

# Communication or Confrontation – Heidegger and Philosophical Method

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## Abstract

*In this essay, we consider the philosophical method of reading and writing, of communication. Normally, we interpret the works of the great philosophers and explain them in papers and presentations. The thinking of Martin Heidegger has given us an indication of an entirely different method of philosophical thinking. In the 1930s, he gave a series of lectures on Nietzsche. In them, he calls his own way of reading and writing a confrontation (Auseinandersetzung) with Nietzsche. We consider the specific character of confrontation, and in what ways it is different from communication. First, we develop an answer to the question of how Heidegger reads Nietzsche. Does he give a charitable or a violent interpretation of Nietzsche and, if neither, how can his confrontation with Nietzsche be characterized? With this, we obtain an indication of the way we have to read Heidegger, indeed, of philosophical reading and writing as such.*

## Keywords

communication  
Heidegger  
Nietzsche  
philosophical method  
Will

## Introduction

In *Also sprach Zarathustra* Nietzsche writes:

Wille zur Wahrheit heißt ihr's, ihr Weisesten, was euch treibt und brünstig macht? Wille zur Denkbarkeit alles Seienden: also heiße *ich* euren Willen! Alles Seiende wollt ihr erst denkbar *machen*: denn ihr zweifelt mit gutem Mißtrauen, ob es schon denkbar ist.

(KSA 4: 146)

When we 'read' this statement of Nietzsche, then it refers back to our own way of 'reading' it. How do we read Nietzsche and in what way is the will to truth at work in *our* way of reading and thinking?

We 'interpret' the text of Nietzsche and 'communicate' it in a lecture or article. Every communicative interpretation is already surrounded by the *Wille zur Denkbarkeit*, as far as the text is represented for thought. Representation anticipates the representability of the text, which means that the primary unity of interpretation and interpretandum, a principle of 'community', is presupposed. This anticipation is such that either the subject of our reading is subservient to its object, or the object of our reading is subservient to its subject. The former we may call a

philological-reconstructive or historical reading of Nietzsche. The latter a philosophical-progressive or systematic reading – which is to say that our own philosophical question is being raised, in the light of which Nietzsche’s thinking is brought up and evaluated critically. It is along these two modes of thought that the great philosophers are read nowadays and their work is commented upon.

Every communication theory presupposes an answer to a fundamental philosophical question: is the ambition of philosophical thinking to reach a unity or community in communication, or is it searching for ways to dwell upon the unbridgeable gap or difference between the participants of communication? It is our experience that the whole point of our reading and writing is the experience of resistance, i.e. the ‘unapproachability’ of the text. This has some implications for our method of reading and writing. How can our reading and writing remain with the unapproachability of the text, without incorporating this unapproachability in its interpretation and communication? On the basis of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger I will try to make this presupposition of interpretation and communication explicit and bring it up for discussion. In this way, we further our attempt to trace the philosophical determinants of communication theory and to rethink this theory.

In the 1930s, Heidegger gave several lectures on Nietzsche. In these, he rejects the interpretative method of philosophical thinking, because every interpretation presupposes the unity of interpretation and interpretandum, like every communication. By contrast, he calls his own way of philosophical thinking a confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) with Nietzsche. I will ask what the nature of this confrontation is and what differences exist between confrontation and interpretative communication. First of all, we obtain an answer to the question of how Heidegger reads Nietzsche. Secondly, and more importantly, we obtain an indication to the nature of philosophical reading and writing as such. Philosophy, it will emerge, is a method of thinking which is capable of dwelling upon the difference between mine and thine, upon the unapproachability of the text.

In this article, I will restrict myself mainly to Heidegger’s first lecture on Nietzsche; what is at stake is primarily the specific nature of confrontation as such, which emerges in his reading of Nietzsche. Firstly, I consider the hypothesis that Heidegger gives an interpretation of Nietzsche (1). After refuting this hypothesis, I elaborate three differences between interpretative interpretation and confrontation (2). Next, we elaborate the specific nature of his concept of confrontation on the basis of an example: Heidegger’s confrontation with Nietzsche’s concept of the ‘Will’ (3). Finally, I reconsider Heidegger’s concept of confrontation in a critical evaluation (4).

## **1. Guiding question (*Leitfrage*) versus grounding question (*Grundfrage*)**

In the first lecture about the will to power of 1936/1937, Heidegger calls attention to a vast difference between the so-called guiding question of the metaphysical tradition and his own grounding question

of philosophy. The 'initial commencement' (*erste Anfang*) of philosophical thinking is, according to Heidegger, guided by the metaphysical question about the 'being' of beings, about the 'beingness' of beings. According to Heidegger, the thought of Nietzsche also belongs to the first beginning of philosophical thinking. Although Nietzsche has a reversal of Platonism in mind and rejects the transcendental world of 'being', his own question about being remains orientated upon beings, namely earthly existence. Just as in the metaphysical tradition, Nietzsche's question of being ends up in a metaphysical description of the being of beings: will to power.

