Raising the Question of Being in Education by Way of Heidegger's Phenomenological Ontology

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Abstract

The aim of this essay is to explore how to raise the question of Being in education by way of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. Phenomenological ontology is a way of approaching and conducting philosophy exemplified in Heidegger's Being and Time. *To prepare the way for raising the question of Being in education, a nuanced understanding of Heidegger's phenomenological analyses on truth and language is summarized. Thereafter, the manner in which Being is referenced is analyzed before considering the way of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. In conclusion, existing attempts and continuing efforts to explore the question of Being in education through phenomenological ontology are outlined. At a time when decontextualized and reductive ways of knowing and being are becoming the norm within education, phenomenological ontology offers new possibilities for scholarship and practice. The present inquiry does not offer solutions in the traditional sense, but rather traces a path that opens and keeps in tension the question of Being in education in order to support further study.*

Introduction and the Scope of the Inquiry

At a time when decontextualized and reductive ways of knowing and being are becoming the norm within education, phenomenological ontology can offer new possibilities for scholarship and practice (Kruger-Ross, 2014; Magrini, 2014). As exemplified in the work of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, phenomenological ontology is a way of approaching and conducting philosophy. While phenomenological ontology as a way of doing philosophy may be best illustrated in Heidegger's magnum opus *Being and Time* (1927/1996), Heidegger was also renowned for his commanding presence as a teacher and public speaker. Students and auditors of his lectures have described Heidegger's presence as "nothing short of electrifying" (Polt, 1999, p. 19) as he guided his listeners through his analyses into the being of the phenomenon in question. Much of what is commonly known about his teaching persona is provided through student accounts, including those of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Karl Löwith, Walter Biemel, and Hannah Arendt. A common pedagogical strategy Heidegger used in his teaching was approaching and laying out his thesis by taking the title of the announced lecture or course, sometimes word-by-word, and completely transforming the common sense meaning to reveal another facet of his "thinking of Being"[1]. In this way, the lecture title became not a description or representation of the work to follow, but rather the source and guideline for the entire inquiry. The present study will follow Heidegger's approach, albeit with much less skill and care than a lecture given by Heidegger.

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[1] "In distinction from mastering beings, the thinking of thinkers is the *thinking of Being*." (Heidegger, 1942-43/1992, p. 7)

Even though we will not be this dramatic or as clever, the title is accurate in laying out the trajectory of the inquiry. The aim of what follows is to explore how to raise the question of Being in education by way of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. We begin with grounding a more nuanced understanding of language in preparation for raising the question. Thereafter, the manner in which Being is referenced is analyzed before we turn to considering the way of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. Finally, we will consider both existing attempts and continuing efforts to find the way of phenomenological ontology into the question of Being in education.

Raising the Question

"Raising" the question is oddly worded. Why not simply state the proposition matter-of-factly: *asking* the question? Asking means something other than what is denoted by the word *raising*. To raise the question elevates its importance and is more meaning-laden than to ask the question. To raise the question incorporates the asking, but also takes a step back and charges the inquirer to carefully and reflectively consider the manner by which the question is approached. This distinction reminds the inquirer that, to engage faithfully with Heidegger's thinking, the importance he placed on challenging the traditional understandings of (1) truth and (2) language must be acknowledged. Therefore, in this section the question will be raised by considering Heidegger's thinking on truth as *aletheia* and on the nature of language.

Obviously, a complete summary and treatment of Heidegger's thinking on truth and language is not possible here. However, there are insights in this arena of his thinking that, were they not discussed, would diminish the accomplishment of the present inquiry. Heidegger's approach to truth and language respectively not only counters traditional under-standings of these philosophical topics, but is also interwoven with his phenomenological ontology into the meaning of Being. As Nicholson (2015) notes, for Heidegger truth is understood as a phenomenon, and therefore worthy of phenomenological inquiry. Therefore, we will begin with Heidegger's thinking on truth before turning to his reflections on language.

