The Three “Fundamental Deceptions” of *Being and Time*: Heidegger’s Phenomenology Revisited

*David Charles Abergel*

Ph.D. Student, Department of Philosophy, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, USA
abergel@bc.edu

**Abstract**

In his private notes written in 1936 (now published as GA82), Heidegger enumerates three “fundamental deceptions” at play in *Being and Time* (1927). The thrust of these deceptions is twofold: that Dasein is something given and that the task of phenomenology is to describe Dasein in its givenness. These are deceptions, Heidegger claims in 1936, because Dasein is not something given, but can only be reached in a leap, and because the task of phenomenology is not to describe Dasein in its givenness, but to bring about Dasein and the “there,” the site of Being’s happening, through a creative leap-in. Scholars might be inclined to read these deceptions as further evidence for the view that Heidegger in the 1930s abandons phenomenology understood as a descriptive enterprise oriented toward givenness. This paper argues, to the contrary, that phenomenology for the young Heidegger was never a descriptive enterprise oriented toward givenness, but always, however obliquely presented throughout the 1920s, a way of participating in the creative unfolding of the site of Being’s happening.

**Keywords**

Heidegger – phenomenology – givenness – leap – origin
1 Introduction

In 1936, Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) retrospectively launched a critical assessment of Being and Time (1927) through the lens of its reception.1 Bearing the title “Running Comments on Being and Time” (Laufende Anmerkungen zu “Sein und Zeit”), this critical assessment has now been published as part of the eighty-second volume of Heidegger’s collected works.2

The guiding theme of “Running Comments” is, on the one hand, how Being and Time has been misinterpreted in its contemporary reception, and, on the other, how certain ambiguities and shortcomings of the work, self-acknowledged by Heidegger, helped facilitate these misinterpretations. As a work of fundamental ontology, Being and Time seeks to lay the foundation of ontology as its overcoming (GA82 7) and thereby to incite a “transition” from traditional ontology – of the beingness of beings (Seiendheit des Seienden) – to the inceptual thinking of the essential occurrence of bying (Wesung des Seyns).3 But, in seeking to overcome traditional ontology, fundamental ontology takes up ontology’s traditional discourse and has thereby unintentionally taken on the appearance of being a mere re-presentation of it. “All endeavors reacting against metaphysics,” writes Heidegger in Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event) (1936–1938) “are precisely re-active and thereby fundamentally dependent on metaphysics” (GA65 136). It is therefore precisely fundamental ontology’s transitional character, reflects Heidegger in “Running Comments,” that “is what is insidious [Verfängliche] for the understanding of the treatise,” facilitating the misinterpretation of fundamental ontology as anthropology and philosophy of existence, as well as “the convenient and pernicious misinterpretation of the ‘understanding of Being’” (GA82 7). And these misinterpretations discussed in the opening pages of “Running Comments,” to be

3 See also Martin Heidegger, Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis), ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, vol. 65 of Gesamausgabe (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1989), trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu as Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 117–118/180; The citation here identifies the German pagination first and then the English pagination second, after the slash mark. Henceforth GA65.
sure, constitute only “a first hint – in the context of widespread, contemporary misinterpretations,” writes Heidegger (GA82 9). Throughout “Running Comments,” Heidegger is especially critical of the interpretation of his work put forth by the Marburg Neo-Kantian Nicolai Hartmann (1882–1950), who he bitterly accuses of incorporating “devilishly much from Being and Time” into his ontology while covering it up “poorly” through the “less than tasteful characterization of a dependence upon Kierkegaard” (GA82 40–41).

In a section titled “Nicolai Hartmann’s misinterpretation of Being and Time,” Heidegger enumerates “three fundamental flaws and errors” – or “fundamental deceptions,” as he also calls them (GA82 11, 43, 44) – that he takes to be at play in “contemporary misinterpretations” of Being and Time:

1. the phenomenological deception [Täuschung], as if it were the exhibiting [Aufweisung] of what is given.
2. the fundamental-ontological aim [Abzweckung] – the question of the possibility of the understanding of Being, as if in this way a ground could be reached!
3. the existentiell intention, as if the original essence as Da-sein could be attained. (GA82 41)