Contrary to this tradition, Heidegger asks after 'Being' itself, for the 'meaning' or 'sense' of being (*Sinn von Sein*). This question is raised at the beginning of *Being and Time*. Here, Heidegger says that 'wir je schon in einem Seinsverständnis leben und der Sinn von Sein zugleich in Dunkel gehüllt ist'.<sup>1</sup> Heidegger explicitly speaks about the understanding of 'being', that is to say that this understanding should not be confused with our understanding of 'beings'. Understanding of being doesn't mean that 'being' shows itself in the world and subsequently can be understood by thinking. The point is the being of understanding itself, of our understanding of things and people itself. What kind of understanding is involved in *our* interpretative understanding of Nietzsche? Every interpretation presupposes the principal 'accessibility' of the interpreted work for the projections of thinking. That is to say that our understanding is marked by the dominion of presentness (SZ: 25). Thanks to this porosity of being and thinking, the work of Nietzsche can be interpreted in a philological-reconstructive or philosophical-progressive way.

In our natural understanding of things, the 'sense' of being stays concealed according to Heidegger. This concealment is not neutralized by a projection (*Entwurf*) of thinking. He calls the sense of being 'projection range' (*Entwurfsbereich*), 'worin sich Verständlichkeit von etwas hält', 'wherein the intelligibility of something maintains itself' (SZ: 151; trans. 193). This *Entwurfsbereich* is the space *between* being and thinking, the openness I have to stride through to reach things in the world. Our understanding lives off this *Entwurfsbereich*, which cannot be taken up in a projection of thinking; on the contrary it withholds itself in every thinking projection. Heidegger experiences, in other words, an incommensurability between understanding of beings and the sense of being, something *beyond thinking* which is unreachable by understanding.

The guiding question of philosophy leads to different configurations of the understanding of the being of beings – in the history of metaphysics, being is, for instance, understood as 'phusis', 'object', 'will to power' – but in this, the question about the open *between* being and thinking, the sense of being, is forgotten and unquestioned. That is to say, that according to Heidegger, the forgetfulness of being dominates (GA 43: 282). In his lecture on the will to power, Heidegger asks the question about the sense of being; this is the grounding question of philosophy, because the sense is the ground for our understanding of the being of beings<sup>2</sup> and this ground of understanding, as such, is the only concern of philosophy.

1. 'We already live in an understanding of Being and that the meaning of Being is still veiled in darkness' (SZ: 4, tr. 23). Quotations in the main text are in German and translated in the notes. Further references and quotations in the notes refer to the German original.
2. 'Und Sinn ist dabei genau in seinem Begriff umgrenzt als dasjenige, von woher und auf Grund wovon das Sein überhaupt als solches offenbar werden und in die Wahrheit kommen kann' (GA 43: 21). On the ground of sense, 'being' becomes manifest, that is to say that the sense withdraws itself from manifestation.

3. 'Im folgenden Text sind "Darstellung" und "Auslegung" in-einandergearbeitet, so dass nicht überall und sogleich deutlich wird, was den Worten Nietzsche's entnommen und was dazugegan ist. Jede Auslegung muss freilich nicht nur dem Text die Sache entnehmen können, sie muss auch, ohne darauf zu pochen, unvermerkt Eigenes aus ihrer Sache dazu geben können. Diese Beigabe ist dasjenige, was der Laie, gemessen an dem, was er ohne Auslegung für den Inhalt des Textes hält, notwendig als Hineindeuten und Willkür bemängelt' (GA 50: 8–9).

4. Examples of such a reading are Michael Zimmermann and Marion Heinz: 'In *Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst* hatte Heidegger wenigstens zwei Absichten. Er wollte erstens zeigen, dass er seine eigene Ontologie ... von Nietzsche's Denken ableiten und dass er so Nietzsche's Denken vor den nationalsozialistischen Ideologen retten konnte' (Zimmermann 2005: 101); 'Erst und nur in seinsgeschichtlicher Blickbahn erschliesst sich die Tiefendimension von Nietzsche's Denken, d.i. die in seinem Gesagten als verborgener Grund herrschende seinsgeschichtliche Konstellation, die es in seiner eigenen geschichtlichen Notwendigkeit zu

Although Heidegger's concept of the other commencement (*andere Anfang*) needs further elaboration, we can already draw a negative conclusion from Heidegger's distinction between the guiding question of metaphysics and his own grounding question of philosophy: the grounding question about the sense of being is completely different from a philological-reconstructive or a philosophical-progressive interpretation of Nietzsche, because every interpretation lives off the understanding of being, and so belongs within the range (*Bereich*) of the metaphysical guiding question. The opening between being and thinking, the sense of being, is forgotten there and remains unquestioned. Only when the grounding question is questioned can we attain the philosophical meaning of Nietzsche's thinking.

The question now is how Heidegger reads Nietzsche, when the guiding question of metaphysics is incommensurable with the grounding question of philosophy. Is the grounding question brought to mind for Heidegger through an 'interpretation' of the guiding question of Nietzsche? What sense does the thinking of Nietzsche make for Heidegger, when guiding question and grounding question are incommensurable?

The difference between them does not reach so far that the thinking of Nietzsche becomes irrelevant for Heidegger. Although Nietzsche does not himself question the sense of being, Heidegger says that this thinking is the impetus for the grounding question (GA 44: 28; GA 43: 288). Is it possible for a reconstructive or progressive interpretation of Nietzsche to lead the way to Heidegger's question of being? We may be inclined to think so and therefore I will test this view.