In "On the Essence of Truth", Heidegger (1930/1949) conducts a phenomeno-ontological destruction of the representationalist theory of truth that constitutes the foundation of the history of philosophy, logic and metaphysics. This destruction, as Thomson (2005) notes, is pursued not in the spirit of the critic or nihilist, but rather in an attempt to uncover and analyze the concept or idea in question. The repre-sentationalist approach, or correspondence theory, has been understood as commonsensical for so long that it is often considered illogical to question it. Put simply,

a propositional statement is uttered that, should it be considered "true", marks an adequate representation of a state of affairs. "The pen is on the table" is a true statement once it is confirmed that the pen referred to is indeed on the table. Put differently, if a statement corresponds to the way things are at a given moment, then that statement is evaluated as being true. The representationalist or correspondence theory of truth then informs the foundational structure of language and grounds human beings' ability to communicate. An example from the classroom is easy to name: consider the common assessment tool of the "True or False" examination question.

Through his analysis of the essence of truth, Heidegger uncovers a more primordial, to use his language, meaning of truth in the Greek word *aletheia*. *Aletheia*, translated as unconcealment, is best grasped as the interplay between the revealing and concealing of a being or entity. For Heidegger, the representationalist/correspondence approach is only partially correct. When we grasp truth as what is revealed or unconcealed (as represented), we are only half correct, because we must also, in order to honour truth as *aletheia*, consider what remains concealed or hidden. Heidegger uncovers additional insights such as untruth that, while remarkable and insightful, must be left unaddressed. Grasping truth as *aletheia*, while a fruitful ground for further thinking, complicates communication and traditional understandings of language – especially communicating about Being.

Even prior to the 1930 lecture on truth, Heidegger can be seen struggling to communicate his inquiries into Being from the very first lecture courses of 1919–1920. Heidegger is often criticised for his obtuse writing and his incorporation of unusual uses of language in his lectures and speeches. While this criticism is to some extent justified, throughout his life Heidegger was attempting to put into language a new and radically different thinking of Being, using a language that limited his ability to do so at every turn. How does one convey insights about the being of beings when the very language used reduces such insights almost instantaneously to a representational, or being as a being, understanding? In *History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger (1925/1985) states: "If we are forced here to introduce ponderous and perhaps inelegant expressions, it is not a matter of personal whim or a special fancy for my own terminology, but the compulsion of the phenomena themselves" (p. 151). The phenomenon in question is the meaning or truth of Being.

Heidegger's later inquiries into language are a more focused exposition of his attempts to language his thinking. Through his encounters with the early Greek thinkers and the German poet Hölderlin, to name only two examples, Heidegger became convinced that the

poetic use of language best exemplified the essence of language, and possibly Being. The interplay between unconcealing/concealing of truth as *aletheia*, along with the challenge of shaking off the metaphysical baggage of representationalist language, became a lifelong journey for Heidegger, one that never came to rest. With the challenges of using representational language briefly sketched, we turn to the phenomenon in question: the question of Being in education.

Of Being in Education

The question of Being in education gives pause for thought. Not only is the wording strange (for what is a "question of Being"?), but the meaning of "Being" and "in education" is unclear and unspecific. "What does it mean to be in education?" is one possible interpretation of the question that, while pointing in the right direction, does not fully grasp the question of Being as such. However, odd wording and lack of clarity aside, the gist of the pause inspired by the question is not easily summarized, nor is it easy to grasp and bind. Heidegger writes in *Being and Time* that the phenomenon of Being is that which is closest to and yet also farthest away from human beings (1927/1996, p. 13).

To begin, we must first distinguish how the word Being is referenced in this essay. The entire argument of what follows collapses without at least a sketch of the phenomenon in question. Distinguishing the phenomenological ontology of Martin Heidegger is, interestingly, somewhat easier to grasp than "raising the question of Being in education". For not only is grasping an understanding of the manner in which the term Being is here being used necessary before a fuller treatment of Heidegger and phenomenological ontology, but we will encounter the phenomenological ontology of Heidegger along the way as we gain further clarity as to what raising the question of Being in education implies.