The first error concerns fundamental ontology as phenomenology. As Heidegger writes in the introduction to Being and Time, “Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible” (SZ 35/BT 60). If fundamental ontology is understood in the traditional sense of phenomenology as a descriptive enterprise, whose task is to describe that which is given, exactly as it is given, then Dasein – the primary theme of fundamental ontology (SZ 13/BT 34) – is accordingly construed as something given. Dasein, the Being of the “there,” repeatedly misunderstood by philosophers throughout the course of the history of metaphysics, however, is neither the human being nor the already existent Being of the human being, but rather the site of Being’s happening, the openness of the truth of Being, and, consequently, “not at all something given” (GA82 39). As a result, to construe Dasein as something given that is available for description is to fail to reach Dasein at all. According to Heidegger, Dasein can only be reached in a leap. As he writes in Contributions, “We never simply come across [Da-sein]; instead, we reach it only in a leap by leaping [erspringen im Einsprung] into the grounding of the openness of what is self-concealing” (GA65: 297/234). The leap is a matter of enacting or bringing about the Being of the “there,” the site of Being’s happening, and with it the openness of the truth of Being. To leap is thus to incite the transition from traditional ontology to the inceptual thinking of the essential occurrence of bying. Consequently, since Dasein is not something given, but can only be reached in a leap, the task of fundamental ontology – contrary to what the traditional sense of phenomenology with its
“addiction to simple givenness for description” (GA82 41) would dictate – is “not the search for a more appropriate description of Dasein (as if it ‘were’ already ‘present’), but rather the bringing about of the beyn of the there!” (GA82 51; see also GA82 25, 32, 39, 45).

Fundamental ontology seeks the meaning of Being, and since Dasein is the being to which an understanding of Being belongs, an understanding of the meaning of its Being is always available to it at some level (SZ 14–15/BT 35). The second error of interpretation is the assumption that, if fundamental ontology is to attain the meaning of Being, it will be by attaining it as the condition of possibility for Dasein’s understanding of Being (GA82 39). For, in order to carry out a transcendental investigation into the conditions for the possibility of something, something must first be given, but Dasein is not something given, but can only be reached or enacted in a leap; consequently, the “fundamental-ontological aim” of Being and Time is “not a description of the conditions of possibility, but rather a projecting, expanding leap-in to the ground of human existence as the guardian of the truth of beyn” (GA82 21; see also GA82 39).

Being and Time makes a distinction between what is “existential” and what is “existentiell” (SZ 12/BT 33), the former referring to Dasein’s ontological characteristics (thrownness, fallenness, projection, etc.), the latter referring to the ways (authenticity, inauthenticity) in which Dasein takes up its ontological characteristics through its ontic, that is, factual, existence. In §63 of Being and Time, fundamental ontology is said to require that the phenomenologist project themselves upon the Being which is their own in existentiell authenticity, “so as to conceptualize it with regard to its structure” (SZ 312/BT 359). Consequently, although fundamental ontology seeks a primordial interpretation of Dasein’s existential structure, the “roots” of the investigation, says Heidegger, “are ultimately existentiell, that is, ontical” (SZ 13/BT 34). The third error seems to be the perhaps natural assumption given Heidegger’s claims, especially in §63, that the function of existentiell authenticity is to uncover Dasein’s a priori ontological structure that is proximately and for the most part concealed in existentiell inauthenticity so as to grasp it in concepts. Such an interpretation of the existentiell intention of the treatise is an error because, if Dasein is not something given, but can only be reached or enacted in a leap, then the very notion of an a priori structure belonging to Dasein founders. According to Heidegger in 1936, since “in truth, everything is projection,” what the “existentiell intention [...] actually [eigentlich] wants” is the “bringing about of the there and thereby the transformation of the essence of truth and thus initially the second inception of the fundamental position for the (event)” (GA82 45). Heidegger is, consequently, highly critical of his own methodological remarks.
in §63 of *Being and Time*, which he identifies as the main reason for such a gross misinterpretation of what he retrospectively claims to have intended but failed to adequately convey: “Here, everything is placed on its head [...] The entirety of §63 as an impossible mixture of existentiality and Phenomenology!” (GA82 43).

