics does not think. Metaphysics thinks in the sphere of what has come out of concealment but does not think unconcealment itself—something which, Heidegger remarks,

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. J. Anderson and E. Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1962); cf. also *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 138ff.

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, 54-6.

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 32-35.

⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, 1003a17.

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. R. Manheim (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1959), 18, 19, 25.

¹⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Boethius' De Trinitate*, ed. B. Decker (Leiden: Brill, 1965), qs. V-VI and ST., I, 85, 1, ad 2.

may contain "a hitherto unnoticed hint concerning the nature of *esse*."¹¹ In thinking what has come out of concealment, metaphysics formulates propositions whose correspondence with what shows itself can be checked. For metaphysics, then, truth is *orthotes*, correctness, correspondence. For Heidegger, thinking of Being is thinking of the granting of the sphere of unconcealment. This entails the thesis that the sphere of unconcealment is not identical for every epoch. But that also entails thinking concealment and thus mystery.¹² The experience of truth as unconcealment contains a negation.¹³ What is granted, the sphere of unconcealment, conceals what grants.

Part of Heidegger's evidence for the epochal character of metaphysics is the history of metaphysics. Unlike other sciences such as mathematics or physics, there is no single agreed upon science of metaphysics. Though each school claims to have achieved *the* metaphysics, none have succeeded in persuading other schools to that effect. Heidegger's contention is that something else is operative, beyond the argumentative and constructive power of each metaphysic: that which grants the peculiarity of a metaphysic, the peculiar opening out of a space of meaning within which that metaphysic operates, the coming to pass of the emergence of Heraclitean Logos, the gathering which bestows meaning both chronologically and ontologically prior to the emergence of logic.¹⁴

Heidegger's second published book, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, suggests that the root of metaphysics is the imagination.¹⁵ Here Heidegger compares Kant's two editions of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, claiming that in the first edition Kant was moving toward the problem of the imagination as at the root of metaphysics, while in the second edition he backed away from that consideration.¹⁶ Kant's central problem, the possibility of metaphysics, was, as in the case of Descartes, provoked by the marked contrast between stability and progress in mathematics (but also in logic and, since Descartes's time, in mathematical physics) and the continuing wrangling that characterizes the history of metaphysics from its inception to the present day.¹⁷

¹¹ "The Way Back Into the Ground of Metaphysics," in Walter Kaufmann ed., *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1956), 211.

¹² "On the Essence of Truth," *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, 132ff.

¹³ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. A. Schuwer and R. Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 16.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 120ff, 128ff, 170.

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. J. Churchill (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1962).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 166ff.

¹⁷ Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Carus, revised by J. Ellington, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977), 1ff, 25, 38ff; Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, trans. D. Cress, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), 4-5.

Heidegger gives an exposition of Kant's treatment of the relation of sensation as reception to understanding as spontaneity, where, initially, sensation provides the data which understanding conceptualizes. The bridge between the two is the function of transcendental imagination which provides the schemata linking the two roots together.¹⁸ Understanding occurs in terms of a three-fold and simultaneously occurring synthesis: the synthesis of apprehension in sensibility, the synthesis of reproduction in imagination, and the synthesis of recognition in the concept. In his interpretation, Heidegger links the three with present, past and future orientations respectively, and finds the unity of the three in the transcendental unity of apperception, the "I think" which, he claims, is identical with originary temporality.¹⁹ Transcendental imagination, temporality and self-awareness coalesce as *Dasein*, as human reality. *Dasein* is a process which, opening up the meaning of Being within which things can appear over-against awareness as something, founds subjectivity and objectivity. Heidegger maintains that this function is more primordial than the split between sensibility and understanding, viewed in the tradition as lower and higher faculties, but also between individual and community—though *Dasein* is "in every case mine."²⁰ A determinate opening out of the whole of being which is granted us in each epoch and in the tradition as a whole establishes the relation between individual and community and, simultaneously, the relation between intellect and sensibility.