Distinguishing the ways that Being can be defined and used for analysis in raising the question of Being is the most crucial ground from which to start. Heidegger's "one thought" throughout his career was the meaning of Being. While he used other words and phrases throughout his lifetime, including *das Ereignis*, *aletheia*, and *die Lichtung*, each is but another approach to the same phenomenon of Being (Capobianco, 2010). This much is generally accepted by Heideggerian scholars, with Thomas Sheehan (2001; 2014) and Kenneth Maly (1993) offering compelling arguments to the contrary. However, what are not as well understood are the different senses of Being that Heidegger used to guide his analysis. This is due in part to a difficulty in translating from German into English the nuanced manner in which Heidegger attempted to communicate his thinking of

Being. Capobianco (2010) points out that Heidegger's own fuzzy and inconsistent use of language also complicates an adequate grasping of the sense in which he approaches the question of Being. Two other difficulties that lie at the core of his thinking, truth and language, were discussed above. But first we must gain clarity on what sense of Being is in question at present.

The Whatness and Thatness of Being

The first and easiest access to Being is the traditional sense: by understanding being as *a* being or an entity. Within educational practice and scholarship this understanding of being is readily accessible. Both practitioners and scholars can easily list beings necessary in the practice and study of education, including students, teachers, subject matter, learning objectives, grades, desks, computers, and so forth. Put differently, this sense of being is concerned with the *what* of a particular being or entity. While this is the common sense view of being, this view assumes an understanding of Being as what is present and lasting, or enduring. Understanding Being as a being cannot be the way to understand Being in the present inquiry, given that almost all research and thinking into education assumes this definition of Being.

If the traditional understanding of Being inheres in the concrete grasping of Being as a particular being, then the second and related sense is more abstract. This manner of approaching being is typically described as the being of a being, such as the being of a student or the being of a subject matter. This mode of under-standing being is also described as the being-ness of beings, or a being's essential presence or essence. Whereas understanding being as a being or entity focuses on the *what* of a being, understanding being as the being of a being aims for *that* a being is in such or such a way. Even as this second manner of approaching Being becomes more difficult to grasp in language, it is of direct concern for the present inquiry into raising the question of Being in education.

For example, put in another way, questioning about the Being of teaching can to some extent be captured in the questions: "What does it mean to be a teacher?" and "Who and how is the being that teaches?" When asked, this type of question is usually addressed within the mode of understanding being as *a being* rather than *the being of being*. This can be explained by the limits of the human ability to use language to distinguish the manner of this questioning. Regard-less, for Heidegger, these two senses of being, as an entity of enduring presence and as the being-ness of being, represent the core concern of metaphysics. However, Heidegger's thinking of Being is altogether different from metaphysics as traditionally under-

stood, and it is in this sense that the term Being is used in this inquiry into Being in education.

The Ur-Phenomenon of Being

Richard Polt selects the question "Why is there something rather than nothing?" as the key to unlocking Heidegger's thinking of Being. This question comes at the conclusion of Heidegger's 1929 inaugural lecture at the University of Freiburg entitled "What is Metaphysics?" and begins the 1935 lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Polt (1999) clarifies the thrust of Heidegger's fundamentally transformed understanding of Being:

> [W]hat is it about *our* condition that lets Being have a meaning for us? In other words, why does it make a difference to *us* that there is something rather than nothing? This is a crucial question about ourselves – for if we were indifferent to the difference between something and nothing, we would be sunk in oblivion. We constantly distinguish between something and nothing, by recognizing countless things as real while rejecting falsehoods and illusions. The process is at work not only in philosophy, but in the simplest everyday tasks: I recognize a pitcher as a being simply by reaching for its handle. It is clear that without our sensitivity to Being, we would not be human at all. Even for the most apathetic or shell-shocked individual, Being means something – although it is hard to put this meaning into words.

> We are now travelling the path of Heidegger's thought. For Heidegger, these three questions belong together in such a way that they can be called *the* question of Being: he wants to notice the wonder that there is something rather than nothing, to ask what difference this makes, and to ask how it can make a difference to us. (p. 4)

Heidegger argues that metaphysics assumes and examines the difference between beings and their being, or remains locked in a dialogue concerned with entities and their essences. Heidegger's own thinking, however, attempts to retrieve a more originary conception of Being that reveals and reflects on the ontological difference between Being (with a capital B) and being. This understanding is written *Being as Being* (and with the capital B at present) in order to distinguish it from *being as an entity* or *the being-ness of a being* that marks the assumptions of metaphysical thinking. The ontological difference is described by Heidegger (1927/1996) in *Being and Time* as the difference between the ontic (beings; beings in their beingness) and the ontological (Being

as Being). However, "The Being of beings 'is' not itself a being" (1927/1996, p. 26) and the ontological difference can best be understood as the difference this claim makes to us as human beings.