The main thrust of these three fundamental deceptions that Heidegger takes to be at play in contemporary misinterpretations of *Being and Time*, as we have seen, is that Dasein is something given, and that the task of phenomenology is to describe Dasein in its givenness. These are misinterpretations, according to Heidegger in 1936, because Dasein is not something given, but can only be reached or enacted in a leap, and because the genuine task of phenomenology is not to describe Dasein in its givenness, but to bring about Dasein and the “there,” the site of Being’s happening, through a creative leap-in. Admittedly, although Heidegger introduces these three fundamental deceptions in the context of how *Being and Time* has been misinterpreted by his contemporaries, it is ultimately ambiguous whether or not he thinks these deceptions were also at play in his own thinking throughout the 1920s. In other words, it is ambiguous whether or not Heidegger himself in 1936 understands his phenomenology of the 1920s to be a descriptive enterprise oriented toward givenness. Heidegger claims at one point in “Running Comments,” for example, that only at this time, with the benefit of hindsight in 1936, does it become apparent that Dasein is not something given, but must be enacted, which brings him to call into question the very possibility of an analytic of Dasein: “Only now does it become visible: that Da-sein is not at all something given – it is not even something one can come-across – the Being of the there must be 'enacted' (created) – therefore, it is also not divisible; there is no analytic” (GA82 39).

The question of what phenomenology is for Heidegger in the 1920s remains largely at issue in examining the change (or “turn”) in his thinking in the 1930s. For only if it is apparent what phenomenology is for Heidegger at this time can the question of whether the later Heidegger of the 1930s onward is still thinking phenomenologically – or, at least, phenomenologically in the same sense – be answered. The scholarly debate on this issue arose at a time before the volumes of Heidegger’s Gesamtausgabe dedicated to his early Freiburg lecture courses (1919–1923) were published, and, since their publication, many old interpretive positions regarding Heidegger’s early philosophical development and fundamental aspects of his magnum opus *Being and Time* have been called into question.4 This essay endeavors to continue this trend of research

---

4 See Theodore J. Kisiel’s study on Heidegger’s early work prior to the publication of *Being and Time*, The Genesis of Heidegger’s “Being and Time” (Berkeley: University of California
by examining, in addition to a number of other texts throughout the 1920s and 1930s, one of Heidegger’s earliest lecture courses – the Freiburg winter semester lecture course of 1919–1920, Basic Problems of Phenomenology\(^5\) – in order to show that phenomenology for the young Heidegger was never a descriptive enterprise oriented toward givenness, but always, however obliquely presented, a way of participating in the creative unfolding of the site of Being’s happening (in the early 1920s – factual life; from the early-mid 1920s onward – Dasein; and, at some point in the 1930s – Da-sein).\(^6\) This study therefore aims to clarify the radicality of Heidegger’s early phenomenology and thereby to disambiguate his critical comments in “Running Comments.”

---


2 Givenness and the Being of Life

Phenomenology, according to Heidegger in *Basic Problems*, is the original science of life; as such, its task is to apprehend life in itself (GA58 81/65). Contrary to what the traditional sense of phenomenology would dictate, however, the task of phenomenology as original science is not to describe life in its givenness. This is because, as Heidegger says in 1919, life itself is not and never can be a given: “Perhaps the original region is now not yet given to us – but when phenomenology is further along? Not even then – and never. Yes, if it were absolutely complete, it would still be totally hidden from current streaming life in itself” (GA58 27/22). Put differently, the task of phenomenology as original science is not to describe life in its givenness, says the young Heidegger, because “concepts of description [Beschreibungsgriffe]” are objectifying, containing objects “given ‘directly’ in experience” (GA58 152/117), and “life is not an object and it cannot become an object. It is not anything like an object” (GA58 236/178). Consequently, since phenomenology is traditionally conceived as a descriptive enterprise oriented toward givenness, Heidegger calls for a radicalization of phenomenology: “The radicalism of phenomenology needs to operate in the most radical way against itself and against everything that speaks out as phenomenological cognition” (GA58 6/5).