The Kant-book's suggestion that the imagination plays a key role in the fundamental configuration of the whole that dominates each epoch implies that the role of metaphor cuts more deeply into the work of intellect than its traditional peripheral assignment would claim. In his "Dialogue with a Japanese" Heidegger speaks of the imagination operating in a twofold direction. On the one hand it is inclined to scatter itself in all directions; but on the other hand, it performs a fundamental gathering that opens up the spheres of thought.²¹ Here we see a convergence with his interpretation of Heraclitean *logos*. In his later thought, the gathering is the coming to presence of the authentic thing, the *Ding* as assembly of the fourfold: earth and sky, mortals and immortals.²² Here is the sphere of operation for poetry as the linguistic ground of all the arts.²³ Through poetic thinking things are allowed to draw near and human beings learn to

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 93-118, 144-177.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 178ff. ²⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 67.

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*.

²² "The Thing" in Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language and Thought*, 174.

²³ "The Origin of the Work of Art" in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought*, 72ff.

dwell rather than, on the one hand, to slide along the surface in everyday adjustment or, on the other, to master, whether conceptually-logically or, following therefrom, technologically.²⁴

We might consult the history of science for a paradigm of epochal thinking operative at a less encompassing level than the opening out of a view of the whole but displaying some important features relevant to understanding Heidegger's basic thesis. Heidegger presents a view parallel to that of Whitehead and made popular more recently by Thomas Kuhn.²⁵ For Heidegger, natural science operates out of a fundamental projection of the groundplan of nature: it determines ahead of time what is to count as nature. So we see a fundamental paradigm shift from an Aristotelian to a Newtonian view of nature. Instead of Aristotelian natures each seeking their natural ends within a hierarchy of natures, we have a single Nature, indifferent to value, composed of atoms contained within empty space and time moving according to invariant mechanical laws.²⁶ Nature is imagined differently, a new view is created and thereby a new demand laid upon thought. It holds sway insofar as it allows operations of exploration to occur within its confines. The projection of nature in modern natural science is essentially tied to the ability to control: it is, in essence, technological.²⁷

But the scientific world operates within the more encompassing lifeworld which is a cultural world that allows for possibilities of operation, including but also encompassing scientific operation within its confines. It contains a projection of the fundamental groundplan of the whole as a sphere of thinking, acting and feeling. It too changes over time within a culture and differs from culture to culture. For Heidegger such projection is the primordial work of imagination.

But he sees a continuity in the projection of the meaning of being in the Western tradition. Beginning with the Greeks, Western thought has operated under a two-fold unthought approach to Being. On the one hand, Being is conceived of as standing presence, dominated by the Now;²⁸ on the other hand, Being is thought from the angle of production.²⁹ In ordinary Greek, the

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 17-20.

²⁵ Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures in Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 155ff *et passim*; Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *What Is a Thing?*, trans. F. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (Chicago: Regnery, 1967), 80ff.

²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 119.

²⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 202-206.

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Problem of Phenomenology*, trans. A. Hofstadter (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992), 99ff.

term *pragmata*, that which has been done, is one of the dominant terms for things—as is the Latin *facta*, that which has been done. In Plato, both these meanings—standing presence and producedness—coalesce in the notion expressed by the terms *eidos* and *idea* as the unchanging and universal face things present to what we have come to call intellect which thinks of archetypes in accordance with which the *demiourgos* mythically fashions things.³⁰ The *ousia* of things is their participation in eternal Forms which are productive patterns. In Aristotle, beings thought in terms of the four causes are thought from the perspective of a productive process in which an agent imposes a form upon matter for a purpose. Agency imposing form for a purpose is then read into the nature which agency so operative presupposes.³¹ And in Hebrew-Christian thought productive agency is again the primary metaphor, only the Aristotelian hyletic presupposition which is always *hypokeimenon*, always lying there beneath formative activity, is itself viewed as produced—though now “from nothing.”³²

For Heidegger, then, it would seem that imagination grants both a sphere for human dwelling and the unthought metaphors that factually guide metaphysical construction. Imagination so conceived is closely linked to the notion of the heart that underlies the split between understanding and sensibility and between theory and practice.