In the preliminary drafts of Nietzsche's unfinished principal work, *The Will to Power*, Heidegger sees three fundamental positions coming up: will to power; the eternal recurrence of the same; and revaluation of all values (GA 43: 18–19). Heidegger discusses these titles and is curious about their 'unity' or connection. This unity does not speak for itself, because will to power is bound up to earthly existence of generation and corruption. This eternal 'ongoing' character of the will to power seems to contradict his other thought of the eternal recurrence. This impels Heidegger to ask for the unity of the will to power and the eternal recurrence of the same (cf. GA 43: 287–288). This is the question about the 'sense of being' as will to power, which is Heidegger's question in this first lecture on Nietzsche. If this is the case, then Heidegger gives a reconstructive interpretation of Nietzsche and, on this ground, he observes an interpretation problem – the unity of the will to power and the eternal recurrence of the same – which is offensive (*Anstoß*) to his own grounding question about the sense of being.

We can even say that here Heidegger gives a progressive interpretation of Nietzsche.<sup>3</sup> He recognizes his own question about the sense of being in the thinking of Nietzsche.<sup>4</sup> So in Nietzsche, he recognizes the question as to what the will to power *itself* is, the sense of being as will to power.<sup>5</sup>

Nothing speaks against this interpretation of the connection between both questions, except Heidegger himself:

Wenn wir Nietzsches Willen zur Macht, d.h. seine Frage nach dem Sein des Seienden, in die Blickbahn der Frage nach 'Sein und Zeit' bringen, dann heißt dies allerdings nicht, es werde Nietzsches Werk auf ein Buch mit dem Titel 'Sein und Zeit' bezogen und nach dem, was in diesem Buch steht, gedeutet und gemessen.<sup>6</sup>

According to Heidegger, a progressive interpretation of Nietzsche, i.e., an interpretation that opens the perspective on the grounding question about the sense of being and understands the thinking of Nietzsche from it (see GA 44: 27).<sup>7</sup>

Von der Leitfrage zur Grundfrage gibt es nie einen unmittelbaren, gleichsinnigen, die Leitfrage noch einmal (auf das Seyn) anwendenden Fortgang, sondern nur einen Sprung, d.h. die Notwendigkeit eines *anderen* Anfangs.<sup>8</sup>

The transition from the metaphysical guiding question to the philosophical grounding question cannot be made by applying the guiding question to sense of being; the grounding question is something completely different and therefore presupposes a 'leap', according to Heidegger (I will come back to this leap in what follows).

Heidegger can claim this, but can we substantiate Heidegger's way of reading and writing about Nietzsche as something else other than an interpretation of his work?<sup>9</sup> The question is, then, how to characterize the relation between the thinking of Heidegger and the thinking of Nietzsche: on the one hand, the grounding question of Heidegger is incommensurable with the question that guides metaphysics up to Nietzsche, on the other hand, Heidegger calls the thinking of Nietzsche that which is offensive for his grounding question of philosophy.<sup>10</sup> We will concentrate on this difference in the next section.

## 2. Heidegger's concept of confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*)

Heidegger calls his own way of philosophical speaking an unfolding (*Entfaltung*) of the guiding question of Nietzsche in view of his fundamental metaphysical position (*Grundstellung*).<sup>11</sup> This unfolding stands under the sign of a confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) with the fundamental metaphysical position of Nietzsche, with his answer to the guiding question of philosophical thinking.<sup>12</sup> We introduce now three differences between an interpretation and a confrontation, to elaborate this confrontation specifically by means of Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche in the next section.

First of all, every interpretation lives off the understanding of being and presupposes in this way the principal identity of interpretation and interpretandum (cf. Introduction). With this, it is incapable of halting at any incommensurability at all. Seen from an interpretative perspective, there is no principal incomparability between guiding question and

begreifen gilt' (Heinz 2005: 175).

5. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche asks what the will to power is. The Nietzsche's answer to this question is: the eternal recurrence of the same. Nietzsche calls this question about being itself his heaviest thought (GA 43: 21). We may conclude that Nietzsche already tried to think the sense of being as will to power – the eternal recurrence of the same – that is to say that he already thinks being out of time.
6. 'If we bring Nietzsche's "will to power", that is, his question concerning the Being of beings, into the perspective of the question concerning "Being and Time", that does not at all mean that Nietzsche's work is to be related to a book entitled *Being and Time* and that it is to be measured and interpreted according to the contents of that book' (GA: 43: 23; trans. 20).
7. Vgl. 'Angesichts eines solchen denkerischen Werkes ist es nicht zweifelhaft, ob wir es im Handumdrehen in unsere gewohnten und geläufigen "Rubriken" einzwängen dürfen oder ob ein solches Denken umgekehrt *uns* zur Besinnung und zur Loslösung vom Geläufigen zwingen muß' (GA 44: 72).

8. 'Going from the guiding-question to the grounding-question, there is never an immediate, equi-directional and continual process that once again applies the guiding-question (to be-ing); rather, there is only a leap, i.e., the necessity of an other beginning' (GA 65: 76; trans. 53).