What is life, such that it is not and never can be a given? This question raises the issue of the Being of life. According to the young Heidegger, the Being of life is intentional openness itself as “a basic directedness in each case and always into a world” (GA58 31/25). At this time in the winter of 1919–1920, Heidegger refers to the Being of life as self-sufficiency (*Selbstgenügsamkeit*); two years later, in his 1921–1922 winter semester lecture course *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research*, he will start referring to it as care (*Sorge*). From 1919 to 1927, Heidegger gradually shifts from using the term life to using the term Dasein to indicate the primary

---

7 Emphasizing the radicality of Heidegger’s early phenomenology, Dan Zahavi advises readers of *Basic Problems* not to underestimate it: “One should not underestimate the radical nature of this criticism. One of the standard ways of defining phenomenology is by saying that its task is to describe that which is given, exactly as it is given, but in consequence of his criticism, Heidegger even questions the legitimacy of this preoccupation with givenness.” Dan Zahavi, “How to investigate subjectivity: Natorp and Heidegger on reflection,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 36:2 (2003): 159.

theme of phenomenology because the term life, unlike the term Dasein, does not make Being into a problem (SZ 46/BT 72). Consequently, in Being and Time, the term care names the Being, not of life, but of Dasein. In any case, we come to find that for the young Heidegger in the 1920s phenomenology researches life (and, subsequently, Dasein) from out of its Being as intentional openness itself (self-sufficiency, care).

In Being and Time, Heidegger introduces the analogy of a clearing (Lichtung), in the sense of a clearing in a forest where light shines through and illuminates the forest floor, in order to clarify the nature of this intentional openness (SZ 133/BT 171): just like a clearing in a forest is not what is seen within it but the illuminated opening wherein things are seen, Dasein, in its Being as intentional openness itself, is neither a subject nor an object but the groundless ontological ground from out of and through which both subjects and objects emerge and abide. According to Heidegger, phenomenology as original science researches, therefore, not life in its factical givenness, since to do so would be akin to mistaking the clearing itself for what is illuminated within it, but rather life itself from out of its Being in its own “self-giving” (GA58 172/132):

The idea of phenomenology is: the original science of life. Factual life itself and the infinite fullness of the worlds that are lived in it are not supposed to be researched. What is to be researched, rather, is life as arising, as emerging out of an origin. (GA58 81/65)

With this, however, we come to find that Heidegger’s radical phenomenology is “struggling relentlessly with a paradox,” which he calls the “primal paradox of life in and for itself” (GA58 2/2), that would seem to preclude its possibility altogether.

3 The Paradox of Phenomenology

Life is self-sufficient, or intentionally open toward a world. Insofar as life is, in other words, it is always already revealed to itself in terms of its “factual life in its facticity” (GA58 173/132). Consequently, it is only through and from within its factual life that life in itself is accessible to itself. For this reason, Heidegger maintains that the point of departure for phenomenology is factual life

---

German pagination first and then the English pagination second, after the slash mark. Henceforth GA61.
(GA58 247/186). Paradoxically, however, in opening up access to its vital origin, the worldly expressions of factical life simultaneously conceal it, thereby seemingly precluding the possibility for life to achieve an original understanding of itself. The “basic problem of phenomenology” is therefore “it itself for itself” (GA58 1/2), since its subject matter is not and never can be given but is rather inherently self-concealing. In Basic Problems, Heidegger articulates life’s self-concealing nature in terms of distance:

[“Life in itself” is] something that lies so near to us that we mostly do not even expressly concern ourselves with it; something from which we have no distance to see it in its “at all”; and the distance to it is lacking, because we are it itself and we only see ourselves from out of life itself; we only see what we are, that it is us (accusative), in its own directions. [The absolute distance of life in itself and to itself is missing] (GA58 29/24, second comment in brackets by Heidegger)

If life can never establish distance from itself, in any sense (reflective, discursive, or otherwise) in order to be able to encounter itself, since to do so would be to mistake life itself for life’s stratum of expression, how is phenomenology as original science possible? What is the task of radical phenomenology, such that it can attend to the self-concealing nature of its subject matter?

In Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics (1929), Heidegger addresses exactly this concern, writing that the task of fundamental ontology must be able to attend to the “concealing occurring of metaphysics in Dasein itself.” Accordingly, we come to find that fundamental ontology “can never become

---


10 Francisco Gonzalez makes this same point in his study on Basic Problems: “The reason why the Ursprungsgebiet of life that phenomenology seeks to understand is not and never can be given to it is that life has the peculiar characteristic of being self-obstructing.” Gonzales, “Why Heidegger’s Hermeneutics is not a ‘Diahermeneutics,’” 139.