II

We move now to a treatment of Aquinas. In the opening question of *De Veritate*, truth is spoken of in three ways: in its basis in the things themselves, in the correspondence of the intellect to things, and in the manifestness or showing of things.³³ In a later Thomistic way of speaking, correspondence is thought of in three directions: logical truth is correspondence between our judgments and things; practical truth is correspondence between things and our concepts; ontological truth is correspondence between things and their Divine Ideas.³⁴ In the first case, failure is error; in the second case, botched activity; in the third, monstrosity or evil.

One has to think this correspondence in terms of our mode of access, and thus the mode of manifestness of the things in question. Whatever is received

³⁰ *Timaeus*, 28ff.

³¹ *Physics*, II, 1-3, 192b8ff.

³² Martin Heidegger, *Basic Problem of Phenomenology*, 118.

³³ *De Veritate*, I, 1.

³⁴ Cf. for example Robert J. Kreyche, *First Philosophy* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1959), 183ff.

³⁵ *ST*, I, 12, 4 and 84, 1.

³⁶ *ST*, I, 76, 5.

³⁷ *ST*, I, 84, 7 and 85, 1 and 2.

is received according to the mode of the recipient.³⁵ Since we do not have an intuitive intellect, we must be receptively related to what is to be known.³⁶ Such receptivity is rooted in sensibility which is linked to things affecting us at a certain limited level as related to the needs of our organism. Imagination retains sensations and links them by association into phantasms, which are more orchestrated appearances than sensations, enriched through time.³⁷ Intellect actively operates upon the given as so limited to construct concepts, whose combinations in judgment have to be checked against what is initially presented in sensation.³⁸ But this process, according to Aquinas, never penetrates to the essential principles, so that logical truth remains essentially incomplete and ontological truth is finally unavailable to us. We do not know the essential principles of even so simple a thing as a fly;³⁹ and, indeed, regarding God, we know best when we know that we do not know.⁴⁰

These declarations do not express an absolute agnosticism, since we do know modes of manifestation and what can be derived therefrom—and these are known as continuous with the wholeness of things in the wholeness of Being. The latter is presented as goal for our natural striving as intellectual beings but is never attained to as goal, at least in this life. Discursive intellect begins with the notion of Being⁴¹ and with the sensorily given (correlated with the manifestness of our own interiority as organically and metaphysically desirous). It must construct its understanding, and in this the work of the imagination is indispensable.

Aquinas' formal treatment of the imagination is restricted to a part of an article on the distinction of the internal senses.⁴² Following Avicenna, Aquinas lists as internal senses *sensus communis*, *phantasia*, *imaginatio*, *vis estimativa* and *memoria*. He appeals to the general principle that powers are distinguished by objects. *Sensus communis* operates in conjunction with the external senses in the work of apprehension. It is the single root of the soul's external sensory powers⁴³ by which we are able to compare the intentions of each of the senses and be aware that we are performing the particular sensory act.⁴⁴ It is thus a mode of self-presence, of awareness of awareness. Aquinas reduces Avicenna's *phantasia* to *imaginatio*, having the function of retaining intentions received from the external senses. The *vis estimativa* or instinct (a term expressive of contrast with intellect but positively uninformative in itself, merely pointing

³⁸ Cf. *ST*, I, 16, 2 and 17, 3.

³⁹ *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima* I, 1, no. 15; *Disputed Questions on Spiritual Creatures*, 11, ad 3; *On Truth*, 4, 1, ad 8.

⁴⁰ *On the Power of God*, 7, 5, ad 14. ⁴¹ *De Veritate*, I, 1. ⁴² *ST*, I, 78, 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, ad 1. ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, ad 2.

to the future of the study of animal behavior)—estimative sense perceives intentions of beneficiality or harmfulness not received through specific senses, and the *memoria* retains such intentions. The latter seems an odd way to treat memory, but it underscores a tendency to recall what is related to our perceived needs and to forget what is not: we do not remember everything but, for the most part, what has pertinence. Live memory, as distinct from mechanical recording, essentially involves forgetting. In human beings, the estimative is transformed or subsumed under intellectual activity as *ratio particularis* or *vis cogitativa* which is said to compare individual intentions—a function already assigned to *sensus communis*. Under similar relation to intellect, imagination in human beings is able to create imaginary forms. This is apparently the power Avicenna called *phantasy*.