9. With this question, we turn against interpreters like Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, who see Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche as indeed rooted in an 'Andersverstehen', but understand this as a progressive Nietzsche-interpretation: 'Aus der von ihm genannten "innigsten Verwandtschaft" heraus erfährt sein Denken gleichwohl immer wieder Anregungen durch Nietzsche, von denen kaum zu sagen ist, ob Heidegger in ihnen eine Bestätigung des von ihm zuvor selbst Gedachten gefunden hat oder ob sie seine Überlegungen vorgängig angeregt haben. Letztlich werden sie in sein Eigenes hineinverwandelt' (Müller-Lauter 1996: 124). With Jeffrey Powel, we turn ourselves against this view on Heidegger: 'Obwohl es wahr ist, dass Heidegger's Nietzsche-Interpretation auf eine Weise begann, die Müller-Lauter und seinen wissenschaftlichen Prinzipien entsprach, sollten

grounding question, rather the grounding question is the result of Heidegger's 'critique' of the one-sidedness of the guiding question of metaphysics and the grounding question exists in a counter-movement *against* the guiding question. Such a critique or counter-movement presupposes the principal comparability of both questions.

However, Heidegger suggests the contrary (GA 65: 187). Just because both questions are incomparable, he bids farewell to interpretation. His confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) makes an effort to halt at the difference (*auseinander*) of the guiding question and the grounding question, without reconciling this difference or aiming to neutralize it in a higher identity

Jede echte Auslegung ist Auseinander-setzung im wörtlichen Sinne; sie muß das Auszulegende in es selbst und seinen eigenen Grund zurückstellen und dadurch erst wird der Ausleger seinerseits in *seine* Blickstellung verwiesen.<sup>13</sup>

The confrontation, is in other words, not controlled by the logic of identity as in interpretation, but by a logic of difference;<sup>14</sup> the point is the 'difference' between me and the other.

This difference does not show itself by criticising the other, but by considering it and tracing it in its effective force (GA 43: 6). In this confrontation, the confronter at the same time is relegated to *his* perspective (*Blickstellung*), in the case of Heidegger in the grounding question about the sense of being. Only in this confrontation, the *auseinander* of guiding question and grounding question emerges.

Yet, Heidegger speaks of a confrontation with Nietzsche in this lecture and he does not unfold his completely 'new' question about the sense of being autonomously. That means that Heidegger, notwithstanding the primacy of the grounding question, depends on the guiding question of Nietzsche. In which sense is this the case?

That Heidegger does speak about an 'other commencement' shows that the grounding question is indeed thoroughly differentiated from the guiding question of metaphysics, but on the other hand is related to the 'same'; it concerns an 'other' commencement of the 'same', namely the philosophical question about being. Our first determination of the confrontation, that it is controlled by a logic of difference, needs therefore a slight modification. The grounding question is indeed differentiated but not completely disconnected from the guiding question. Both are involved in the question about being, that is to say that the confrontation has the *Auseinander-setzung* (difference) within the same (identity) in mind.<sup>15</sup> The confrontation is, in other words, controlled by a logic of 'iteration'.<sup>16</sup>

With this further determination of the confrontation, it has indeed become clear why the grounding question of Heidegger depends on the guiding question of metaphysics. But until now it has not been clear why Heidegger has to rely specifically on the guiding question of Nietzsche. The confrontation *has* to go via Nietzsche according to Heidegger because *we* do not have enough distance, do not have an *aus-einander* to his way of thinking (GA 43: 281); 'Nietzsche is

therefore the place and source, at which real confrontation has to take place' (GA 29/30: 107). The thinking of the initial commencement is still too contemporary for us<sup>17</sup> and the confrontation with Nietzsche is, as such, primarily a confrontation with *ourselves*. The confrontation with Nietzsche concerns therefore *our abendländisches Schicksal* (GA 43: 281).

With this, a second difference between an interpretation and a confrontation comes to light. An interpretation takes a position or standpoint, out of which the 'interpretandum' is represented. This standpoint is the ground or the subject of interpretation, which itself is not involved in interpretation. On the contrary, the confrontation is primarily the confrontation with our 'ownmost'; the interpretative subject. Our thinking is, in other words, 'involved' (*einbegriffen*) in the confrontation. Not only Nietzsche, but we *all* live off the guiding question of metaphysics (GA 43: 280) and are as such marked by the forgetfulness of being. The confrontation with Nietzsche is necessary, in order that we become 'free' for the highest effort of our thinking, namely the question about the sense of being as another commencement of philosophy, according to Heidegger (GA 43: 20, 281). (I will return to this concept of freedom in section 4.) For that, we say farewell to ourselves as the interpretative subject – the jump-off of the subject as the ground for the understanding of being – in favour of that human mode of existence, which exposes itself to the sense of being (*Dasein*). Only when we understand that, we are involved in the initial commencement that culminates in the work of Nietzsche; his work is the 'größte Anstoß zur höchsten Auseinandersetzung, zum geistigen Kampf' (GA 44: 28).<sup>18</sup> It is the sense of being, which is at stake in the confrontation between the initial and the other commencement.