metaphysics ‘about’ Dasein, as for example zoology is about animals,” since to do so would be to mistake Dasein as a given; rather, fundamental ontology is the “metaphysics which occurs necessarily as Dasein” (GA3 231/162). Heidegger makes this same point in terms of his “Hermeneutics of Facticity,” articulated in his summer semester lecture course of 1923, Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity. According to Heidegger at this time, the “relationship between hermeneutics and facticity is not a relationship between the grasping of an object and the object grasped [...]” Rather, interpreting is itself a possible and distinctive how of the character of the Being of facticity” (GA63 15/12, tm). In other words, “Hermeneutics of Facticity” is intended, not as an objective genitive, which would make facticity the object of hermeneutics, but rather as a subjective genitive, which means hermeneutics “belongs to the Being of factual life itself” (GA63 15/12). Fundamental ontology and the hermeneutics of facticity are therefore able to attend to the self-concealing nature of their subject matter because they both involve ways of apprehending that maintain absolutely no distance – reflective, discursive, or otherwise – to their subject matter.

To clarify the radicality of phenomenology as original science in comparison to the traditional sense of phenomenology and the special sciences, Heidegger notes that phenomenology as original science can be neither learned nor mastered (GA58 135–136/104) and can yield “no unequivocal results” and “no universally recognized truths” (GA58 235/177). As a result of its radicality, we also come to find that it “does without a ‘system’” and “without an ultimate division of everything into regions” (GA58 239/180) and “needs no ‘transcendental guidelines’” and “no ‘ontology’” (GA58 239/181). In his 1963 autobiographical essay “My Way to Phenomenology,” Heidegger concludes by claiming that phenomenology “can disappear as a designation in favor of the matter of thinking.” Similarly, in Basic Problems, he claims that the “idea” of phenomenology is “‘accidental’ [zufällig],” in the sense that it “falls back [zurückfällt], as a manifestation of itself, into its object, into itself” (GA58 1/2).

---


Consequently, the method of phenomenology for the young Heidegger is in no way imposed on life from without, but rather “has its roots in life itself” (GA58 228/172), which means, furthermore, that phenomenology “determines the sense of its knowledge from out of [life itself]” (GA58 239/180). According to Heidegger, phenomenology in this radicalized sense is therefore “neither an ‘objective’ science nor a practical instruction for life” (GA58 239/180), but rather an “innermost, living calling” (GA58 2/2). In other words, it is a way of grasping that maintains absolutely no distance to its subject matter; it is, simply put, the participation of life in its own “self-giving” (GA58 172/132) – or, in terms of Heidegger’s “Hermeneutics of Facticity,” in its own “primordial self-interpretation [Selbstauslegung]” (GA63 18/14).

4 Letting and Leaping

In Heidegger’s 1930 essay “On the Essence of Truth,” he uproots the traditional conception of truth as correctness by revealing its hitherto concealed essence to be that of “freedom” – “ek-sistent, disclosive letting beings be [Seinlassen des Seienden].” And according to Heidegger at this time, since, just like the phenomenon of life in itself in the context of Basic Problems, the essence of truth is inherently self-concealing, it calls for a special way of thinking, a “philosophical thinking,” that is irreducible to any kind of objectifying mode of thought. As Heidegger writes in 1930, “The disclosure of beings as such a simultaneously and intrinsically the concealing of Being as a whole” (GA9 198/134, tm). Philosophical thinking, just like the task of phenomenology as original science, can therefore maintain absolutely no distance to its subject matter; rather, it must be understood as a way of participating, through a “gentle releasement [Gelassenheit]” (GA9: 199/135, tm), in its essential unfolding – the

---

14 The radical sense of phenomenology for Heidegger at this time is made especially evident in one of his letters to Karl Löwith (1897–1973), dated August 19, 1921, wherein he writes, “you are, to the extent that such expressions say something, an objective relativist; I, on the other hand, am a dogmatic subjective relativist.” Martin Heidegger, “Letter to Karl Löwith on his Philosophical Identity,” in Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of his Early Occasional Writings, 1910–1927, eds. Theodore Kiset and Thomas Sheehan, in The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy, volume IX, ed. Burt Hopkins and John Drummond (New York: Routledge, 2009), 108.

revealing of Being as whole, which is simultaneously the concealing of Being as a whole.