With this brief explication of Aquinas' treatment of the internal senses, I want next to provide an interpretation which moves toward a "fusion of horizons" with the movement of Heidegger's thought.

III

Having divided the interior senses, it is necessary to relate them. It would, I think, not do violence to Aquinas here to view the power of sensation as such, i.e., the *sensus communis*, not only as the root of the external senses, but also as the root of the internal senses. Retention of intentions, pressed further along Husserlian-Derridian lines, is essential for any appearance to occur, so that "imagination" with its "storehouse" function is involved in the initial sensory appearance.⁴⁵ But the recognitional aspect in the appearance of things also requires the entry of the longer-term past into the present: the recognitional appearance involves a gestalting process, a configuration of the *sensa*. This is perhaps what Aquinas means by the *phantasm*. It is not clear to me whether this is the work of the imagination, of the common sense, of cogitative power or of the three together. But as Aquinas remarks, the imaginative work of combining and separating is an act of the composite.⁴⁶ The term 'phantasm' is rooted in *phainomai*, I appear. It is that which makes configurational appearance possible. The terms "species" and *intentio* in this context underscore the dimension of appearance insofar as *species* is itself appearance, manifestness,

⁴⁵ Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, trans. J. Churchill (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1964), especially 50ff; Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans. J. Leavy (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), especially, 57ff and 134ff.

⁴⁶ *ST*, I, 84, 6, ad 2.

and *intentio* is the transcendence of itself by awareness dwelling in the manifestness of the bodily given other.

But in the human case, appearing is not simply a configuration tied to appetite and functioning without the further elaboration of thought. Thought enters into the constitution of appearing by reason of association with what we know from other sources: thought provides recognition of what is sensorily presented now and imaginatively gathered from the past. In so doing, thought anticipates the future of fuller disclosure. Furthermore, the way thought anticipates is tied essentially to what we want to be and thus to how we make our fundamental choices.

In living our lives, though general principles are crucial, equally crucial is that they be applied to the changing contexts of experience—thus particular reason, comparing individual intentions. Particular reason, we suggest, is, in us, the active phase of imagination. Here one has to gain a comprehensive sense of the concrete context; one has to have gathered up and retained a richness of concrete experience—and this is the work of imagination. One has also to be able to enter imaginatively into the lives of others in order to act prudently in relation to how things appear from the others' mode of being-in-the-world. This is, indeed, one of the presuppositions of rhetoric, an essential aspect of political prudence. One has to be able to come to terms creatively with novel situations and for this one must be able to project alternative ways of acting. It is the arts, I would claim, that advance these capacities.

One problem with a faculty analysis is the tendency to substantialize and separate the faculties. There is no human imagination—or, for that matter, human sensation—without human intellect. The construction of models, the imaginative construction of a work of art, the opening out of a world for human dwelling are sensory-imaginative-intellectual operations, or, as Aquinas has it, the operation of the composite. Rather than speaking of “the intellect” doing this and “the imagination” doing that, it would be better to speak of doing something intelligently or imaginatively where it is a matter of emphasis within a totalistically functioning field of awareness.

The expression “particular reason” becomes problematic and appears as an oxymoron with the initial determination of intellect as the faculty of the universal over against the individual. But perhaps we are systematically misled in these matters by this initial determination. One could work here at our fusion of horizons between Heidegger and Aquinas via an interpretation of the notion of *intellectus agens* as orientation toward being as a whole.⁴⁷ Through our

⁴⁷ Cf. Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. W. Dych (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 132ff. Aquinas' treatment of *intellectus agens* is found in *ST*, I, 79, 3-5 and *SCG*, II, 76-78.

orientation toward the whole via the notion of being ("being in a way all things"),⁴⁸ abstraction of form is rendered possible since intellect is always already beyond the here and now of sensation and empty with the whole. Abstraction from the sensory involves locating the sensorily given within the whole of space and time, for we know the universal to apply any time and any place. Then space and time, in a way, must be given a priori. And, as Kant noted, space and time are not originally concepts but individual wholes (about which we can also form concepts), furnishing the essential frame of sensibility, since everything which appears sensorily appears in space and time given as indeterminately surrounding any empirically given spans of space and time.⁴⁹ Space and time are thus linked essentially to the operative power of imagination which, as particular reason, compares individual intentions appearing within space and time.