With this, we encounter a third and last difference between an interpretation and a confrontation. An interpretation presupposes a priori the presence-at-hand of the interpretandum, which has already appropriated its presence. That *our* philosophical thinking is involved in the guiding question means on the contrary, that we *cannot* claim to possess the other commencement of philosophical questioning as our property. The overcoming of the forgetfulness of being presupposes primarily a basic experience (*Grunderfahrung*) of the sense of being (GA 43: 279). This basic experience brings Heidegger to his grounding question of philosophy and to the localization of the first commencement of philosophical thinking in Nietzsche (GA 43: 285):

Die Auslegung dagegen und das leitende und doch verschwiegene Fragen kommen aus der Erfahrung der Ankunft des anderen Anfanges der Philosophie.

(GA 43: 290).<sup>19</sup>

Here, we see the eventual or momentous character of confrontation, the farewell of the metaphysical guiding question and the 'leap' in the grounding question, which has to happen every time again and has to be attempted by everyone for himself. This is what is at stake in the confrontation between both questions.

wir immer dessen eingedenk bleiben, dass Heidegger sich niemals als durch akzeptierte Interpretationsmethoden und deren Prinzipien begrenzt ansah' (Powel 2005: 118).

10. In a lecture about the fundamental metaphysical position of Nietzsche from 1937, Heidegger even says that the thinking of Nietzsche forced him to say farewell to the usual way of thinking – i.e., the farewell of the guiding question – and to reflect (*Besinnung*) on the grounding question of philosophy (GA 44: 72).
11. In the context of this article, we cannot elaborate the unfolding any further. When we speak of *Auseinandersetzung* in this article, in fact an *entfaltende Auseinandersetzung* is at stake.
12. 'Die Fragenden selbst und die, die innerhalb der Bereiche der jeweiligen Antwort auf die Leitfrage ihr wesentliches Wissen und Handeln gestalten und begründen, haben mit der Leitfrage – mag sie als solche gewubt werden oder nicht – im Seienden im Ganzen und im Verhältnis zum Seienden als solchem eine Stellung bezogen. Weil diese Stellung aus der Leitfrage und mit ihr entspringt und weil die Leitfrage das eigentlich Metaphysische in

der Metaphysik ist, nennen wir diese mit der selbst nicht entfalteten Leitfrage sich ergebende Stellung *die metaphysische Grundstellung*' (GA 44: 212–213). What is the being of beings? Will to power. What is at stake in the confrontation between guiding question and grounding question is the confrontation with the fundamental metaphysical position of Nietzsche, which is his answer on the guiding question.

13. 'Every real explanation is con-frontation in a literal sense; it has to put back the *explanandum* in its own ground and with this, the interpreter for his part is relegated to *his perspective*' (GA 90: 37; vgl. GA 44: 150).
14. 'Denn das Verstehen macht sich nicht so, wie wenn aus einem gefüllten Glas Wein der Inhalt in ein noch leeres umgegossen wird, sondern Verstehen wird nur dort, wo die wesentlich Verstehenden selbst von sich aus dem neuen Gedanken entgegenwachsen und aus der Selbstständigkeit ihrer Not den neuen Fragen entgegenfragen, um sie erst so als neue zu ergreifen und damit sich selbst in die höhere Klarheit zu verk-lären' (GA 44: 150).
15. 'Die Schärfe der Auseinandersetzung ist hier nur möglich,

### 3. The concept of the will

Now that we have considered what the difference is between confrontation and interpretation, the question concerning the 'substratum' of Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche arises. With what exactly does the thinking of Heidegger confront itself?

Heidegger says that all great thinkers think the 'same', because they are all connected to the one question about 'being' (GA 43: 43). Where do we have to look for 'being'? The confrontation confronts itself with 'being', as it shows itself in the 'philosophical concepts' of Nietzsche:

Erkennen und Wissen, das ist nicht bloße Kenntnis der Begriffe, sondern ist Begreifen des im Begriff Ergriffenen, das Sein begreifen, d.h. dem Angriff des Seins wissentlich ausgesetzt bleiben.<sup>20</sup>

Not the standpoint of Nietzsche, but his philosophical concepts are the 'substratum' for Heidegger's confrontation, which means that the philosophical thinking of Heidegger is linguistically determined.<sup>21</sup> The philosophical concepts are namely drawn out of, and hold themselves to, that of which they speak – 'being' – according to Heidegger.<sup>22</sup>

Although all great philosophers think the same according to Heidegger, our elaboration of the guiding question and the grounding question in the preceding paragraphs also made clear how *different* the *Sache des Denkens* is for each thinker. When the philosophical concepts are drawn out of this *Sache*, which is the same and at the same time different, then also the philosophical concepts are extremely ambiguous.<sup>23</sup> Out of this, we conclude that the greatness of the great thinkers exists in the ambiguity of their concepts, which, on the one hand, belongs in the guiding question of metaphysical tradition and on the other hand are witnesses of the other commencement of philosophical thinking.<sup>24</sup>

The greatness of the thinking of Nietzsche is that his concepts are not univocally at home in the first commencement of philosophical thinking. This ambiguity or undecidedness of Nietzsche shows that he is already on his way to a reflection about the sense of being, and is 'transitive' to this question.<sup>25</sup>

Exactly this ambiguity of Nietzsche's concept of 'being', which *is* the ambiguity between first and other commencement, impels Heidegger to a 'confrontation' with his concepts. We will elaborate on this now by means of an example from Heidegger's lecture on the will to power as art, given in 1936–1937.

