Course Outline

Part 2 - Reason in Heidegger:
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Heidegger is often taken to be utterly hostile to the claims of reason. In one place he calls reason "the most stiff-necked adversary of thought," and in many places he seems to want to displace logic as the rule of thinking. He identifies *ratio* with calculative thought – that is, with technology and the metaphysical tradition that supposedly consists in the "oblivion" of the question of being – and he seems to abandon anything like Husserl's idea that philosophy can be "scientific," that is, consist of statements that can be grounded in reasons and criticized on the basis of the strength of those reasons. Hence his philosophy has been branded (by its foes) as nihilistic, irrationalist, and mystical, and (by its defenders) as something "more rigorous than the conceptual," a thinking that has "overcome" the narrow confines of reasoning and argument. It will be the purpose of this Seminar to challenge both these readings by exploring the problem of reason from a point of view very different from that adopted by Heidegger's critics and defenders alike. We shall examine Heidegger's project of "fundamental ontology" (primarily in the text of *Being and Time*, but also in related works from that period) as an inquiry into the *sources of normativity*, and so into the existential basis for the *scope and authority of reason*. In so doing we shall not challenge the view that Heidegger displaces logic from its privileged position in Western philosophy, but we will show that the concept of reason as *reason giving* – that is, as the practice of providing justification for our beliefs and actions within the dialogical situation of being-with-others – is found at the very core of Heidegger's concept of "authentic" existence. We shall thereby construct an answer to those who, like Ernst Tugendhat, claim that Heidegger's philosophy is "an attempt to banish reason from human existence, particularly from the relation of oneself to oneself."

The Seminar will proceed in four sessions. In the first we shall briefly look at Heidegger's work prior to *Being and Time*, where he both drew upon, and criticized, the neo-Kantian attempt to link reason (logic) to the form of judgment and assertion through a theory of meaning and validity (*Geltung*). This early work is important because it demonstrates Heidegger's commitment, very early on, to approaching the "meaning of meaning" by focusing on its *normative* element as opposed to any naturalistic, psychologistic, or grammatical explanation. Heidegger signals this by identifying meaning with Aristotle's *on hos alethes*("being in the sense of truth"). Following this thread, we shall look at Heidegger's criticism, in *Being and Time* and other works, of this early tendency to identify the normative element of meaning with judgment, assertion, and logical form. In so doing, we can see how this normative moment comes to define the "ontological difference" between being and beings, thus providing support for Heidegger's attempt to dig below Husserl's account of "intentional content" to that "primal transcendence" from which meaning (as the *understanding* of being) arises. This brings us to the second session of the Seminar, which explores primal transcendence as "everyday Dasein." The self-understanding that belongs to Dasein's exercise of its skills and abilities in social roles and practices (in which things can show up *meaningfully*, "as" the things they are) is necessarily responsive to the public norms that constitute such practices. But though everyday Dasein must act *in accord* with norms,

it need not act *in light* of them *as* norms. Existence is thus not adequately distinguished from causal functioning or animal instinct. Critics of Heidegger have often seized upon these chapters – concerning the "worldhood of the world" and "the They [*das Man*]" – as demonstrating that Heidegger believes that all norms are conventional and all reasoning inauthentic. The task of the third session of the Seminar is to undermine that view by showing how the project of reason-giving is a *necessary condition* of selfhood and is *entailed* in any other "project" that authentic Dasein may take up. Through a reading of the chapters of *Being and Time* that outline the breakdown of everyday "practical identity" – chapters on anxiety, death, and conscience – we shall see how the kind of normativity present in everyday practices depends upon Dasein's being *responsive to norms as norms*, and so its ability to consider its "factic" grounds in light of considerations of better and worse, i.e., as potential *justifying reasons* for its beliefs and actions (choices). Thus Heidegger does not offer us a prescriptive moral theory or "criterion" for making "rational" choices, but he does show what ontological constitution an entity must have if it is to be *able* to dwell in a "world" (space of meaning) and why such an entity *must* engage in the game of giving and asking for reasons. In the fourth session of the Seminar we shall explore what this means and briefly suggest how, even in Heidegger's later works on language and poetry, the same structure – the same identification of meaning with normativity and the same idea that existence is the site where responsiveness to the normative (the "good") as such is translated into a kind of justificatory "saying" – can be found.