And intellect, though initially discriminated from sensation through its apprehension of abstract universality, is nonetheless, because of its orientation toward being, referred to the concrete wholeness of each thing wherein alone, for Aquinas, being is found. *Imagination* functions generally in grounding both abstraction and conversion, the latter of which gives access not simply to abstract intelligibility but to concrete *esse*, so that to know being truly and completely, a conversion to phantasms is essential.⁵⁰ Further, in reflecting upon itself, self as intellect is present to its own individual *esse*,⁵¹ for it is not individuality that is incompatible with intellect but only materiality.⁵² But of course the psychophysical self is not intellect, so that concrete self-understanding is, in a way, like the understanding of another, something essentially on the way. In any case, the mind's orientation toward being, which includes absolutely everything in its scope, grounds Aristotle's observation that *nous* apprehends *both* the universal principle and the ultimate particular.⁵³

The orientation toward the whole, characteristic of mind, also makes freedom of choice possible,⁵⁴ and choice involves concrete alternatives disclosed by a creative employment of imagination. Human beings create institutions, art-forms and scientific models that both expand and mirror (within the limits of the disclosive power of the models) the character of concrete *esse*. Understanding a person involves imaginative entry into his/her world, for his/her being is a mode of being-in-that-world as a variation on the general theme of belonging to intersecting sets of common worlds. Understanding both common worlds

⁴⁸ *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*, III, 8, 431b 21.

⁴⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B37/A23ff.

⁵⁰ *ST*, I, 84, 7.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, I, 85, 2.

⁵² *Ibid.*, I, 86, 1.

⁵³ *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 1143b.

⁵⁴ *ST*, I, 82, 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 32, 1, ad 2.

and individual persons is a matter of learning to grasp particularized *Gestalten* within which general principles operate. Understanding the being of human reality is not fulfilled unless it terminates in such imaginatively configured *Gestalten*.

Because of the creative power of imagination in constructing a lifeworld, common sense in its functioning as fundamental orientation in the life-world is essentially historical. And both its general structure and the declarations of ontological fixity arising out of the Aristotelian tradition still remain dashboard manifestations in relation to the essential being of any encounterable entities and of our very selves which remain deep wells of mystery.

Likewise because of the creative power of imagination vis-a-vis the sensorily given other, the natural sciences operate to "save the appearances."⁵⁵ This means that there are alternative construals possible for understanding—and that means linking together in a coherent way—our observations and inferences. Alternative construals at one level involve imaginative models. Models are, in Thomistic terms, phantasms which, in Heideggerian terms, allow things to appear in a certain way. There is an objectivity to the appearance, a non-arbitrariness to the model-construction, but also an historical relativity in the whole project. We advance in our understanding of nature; but still do not know the final constitutive principles, the essence, of even the simplest of things, even a common fly—though, as someone properly remarked, "I know one when I see one." Functionally we are able to abstract "phenomenal essences," constancies in ways things have of appearing expressively within the circle of sensation. We thus are always possessed of an essential "dashboard realism."⁵⁶ One can work at the progressive uncovering of principles-for-us, but things-in-themselves remain deep wells of mystery to which we may also gear our explicit attention. That is what Heidegger has chosen to do.