The ontological difference is often reflected in terminology, such as the difference between beings and Being, or between the ontic and the ontological. While the ontological difference was pre-eminent in Heidegger's thought in lecture courses and writings from the 1920s, this key distinction, in allowing for catching sight of Being, remains a feature of his thought for the remainder of his career (see Harman, 2007, pp. 45-48). It is our being so wrapped up in our own existence that makes the idea or thinking of Being – much less the asking of the question of Being – so tricky and arduous. No wonder that Heidegger describes Being as that which is closest yet farthest away (1927/1996, p. 13). For example, a building is a being, but the Being of the building is itself not a being. How then do we gain access to Being? Heidegger suggests that one clue might be through the sense of smell:

> One can, as it were, smell the Being of such buildings, and often after decades one still has the scent in one's nose. The scent provides the Being of this being much more directly and truly than it could be communicated by any description or inspection. (1935/ 2014, p. 26)

School buildings, hallways and classrooms are said to have their own specific smells about them. Upon arrival, a quick inhale can transport one back in time. The question of Being in education, as Heidegger intimates, may be more about the nose than the roles human beings embody.

In Education

Given that the nature and focus of education has been left both undefined and unspecified (as opposed to, for example, vocational education, K-12 education or higher education), education can be conceived of in the broadest terms possible as a human capacity and endeavour. Education, as a process of teaching and learning in formal and informal settings, is a thriving area of scholarship and philosophical study. However, it can benefit profoundly from more extensive analysis via phenomenological ontology. Specifically, answering the question of Being in education requires Heidegger's phenomenological ontology.

Why raise the question of Being in education at all? In addition to James Magrini's (2014) call for greater thought regarding the dominance of social efficiency and instrumentalism in education, the philosopher of education Michael Peters (2005; 2009) has argued for

bringing Heidegger into greater dialogue within the field of philosophy of education. Peters (2009) contends that: "Heidegger and his forms of phenomenology have been a neglected figure in the field of philosophy of education in the English speaking world. … [A] convincing argument can be made for the centrality of his philosophy to education" (pp. 1-2). Considering Heidegger not only as a philosopher, but also as a teacher, is worthy of reflection, given that "[n]o philosopher since Socrates was so committed to questions of education and to good teaching as Heidegger" (Peters, 2009, p. 3). Donald Vandenberg, an early advocate for the intersection of Heidegger's thinking and educational scholarship and practice, asks a poignant question in arguing for the thinking of Being in education:

> How can Heidegger's analysis of human existence as being there, as Dasein, as articulated in his magnum opus, help us to understand the educational journey of becoming who one can become, oneself, as distinct from becoming what other people want one to be, rather than who one is? (2008, p. 261)

Approaching the answer to Vandenberg's question requires a turn to the way of Heidegger's thinking: phenomenological ontology.

By Way Of

Ways or paths are important in Heidegger's thinking; so important that he urged readers in the draft preface to his *Gesamtausgabe* [Collected Works] to consider his published writings as "ways, not works":

> The collected edition should indicate various ways: it is underway in the field of paths of the self-transforming asking of the many-sided question of Being … . The point is to awaken the confrontation about the question concerning the topic of thinking … and not to communicate the opinion of the author, and not to characterize the standpoint of the writer, and not to fit into the series of other historically determinable philosophical stand-points. Of course, such a thing is always possible, especially in the information age, but for preparing the questioning access to the topic of thinking, it is completely useless. (GA1, pp. 437-438; in Polt, 1999, p. 116)