In the second chapter of this first lecture about Nietzsche, Heidegger brings up Nietzsche's concept of the will. What does Nietzsche, according to Heidegger, mean with his concept of the will?<sup>26</sup> Will to power is his answer to the metaphysical question what beings as such are. According to Heidegger, that the will is occupied with 'beings as such' means that this concept cannot be derived from a region of things or circumstances in the world:

Wenn nach Nietzsche der Wille als Wille zur Macht der Grundcharakter *alles* Seienden ist, dann können wir uns bei der Bestimmung des Wesens des

Willens nicht auf ein bestimmtes Seiendes, auch nicht auf eine besondere Seinsweise berufen, um von daher das Wesen des Willens zu 'erklären'.<sup>27</sup>

Heidegger elucidates this by means of an example: usually, we take will to be a faculty of the soul.<sup>28</sup> The soul then is distinct from body and mind. But when the will determines the being of every sort of being, then it is not a 'faculty' of the soul. The soul itself then is already willing, inasmuch as it *is*. This does not hold only for the soul, because also body and mind are willing, inasmuch as they *are*. The will therefore cannot be understood as a faculty of the soul. But neither can the will be understood as a faculty of the soul. Every faculty is capability-to-something and therefore already a power or might to do something. The will cannot be understood as a faculty therefore, because the being of a faculty is already marked by the will to power. 'Wenn der Wille zur Macht das Sein selbst kennzeichnet, gibt es nichts mehr, als was der Wille noch zu bestimmen wäre. Wille ist Wille'.<sup>29</sup>

He connects this concept to other concepts like 'affect' and 'feeling'. Usually, we link these psychological terms together with the human being as the subject that is willing. But according to Heidegger, this link is not justified.<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche says that the will is something complicated, something that is a unity only as a word. He does not presuppose a fixed concept of the will but this concept remains forever the actual object of his search:

Soviel ist gewiß, daß für Nietzsche zunächst – bei der Vieldeutigkeit des Willensbegriffes und bei der Vielfältigkeit der herrschenden Begriffsbestimmungen – kein anderer Weg blieb, als mit Hilfe des Bekannten das von ihm Gemeinte zu verdeutlichen und das Nichtgemeinte abzuwehren.<sup>31</sup>

That Nietzsche determines the will as affect or feeling does not mean anything, according to Heidegger. He does not give an answer to the question what an affect is and only says that it is a form of the will to power.<sup>32</sup>

According to Heidegger, this answer of Nietzsche's requires us to elaborate the will to power from *our* understanding of the concept of the affect. Thus we can determine Nietzsche's concept of the will according to Heidegger.

Nur in der *Auseinandersetzung* erwächst die schöpferische Auslegung, diejenige, durch die Nietzsche auf sich selbst in seiner stärksten Stellung zu stehen kommt

(GA 43: 275–276)<sup>33</sup>

And here we obtain an indication to the specific character of Heidegger's confrontation with the language of Nietzsche, namely that it is the creative explanation of his concepts. Such an explanation has nothing to do with a critique or improvement of his concept of the will or with the affects as psychological phenomena.<sup>34</sup> The creative explanation of the will is *differentiating*, namely the destruction (*Zerstörung*) of the first

wenn getragen von der innigsten Verwandtschaft, nur wo das Ja zum Wesentlichen' (GA 43: 277).

16. 'Iter, derechef, viendrait de itara, autre en sanskrit, et tout ce qui suit peut être lu comme l'exploitation de cette logique qui lie la répétition à l'altérité' (Derrida 1972: 375).
17. 'Nietzsche's denken und Sagen ist uns noch zu gegenwärtig. Er und wir sind noch nicht hinreichend weit auseinandergesetzt, damit sich der Abstand bilden kann, aus dem eine Würdigung dessen zum Reifen kommt, was die innerste Stärke des Denkens dieses Denkers ist. Es bedarf der Auseinandersetzung mit Nietzsche' (GA 43: 6; vgl. GA 90: 253).
18. 'Greatest impetus to the highest confrontation, to spiritual combat'.
19. 'The explanation by contrast and the guiding though concealed questions comes out of the experience of the arrival of the other commencement of philosophy'.
20. 'To be cognizant, to know, is not mere familiarity with concepts. Rather, it is to grasp what the concept itself catches hold of. To grasp Being means to remain knowingly exposed to its sudden advance, its presencing' (GA 43: 69; trans. 59).