But there is a further consideration: through artistic disclosure things and persons are "brought near," and we gain a deepened sense of the mystery of their being in the whole. Jacques Maritain, the patron of this society, is one who has gone quite far in this direction, in developing access to *esse* which is more than grasping a system of essences whose link to individual existence is acknowledged through the judgment. On the one hand he stressed "the intuition of being" as a kind of spiritual sense, an enhanced awareness of being-outside-nothing, to which Heidegger's moment of vision in the realization of Being-toward-death is a concrete path.⁵⁷ On the other hand, Maritain gave significant

⁵⁶ This is a modification of Owen Barfield's felicitous expression in *Saving the Appearances: An Essay in Idolatry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World), 28-35.

⁵⁷ Jacques Maritain, *Preface to Metaphysics: Seven Lectures on Being* (New York: Mentor,

attention to artistic creation and the apprehension of the concrete individual *esse* of human subjectivity involved therein.

In spite of Maritain's deliberate intent to be a "paleo-Thomist," right from the beginning of *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* we are placed in a different spiritual landscape than that of Aquinas. The author announces that poetry is "intercommunication between the inner being of things and the inner being of the human Self which is a kind of divination,"⁵⁸ while for Thomas poetry is *infima veritas*, lower truth useful for communicating to the uneducated.⁵⁹

Of course, for Maritain this does nothing to alter the fundamental metaphysical framework within which his explorations are located and which he seeks to develop. But for Heidegger, the deepening of our understanding of personal *esse* through the arts is involved in epochal shifts in our understanding of what he calls the onto-theo-logical framework within which alternative metaphysical construals emerge. For Heidegger what does seem to remain fixed is the fundamental structure of *Dasein*. And what is most important to notice is that this is not merely a matter of a Kantian apriori, at least insofar as, through his conception of the apriori, Kant sets up the realm of appearance in such a way that we cannot gain access to things-in-themselves.⁶⁰ For Heidegger, on the contrary, the realm of appearance *is* the disclosure (as well as the simultaneous concealing) of things-in-themselves.⁶¹ Where Heidegger differs from Aquinas is in his claim to the perspectivity of the way in which that disclosure occurs.

In understanding Aquinas himself on this matter, it is essential to come to terms with the two agnostic disclaimers to which we have already called attention: that we do not know the essence of any creature, not even something so simple as a fly; and that we know best about God when we know that we do not know about God. The latter fits in with his late declaration, apparently based on some mystical experience, that all he has written is straw.⁶² All three declarations point to common ground with Heidegger: that whatever truth-claims we make take place within the finite conditions of human cognitive structure. All *aletheia*, all unconcealment of entities, takes place within the hidden

1962), 48-64 and *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galantieri and Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 28ff.

⁵⁸ Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 3.

⁵⁹ *ST*, I, 1, 9.

⁶⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B45/A30 and B295/A236ff.

⁶¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 51-55 and 249.

⁶² Cf. James Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas d'Aquino*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), 321ff for the sources.

background of the *lethe*, the essentially concealed to which, nonetheless, we as humans, via the notion of being, are essentially related. The sense of the *lethe* is the essential mystical sensibility, the sense of mystery that provokes the essential awe which gives rise to and sustains philosophy as the question of the meaning of Being.⁶³ But the dominance of logic in the tradition and the dominating thrust of modern science tend to move us away from the sustaining ground of awe into the realm of cognitive and practical mastery. It is in the arts that such awe gains essential expression, provided art is not understood as surface decoration provoking fine feelings.

Philosophy and art ontologically understood are rooted in the structure of *Dasein* as sensorily grounded, culturally mediated reference to the whole whose center lies in the thoughtful heart and whose correlate is the coming to presence of unfathomable mystery surrounding the least thing. Its vehicle of expression is the fundamental work of the imagination, which grants the sphere of encompassing dwelling, the derivative sphere of philosophic thinking, and the even more derivative sphere of scientific-technological thinking that currently has us in its grips. Heidegger's thoughtful approach to the ground of metaphysics has changed the terms of philosophic discussion and reopened the question of the relation between philosophy, science and the arts. In so doing, it holds much common ground with Aquinas, but invites a different look at the role of the arts which runs parallel with the work of Jacques Maritain.

⁶³ Martin Heidegger, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. S. Kluback and J. Wilde (New York: Twayne, 1958), 78-85.