While the later Heidegger focused on analyzing the historicity of Being in relationship to, for example, art, technology, and poetry, in the first part of his life he was quick to name his way toward the question of Being: phenomenology. Even in his later teachings, he remained faithful to the manner of phenomenological

inquiry. For example, in the Le Thor and Zähringen seminars that took place during the last decade of his life, Heidegger (1966-73/2012) continues to name his approach phenomenology even while simultaneously continuing to push the boundaries of metaphysical language:

> I name the thinking here in question tautological thinking. It is the primordial sense of phenomenology. Further, this kind of thinking is before any possible distinction between theory and praxis. To understand this we need to learn to distinguish between "path" and "method". In philosophy, there are only paths; in the sciences, on the contrary, there are only methods, that is, modes of procedure. (p. 80)

Methodology, as it is traditionally understood, is best grasped within Heidegger's thinking as a *way*. The word "way" must be heard as addressing not only a *what* but, even more importantly, a *how* of doing philosophy. For Heidegger, phenomenological onto-logy is the pathway to the meaning of the question of Being, not in a prescriptive sense but in an attuned and receptive manner. In the following section, the relationship between ontology, phenomenology and Heidegger's phenomenological ontology is addressed.

Heidegger's Phenomenological Ontology

With the question of Being as our focus, we are already within the realm of ontology. Ontology is the philosophical domain and distinction that denotes the study of reality, of all that is. Specifically, and in a Heideggerian sense, ontology is often referred to as the science or study of being as such and in general. Where ontology stands within Heidegger's thinking as a whole is complicated by his struggle to name and provoke the fundamental matter for thinking, the question of Being. As Heidegger's thinking matured, he came to consider ontology as in the service of metaphysics, and metaphysics as the ultimate realm of philosophy and philosophizing. If ontology refers to the study of Being and beings in the sense framed by traditional metaphysics as being and their being-ness, then Heidegger would not accept the use of this term. But if ontology were to point to thinking of Being as Being, Heidegger would concur. But how to approach the question of Being? For Heidegger, onto-logy was rightly understood as accessible only via phenomenology (1927/1996, p. 31).

Traditionally understood, phenomenology is the study of the lived experience of human beings. For Edmund Husserl, Heidegger's teacher and mentor, the founda-tion of phenomenological study was consciousness, as is evidenced in the epistemological method of the epoché. This was troubling for Heidegger, because

Being was, via Husserl's methodological bracketing, presupposed. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1927/1996) transformed Husserl's transcendental phenomenology into phenomenological ontology, or the phenomenological inquiry into the question of the meaning of Being. In his early to mid-career, roughly from 1920 through the mid-1930s, Heidegger referred to his methodological approach to philosophical inquiry as fundamental ontology, but this naming was simply another way of saying phenomenological ontology. In addition to *Being and Time*, two lecture courses, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1927/1982) and *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (1928/1984), offer Heidegger's own description of his way into the question of Being. These lecture courses are critical for understanding phenomenological ontology, as they directly followed the publication of *Being and Time*, wherein Heidegger demonstrated the carrying out of a fundamental ontology into the being of Dasein.

Heidegger's phenomenological ontology seeks to ground and understand phenomena not only as they appear and are constituted in lived experience, but also as the phenomena are experienced contextually, temporally and historically via Dasein. Van Manen (1990) describes Dasein as "a Heideggerian term which refers to that entity or aspect of our humanness which is capable of wondering about its own existence and inquiring into its own Being" (p. 176). Some scholars recommend substituting "human being" for Dasein, but this could be misleading, as Heidegger uses the term to denote much more. For this reason, Dasein is almost always left untranslated in English translations of Heidegger's thinking. Specifically, Dasein is the root of phenomenological ontology.