21. Here is not the place to elaborate the central role of language in the early and later thinking of Heidegger. For this, see Blok (2005).
22. 'Ein Begriff ist kein Begriff – in der Philosophie wenigstens nicht –, wenn er nicht so gegründet und begründet ist, daß er das, was er begreift, für sich zum Maß und zur Bahn des Fragens werden läßt, statt es in der Gestalt einer bloßen Formel zuzudecken' (GA 43: 69).
23. 'Aber Zarathustra erkennt: In Wahrheit sind Worte und Töne Regenbögen und Schein-Brücken zwischen Ewig-Geschiedenem (VI, 316). Und wo das Ähnlichste im Gespräch genannt wird und es sich so anhört, als sei es das Gleiche, da wird am schönsten gelogen: denn die kleinste Kluft ist am schwersten zu überbrücken' (GA 44: 55). The *kleinste Kluft* means that the same word always has a different meaning.
24. 'Der große Denker ist dadurch groß, daß er aus dem Werk der anderen Großenbühr Größtes herauszuhören und dieses ursprünglich zu verwandeln vermag' (GA 43: 42).
25. 'Nietzsche ist ein Übergang – das Höchste, was von einem Denker gesagt werden kann. Ein Übergang, der Übergänge einleitet zum zweiten Anfang' (GA 43: 278; vgl. 283; vgl. GA 45:

commencement and the erection (*auslegende Aufbau*) of the question of being in the sense of another commencement (GA 43: 279). We will try to follow the specific method of Heidegger here.

Heidegger says that the essence of the creative explanation of the concept of the will consists in a 'having-to-destruct'.

Und die größte Zerstörung greift an gegen den Schaffenden selbst. Er zuerst muß aufhören, sein eigener Zeitgenosse zu sein, weil er am wenigsten sich selbst gehört, sondern dem Werden des Seins

(GA 43: 274)<sup>35</sup>

What is destructured is that 'meaning' of the concept of the will, which is bound up to human existence as subjectivity. We are involved ourselves in this destruction of the concept of the will, because it aims primarily at the creator itself and is therefore *our* farewell to human existence as subjectivity.

At the same time, what is at stake for Heidegger is to differentiate a *different* possible meaning in this same concept of the will: the will as a way human existence (*Dasein*) *ex-ists* and its exposure to the openness and concealment of beings, i.e., the sense of being. With regard to the concept of the will, we have to see according to Heidegger:

daß es sich hier überhaupt nicht um Psychologie, auch nicht um eine durch Physiologie und Biologie unterbaute Psychologie handelt, sondern um Grundweisen, in denen das menschliche Dasein beruht, um die Weise, wie der Mensch das 'Da', die Offenheit und Verborgenheit des Seienden, in denen er steht, besteht.<sup>36</sup>

In the destructive-creative confrontation with the concepts of Nietzsche, it comes to the erection of the other commencement, i.e., *our* transformation and transition from subject to *ex-istence* (*Dasein*).<sup>37</sup>

How can the concept of the will concretely speaking be stretched in such a way, that it can bear reference to the *ex-istence* (*Dasein*)? An affect, for instance a passion, 'assaults or seizes us': it brings excitement, and lifts us up beyond ourselves. We then say: he is out of his senses. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche has this essential moment in the concept of the affect in mind – this being outside oneself – when he calls will an affect. As willing-out-beyond-itself, the will is outside itself, ecstatic. This is the first essential moment in the concept of the affect.

According to Heidegger, Nietzsche also has the other essential moment in the concept of the affect in mind – the fact that a passion comes over us, 'assaults' us, seizes us – when he calls will an affect. That the will assaults us does not mean that we first exist and then we will something. We are always within the scope of the will, even when we are unwilling, as far as the *Entschlossenheit* to the openness is at stake here.

Jenes eigentliche Wollen im Aufbruch der Entschlossenheit, dieses Ja ist es, durch das jener Anfall des ganzen Wesens an uns und in uns kommt<sup>38</sup>

The real willing as willing-out-beyond-itself, as ecstatic exposure (*Entschlossenheit*) is not of all time, but the farewell of the subject and the transition to that human existence, that exists the sense of being (*Dasein*).

With the concept of *Entschlossenheit*, Heidegger brings one of his own basic concepts of *Being and Time* in connection with Nietzsche's concept of the will. Normally, this word means *resoluteness* and indicates the resoluteness of the will of the subject. Literally nevertheless, *Entschlossenheit* means *Ent-schlossenheit*, 'unclosedness', i.e., not exactly will as the resoluteness of the subject, but *exposure* to the openness and concealment of beings, the sense of being.<sup>39</sup> Heidegger's confrontation with the concept of the will destructs the subjective meaning of the will and stretches the concept so much, that the essence of the will indicates the ecstatic existence and opening up of the openness.<sup>40</sup>

Der Wille als das Über-sich-Herrsein ist niemals eine Abkapselung des Ich auf seine Zustände, sondern Wille ist, wie wir sagen, Ent-schlossenheit, in der sich der Wollende am weitesten hinausstellt in das Seiende, um es im Umkreis seines Verhaltens festzuhalten.<sup>41</sup>

#### 4. The test of Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche

Now that we have elaborated the specific essence of the confrontation by means of the example of the will, we come back to the three characteristics of the confrontation and draw a number of conclusions.