From the 1930s onward, Heidegger suspends his use of the term phenomenology to characterize his thinking until it resurfaces in the 1970s in terms of what he calls “a phenomenology of the inapparent.” One way to understand the change in Heidegger’s thinking from the 1920s to the 1930s is to suggest that he turns away from the discourse of phenomenology to a discourse of letting (lassen) – Seinlassen and Gelassenheit, for example, as we see above in “On the Essence of Truth.” But this is not at all the case; for, over a decade earlier in Basic Problems, we see that Heidegger had already embraced a discourse of

---


17 In The Fate of Phenomenology, McNeill calls this the “progressive view,” since it understands Heidegger’s path of thought as one of progress, along which he is taken to have “moved from one way of thinking, called phenomenology, to another way, that of letting be (Seinlassen), which perhaps at a certain point morphed into Gelassenheit” (42). In William J. Richardson’s Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), which has provided a paradigm for understanding the unity between the early and later Heidegger and “the ‘reversal’ (Kehre) which separates Heidegger I and II” (36n21), Richardson argues that “Heidegger’s perspective from beginning to end remains phenomenological” (627). According to Richardson, what “characterizes the decisive difference between the two periods” is not a shift from one way of thinking to another, but “the shift of focus from There-being to Being” (624). Following Richardson, Thomas Sheehan, in “What, after all, was Heidegger about?,” Continental Philosophy Review 47 (2014), also claims that “Heidegger remained a phenomenologist from beginning to end” (251); but, whereas Richardson takes this to mean that Heidegger was “concerned only with the process by which beings are lit up and reveal themselves as what they are for and to man” (627), Sheehan takes this to mean that Heidegger was concerned “exclusively about meaningfulness and its source” (251–252). In The Fate of Phenomenology, McNeill takes issue with the view that Heidegger’s thinking remained phenomenological from beginning to end, arguing that this view is “at best misleading, since it implies that there is a single sense of phenomenology that holds sway in Heidegger’s thought from beginning to end” (60n1), and, moreover, since it tends to “ignore the fact that the later thinking is for the most part no longer carried out in the name of phenomenology” (41). McNeill, however, also takes issue with “the progressive view,” arguing that although it is “not entirely wrong,” it is “reductive” and therefore “fundamentally misleading” (42). In McNeill’s view, the change in Heidegger’s thinking is thus surely a move beyond phenomenology, but it is not a move forward, but back – that is to say, not a turn to another way of thinking, but “a turning into and toward the issue or Sache of phenomenology” (58), which is simultaneously a “self-overcoming of phenomenology” (36). In this essay, I argue for a position on this issue that I take to align most with that of Thomas Sheehan.
letting. The task of phenomenology, says Heidegger in Basic Problems, is: the “letting-open-up [Offen-Lassen]” and “constantly-commencing-anew” of life's tendencies (GA58 25–26/21); life's “genuine letting-itself-be-built itself [echten Sichbauenlassens selbst]” (GA58 191/147); and life's “releasement of itself [ein sich Loslassen]” (GA58 263/198). The task of phenomenology as original science is life's letting of itself because as a way of participation it allows phenomenology, just like it does philosophical thinking in “On the Essence of Truth,” to be able to attend to the self-concealing nature of its subject matter; and, by using this middle voiced verb (lassen) to characterize the task of phenomenology, Heidegger is also able to indicate the self-revealing nature of its subject matter — namely, that life reveals itself to itself from itself and of its own accord, without any action on our part, despite the fact that it needs us in order to achieve this very “self-giving” (GA58 172/132). For life to participate in itself — for life to let itself be itself, in other words — is thus for life to participate in the revelation of itself to itself as a world, which is simultaneously the concealing of itself from itself in its Being as intentional openness itself.18

In Heidegger's work throughout the 1930s, he also characterizes the genuine task of philosophy as the bringing about of Dasein and the “there,” the site of Being's happening, often through a constellation of terms using some form of the word Sprung. In “Running Comments,” for example, Heidegger claims that Dasein “can be grounded only as something sprung open in the