Dasein literally translated means being-there or there-being (*Da* - there/here, *sein* - being). As Dasein, we are there-being because we are as we are and where we are. Dasein is thus only Dasein insofar as it is connected with its there, or its world. Heidegger's use of the word Dasein at once brings human beings to account for themselves as beings while yet not transforming Dasein into a super-category of Being. Dasein is us in our everydayness. Heidegger (1927/1996) writes:

> Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of its possibility to be itself or not be itself. Dasein has either chosen these possibilities itself, stumbled upon them, or in each instance already grown up in them. Existence is decided only by each Dasein itself in the manner of seizing upon or neglecting such possibilities. We come to terms with the question of existence always only through existence itself. (p. 10)

This everydayness of Dasein's existence Heidegger uses to build his existential analysis in *Being and Time*, and, ultimately, to prepare his reader for the raising of the question of the meaning of Being. Dasein is not, however, another thing or object "out there" in the world. As Kisiel (2002) comments:

> Contrary to the usual categories, the very term Da-sein does not express a what but a way to be (*Weise zu sein*), and so all further investigation of it is aimed at explicating its specific ways to be (later called the existentials by Heidegger): to be in the world, to be authentically or inauthentically, to be toward death, etc., with a decided penchant toward prepositional phrases and adverbs serving to qualify the verbal "to be". As the investigation proceeds, Heidegger at times even expresses an aversion to referring to Dasein as an entity, a term which traditionally in our vocabulary and grammar is fraught with the connotations of the substantiality of a thing. The "I" of Dasein is not a thing but a way to be, not a what but a who, with its connotations of orientation to a unique situation. (p. 54)

Kisiel's commentary is critical not only for grasping the meaning of Heidegger's Dasein, but also for expanding the traditional or common sense understandings of being we encountered above.

The 1927 lecture course, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, has come to be widely regarded as the unpublished third section of *Being and Time*, and includes an account of Kant's theses on being and the Aristotelian concept of time and temporality. Included in the preparatory notes and course overview, however, is a particularly coherent review of the character of phenomenological ontology (1927/1982, pp. 19-23). In his "Translator's Introduction", Albert Hofstadter notes:

> Heidegger conceived of phenomenology in a way that departed from the Husserlian mode of analysis of consciousness. Phenomenology became for him the *method* of philosophy understood as ontology. All the propositions of ontology are, in his view, a priori, having to do with being rather than beings; for being must be understood prior to all encounter with and understanding of beings. Heidegger connects this doctrine of the apriority of philosophy with a unique conception of the manner in which time functions as the source of the a priori. Phenomenology, which looks to "the things themselves", without theoretical preconceptions, and wills only to unveil beings and being in their evident truth, is of

necessity the method which philosophy as thus conceived will employ. (1982, p. xvii)

Phenomenology, rightly understood by Heidegger as the method of ontology, comprises three movements: the phenomenological reduction, construction, and destruction. Ontology must always begin with a being – but Heidegger (1927/1982) emphasizes that "Being is always being of beings":

Apprehension of being, ontological investigation, always turns, at first and necessarily, to some being; but then, *in a precise way, it is led away from that being and led back to its being*. We call this basic component of phenomenological method – the leading back or re-duction of investigative vision from a naively apprehended being to being – phenomenological reduction. (p. 21)

Here Heidegger deliberately incorporates and transforms the Husserlian phenomenological reduction as the foundation of phenomenological ontology. Once the being of being has been understood through the reduction, phenomenological construction offers guidance in approaching Being. "Being does not become accessible like a being. We do not simply find it in front of us … it must always be brought to view in a free projection" (1927/1982, pp. 21-22). If phenomenological reduction leads the inquiry away from a being such that its being can be apprehended, the construction is the glimpse or flash of Being and its structures as one is drawn back toward the being.

The final component in this triadic approach is phenomenological destruction, "a critical process in which the traditional concepts, which at first must be necessarily employed, are de-constructed down to the sources from which they were drawn" (1927/1982, p. 23). Because ontology is always a study of the being of some being, and specifically (for Heidegger) the being of Dasein as that being for whom Being matters, ontology must be understood within its historical and temporal contexts. As such, Being itself is always historically and temporally situated, and only via the phenomenological destruction "can ontology fully assure itself in a phenomenological way of the genuine character of its concepts" (p. 23). Van Manen (1990) writes of the need for destruction when he notes that "the problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much (p. 46).

Heidegger also describes his phenomenological approach in *Being and Time* (§7, specifically) as an interpretative method. After deconstructing phenomenology into its components (phenomenon and logos), Heidegger circles back to redefine and situate phenomenology as hermeneutics. He acknowledges the interpretative thrust of his phenomenological descriptions as a feature of logos, or of "letting something be seen as something" as in an apophantic saying. Heidegger is here contextualizing the three movements in his phenomenology – reduction, construction, and destruction – as interpretative movements, a way that allows for entities to show themselves as themselves. This radicalization transforms not only Husserl's phenomenological method, but also the traditional discipline of hermeneutics.

With his transforming of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology of consciousness into an interpretative inquiry into the ontological foundations of Western metaphysics, Heidegger launched an entire movement in philosophical thought that has made him the most influential philosopher of the 20th century. Almost all of the prominent French and German philosophers from the past four to five decades – including Jurgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze – have acknowledged the influence of Heidegger's thought on their own work. While phenomenology as traditionally understood can approach and describe the lived experience of human beings, it is by way of phenomenological ontology that Being is allowed to, in Heideggerian terms, show itself in itself. In the following section, existing approaches at the intersection of the question of Being in education and phenomenological ontology are explored.

Existing Approaches

Despite early attempts to bring phenomenological ontology into direct conversation with educational studies and philosophy of education (Denton, 1974; Vandenberg, 1982; 1997) interest is only now taking hold. Gloria Dall'Alba's (2009) *Exploring Education through Phenomenology* – which comprises papers drawn from those presented at the symposium on phenomenology in education Dall'Alba convened at the European Conference on Educational Research held in Geneva in 2006, as well as those reviewed for publication in a special edition of *Educational Philosophy and Theory* (February, 2009) – showcases a diverse range of phenomenologically-grounded approaches to studying educational phenomena. However, only two of these specifically utilize Heidegger's phenomenological ontology to address educational practice. The remaining authors conduct their inquiries by way of the traditional transcendental phenomenology.

Scholarly exploration of Heidegger's pedagogy is becoming more common within Heideggerian studies (Ehrmantraut, 2010) and philosophy of education (Riley, 2011). Donald Vandenberg, a lifelong scholar of Heidegger, Being, and education, wrote an article

entitled "A Guide to Educational Philosophizing after Heidegger" (2008) that traced his own work and that of others in bringing Heidegger's thought to bear in the areas of philosophy and phenomenology of education (see the articles by Bingham, Peterson, Ream & Ream, and Waddington which appeared in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 37(4), 2005). While rather tersely composed, Vandenberg also criticizes four articles published within the field of philosophy of education that, directly and indirectly, take up Heidegger's phenomenological philosophy. Vandenberg's primary cause of complaint is twofold: (1) ignorance of existing work in the phenomenology of education inspired by Heidegger, and (2) lack of a genuine understanding of Heidegger's thinking. Vandenberg's account points to a lack of coherence of phenomenological thinking within philosophy of education, as well as the absence of a predominant perspective on Heidegger's thinking in the study of education and philosophy.

In an attempt to collect and retell the history of phenomenology and existentialism in educational philosophy, Magrini recently published a book-length study on ontology, phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics in education (2014). This study is in addition to, and the culmination of, a number of shorter works on the same subject (e.g., Magrini, 2011; 2012; 2013a; 2013b). The intent of Magrini's scholarship is to "contribute to envisioning a model of curriculum and education that is, in the first instance, ontological in nature" (2014, p. 2). This approach, he argues, would counter "the impoverished ontological state of contemporary standardized education (*social efficiency*), outlining the potential devastating effects of the learning sciences on the Being of both educators and students, on *phenomenological self-hood*" (2013b, p. 1). In respect of phenomenological ontology, Magrini works towards bringing together Heidegger's fundamental ontology of Dasein from *Being and Time* and the "human science research" of van Manen. He asserts that, "Unlike Husserl ... I am unconcerned with the transcendental consciousness and the intentional structures that constitute the subject's cognitive experience" (2014, p. 2). Magrini (2011/2012a) enters into dialogue with the field of curriculum studies (e.g., Aoki, 2005; Pinar, 2013) via Huebner's (1974; 1999) insights into Heidegger and phenomenology. He further offers many "ontological footholds" (Heidegger, 1927/1996, p 59) on being educated, ontological learning, and phenomenological selfhood. These are but a few insights to be gained from Magrini's attempts to ground education as an ontological experience.