18 In the winter semester lecture course of 1921–1922, Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research, Heidegger, drawing from the language of Saint Augustine's Confessions, signifies this revealing/concealing movement of life's intentional openness with the term “ruinance” (Ruinanz, derived from the Latin ruina); according to Heidegger in this lecture course, “ruinance” indicates that care is constituted by a dual movement of “relucence” (Reluzenz) and “prestruction” (Praestruktion) — the former, an intentional openness to the world; the latter, a securing that conceals that openness (see GA61 117–133/87–99). For studies on Heidegger's notion of ruinance, see: David C. Abergel, “The Confluence of Authenticity and Inauthenticity in Heidegger's Being and Time,” Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual 10 (2020): 74–110; Hans Ruin, “Thinking in Ruins: Life, Death, and Destruction in Heidegger's Early Writings,” Comparative and Continental Philosophy 41 (2012): 15–33; Scott M. Campbell, The Early Heidegger's Philosophy of Ruin: Facticity, Being, and Language (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 83–99. In Being and Time, this revealing/concealing movement is expressed in terms of projection and thrownness, on the one hand, and truth and untruth, on the other. As Heidegger claims in §44, the double meaning of care as a “thrown projection” constitutes the “existential-ontological condition” for the fact that “Dasein is equiprimordially both in the truth and in untruth” (SZ 223/BT 265) — truth in the sense of being “disclosed” (SZ 221/BT 263); untruth in the sense of being “closed off and covered up” (SZ 222/BT 265; see also SZ 256–257/BT 301). From the 1930s onward, this revealing/concealing is expressed in terms of the structure of aletheia.
leap-in [als im Einsprung Ersprungenes] (GA82 82). This is also a primary theme in Contributions, as we have seen, where Heidegger writes, “We never simply come across [Da-sein]; instead, we reach it only in a leap by leaping [erspringen im Einsprung] into the grounding of the openness of what is self-concealing” (GA65: 297/234; see also GA65, Part IV, titled “The Leap” (Der Sprung), 227–289/179–227). And, in addition to the above mentioned lassen-variations, Heidegger also describes the task of phenomenology in Basic Problems in precisely this manner, using a constellation of terms that utilize the word Sprung. The task of phenomenology as original science, writes Heidegger in 1919–1920, is: to research “life as arising [entspringend], as emerging out of an origin [aus einem Ursprung hervorgehend]” (GA58 81/65); to understand life “in the way of original science as arising from the origin [als aus dem Ursprung entspringend]” (GA58 82/65); “to genuinely apprehend life, the factical [life] in all its dimensions and diversities springing [entspringend] out of [the origin]” (GA58 173/133); to understand factical life as “originating” [entspringend] (GA58 174/133); to attain life’s “origin-understanding [Ursprung-Verstehens]” (GA58 239/181; 247/187). To be sure, “origin” in the sense used here in Basic Problems is neither an absolute beginning (GA58 4/4) nor an absolute principle (GA58 26/22), but life in its Being as intentional openness itself (self-sufficiency, care). As Heidegger writes, “life suffices for itself [...] thus it gives itself” (GA58 35/29).

5 Conclusion

In his famous 1962 letter to William J. Richardson, Heidegger acknowledges that there was “a change” (eine Wendung) in his thinking. However one comes to understand this change, it was the purpose of this paper to show that it would be inaccurate to suggest that the Heidegger of the 1930s moves away from phenomenology understood as a descriptive enterprise oriented toward givenness. For, however obliquely it was presented, for the young Heidegger of the 1920s Dasein was never something given, but always something that had to be enacted in a leap, and the task of phenomenology was never to describe Dasein, but always to bring about the site of Being’s happening (in the early 1920s – factical life; from the early-mid 1920s onward – Dasein; and, at some point in the 1930s – Da-sein), through a creative leap-in. In regard to the three

19 Richardson, Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought, xvi. The letter is included as the Preface to Richardson’s book.
deceptions at play in the misinterpretations of Being and Time that Heidegger enumerates in “Running Comments,” this paper has therefore shown that they should only be read as a self-critique to the extent that the Heidegger of 1936 thinks that he failed in Being and Time to properly convey what he genuinely intended. In other words, they should be understood as applying strictly to the misinterpretations of Being and Time put forth by Heidegger’s contemporaries, such as Nicolai Hartmann.20

20 My gratitude to all those cited without whom this project would not have been possible. Thanks also to Gregory Fried, Scott Campbell, Richard Polt, John Sallis, Daniela Vallega-Neu, Sebastian Luft, Pol Vandevelde, David Johnson, and Lucas Carroll for their helpful critical suggestions on earlier drafts of this essay.