Outside of philosophy of education, Heideggerian scholars, in exploring questions related to education, turn to the work of Iain Thomson (2001; 2004; 2005). Thomson, who studied under the noted American philosopher Hubert Dreyfus, argues that Heidegger's philosophy needs to be read and understood as an ontotheological approach rather than simply as an ontological-phenomenological destruction of Western metaphysics. While being somewhat at odds with current perspectives on Heidegger's work, Thomson claims that, by approaching Heidegger's thinking as ontotheology, Heidegger's insights into education, technology and politics can be more profoundly understood. More especially, Thomson demonstrates that there exists a continuous thread through Heidegger's lifetime of thinking that calls for an "ontologization" of education (2004; 2005).

The research currently underway at the intersection of phenomenological ontology and education is, in general, promising. This section has focused briefly on recent scholarship occurring at this crossroads between teaching, learning, and philosophical inquiry. Specifically, Thomson (2005) and Magrini (2014) offer particularly interesting trajectories of inquiry into the question of Being in education that honour the ontological thrust of Heideggerian phenomeno-logical ontology. However, this scholarship remains focussed on Heidegger's thinking of Being in relation to education, while not more particularly engaging in phenomenological ontology into the lived experiences of those phenomena that constitute the teaching-learning context. In short, while the work of Thomson (2005) and Magrini (2014) is critical to approaching the question of Being in education, neither takes the crucial next step: thinking the Being of education by way of phenomenological ontology. The final section of this essay indicates those who have walked the way of phenomenological ontology, and offers concluding thoughts.

Continuing Efforts and Concluding Thoughts

Being and Time, Heidegger's magnum opus, and the first text to engage in the philosophical manner that we have been referencing as phenomenological ontology, remained unfinished. At present, scholars are still unsure of how to characterize this attempt to inquire into the meaning of the meaning of Being. Was Heidegger's project a failure? Can we identify the missing half of *Being and Time* in his other published writings and courses? What are we to make of the text in relation to the whole of Heidegger's thinking? It seems to me that those who come to Heidegger's thinking looking for firm and direct answers to questions are misguided and do not fully grasp the thrust of his lifelong project. Returning to Heidegger's comments, just days before his death, in the proposed preface to the *Gesamtausgabe* – "The point is to awaken the confrontation about the question concerning the topic of thinking" (quoted in Polt, 1999, p. 116). I argue that this is fundamental to Heidegger's thinking, that we engage in holding open

the questions such that in this tension the questions remain as questions before collapsing into answers. In this way, it will be phenomenological ontology that supports us as we get "underway in the field of paths of the self-transforming asking of the many-sided question of Being" (ibid.).

Thomson's (2005; Thomas & Thomson, 2015) high-lighting of Heidegger's vision for an ontologization of education is inspiring. One can find, in between Thomson's analysis of Heidegger's thinking about education, hints and indications toward educational phenomena that have been or could be thought by way of phenomenological ontology. In these glimpses, Thomson's scholarship honours van Manen's (2014) argument that phenomenology should be regarded more as a way of questioning than of answering. This observation is telling, given the shift in van Manen's approach from a more representational perspective (1990) to a focus on the phenomenology of practice (2014). New possibilities for inquiry and practice become available when teaching and learning are approached as they are experienced in the everyday lives of human beings. My own work endeavours to think the fundamental Heideggerian distinctions of world, attunement, and Enframing in the manner of phenomenological ontology such that the everyday practice of teaching is foregrounded (see Kruger-Ross, 2013; 2014; in press).

In one of Heidegger's (1945/2002) most accessible reflections on his pedagogical stance as a teacher of philosophy, he engages in a damning critique of the influence of theoretical abstraction on the teacher-student relation. This "contractualizing of pedagogy" (p. 39) comes about as a result of an over-reliance on theory within the university. However, Heidegger does not offer practice or even praxis as a resolution to the challenges inherent in theoretical reflection. His point, as is so often the case, is to bring the situation to our attention and to do so in a questioning manner. This manner is the way of phenomenological onto-logy – a way to raising the question of Being in education.

Referencing Format

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