The example of the will has shown that the concepts of Nietzsche cannot be read ambiguously just like that. They can be read in two differentiated directions, namely in the direction of the human being as the subject of the will on the one hand, and in the direction of the resolute openness to the sense of being on the other hand. The concepts of Nietzsche are undecided; this reflects the undecidedness of the question 'who we in essence are'. This corresponds with the second character of the confrontation, which we separated in section two, namely the fact that our thinking is 'involved' (*einbegriffen*) in confrontation. Is it self-evident that the human being is the subject which is the ground of the dominion of the earth: will to power? Or is human existence primarily the resolute openness to the words or concepts that mark the way things appear and the way we people respond to it: will to power? That we are 'involved' in this confrontation means that we do not play with words, but that *our* farewell to the interpretative subject and *our* transition to human existence (*Dasein*) are at stake here.

This confrontation has in mind to alter (*verwandeln*) the ambiguity or undecidedness (*Unentschiedenheit*) in a decision (*Entscheidung*), namely the separation (*Scheidung*) or out-of-one-another (*auseinander*) of first and other commencement and with this, of subject and *Dasein*. The only real task of the confrontation with Nietzsche is, according to Heidegger, 'the will to prepare *the* decisions, which the West approaches in this and the coming century'.<sup>42</sup>

That thinking is involved in confrontation entails that the transition to the other commencement is not a decision of the human being as

133–135). Heidegger is of two minds, because on the other hand, he says that Nietzsche is the end of metaphysics, and as such obstructs the other commencement of philosophy. For the development of Heidegger's ambiguous relation with Nietzsche in the thirties, see Blok (2008).

26. We have to stress that we do not thematize Nietzsche's own concept of the will, but its 'reception' by Heidegger. In this article, we can only refer to Nietzsche's own understanding of the will in the notes.
27. 'If according to Nietzsche will as will to power is the basic character of all beings, then in defining the essence of will we cannot appeal to a particular being or special mode of Being which would serve to explain the essence of will' (GA 43: 44; trans. 37).
28. See for example Nietzsche's own destruction of the will as faculty of the soul (KSA 531–34).
29. 'If will to power characterizes Being itself, there is nothing *else* that will can be defined as. Will is will' (GA 43: 45; trans. 38). Nietzsche's own destruction of the will in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* seems to be comparable with this: 'Wille kann natürlich nur auf Wille wirken – und nicht auf Stoffe (nicht auf Nerven zum Beispiel –); genug,

man muss die Hypothese wagen, ob nicht überall, wo Wirkungen anerkannt werden, Wille auf Wille wirkt – und ob nicht alles mechanische Geschehen, insofern eine Kraft darin tätig wird, eben Willenskraft, Willens-Wirkung ist' (KSA 54–55).

30. A first indication of this we saw before: according to Heidegger – in this lecture at least – Nietzsche doesn't link his concept of the will together with a 'being' at all, so also not with human being as the subject that is willing: 'Der Wille als das Über-sich-Herrsich ist niemals eine Abkapselung des Ich auf seine Zustände ...' (GA 43: 56).
31. 'This much is certain: for Nietzsche there was at the time no other alternative – given the ambiguity of the concepts of will and the multiplicity of prevailing conceptual definitions – than to clarify what he meant with the help of what was familiar and to reject what he did not mean' (GA 43: 46; trans. 39).
32. In fact, this is not true, because Nietzsche explains the will to power out of his reflection on the essence of the affective (vgl. KSA: 54–55). In a note he concludes: 'Daß der Wille zur Macht die primitive Affekt-Form ist, daß alle anderen Affekte nur seine

subject. That is why Heidegger on the one hand speaks about a leap of being (*Seinssprung*) – i.e. a 'leap' in the transition to the other commencement of philosophical thinking – and on the other hand a thinking 'preparation' of this other commencement (GA 43: 283). This preparation consists in a confrontation with the concepts of Nietzsche and tests its transitivity. That 'Will' means *Entschlossenheit* is not an invention of the human being as the subject of thinking, but this thought comes over thinking in the thinking preparation of it. With regard to the thinking of Nietzsche, we read:

Der Wiederkunftsgedanke war nicht aus anderen Sätzen errechnet und erschlossen, er kam; aber er kam nur, wie alle großen Gedanken, weil er – ungeahnt – doch durch eine lange Arbeit vorbereitet und erlitten war. ... Der Blickbereich, in den da der Denker hineinblickt, ist jedoch nicht mehr der Horizont seiner 'persönlichen Erlebniss', sondern ein anderes als er selbst, was unter und über ihm hinweggegangen und fortan da-ist, was nicht mehr ihm, dem Denker, gehört, sondern dem er zugehört.<sup>43</sup>

Precisely in this way, Heidegger is not the subject of his concept of the will as *Entschlossenheit* (resolute exposure), but this thought comes over thinking, or not.<sup>44</sup>

Because the preparing leap in the other commencement of thinking can succeed but can also be unsuccessful, Heidegger calls his own way of thinking an attempt (*versuchen*): 'Die neuen Denker müssen Versuchenden sein, d.h. sie müssen das Seiende selbst hinsichtlich seines Seins und seiner Wahrheit fragend auf die Probe stellen und in die Versuchung bringen'.<sup>45</sup> This attempt is the test of the transitionability of the concepts *Wille* and *Entschlossenheit* and with this of the suitability of these words to be used for the other commencement of philosophical thinking. The first and only touchstone for this test is the *Sache des Denkens* itself, i.e., the sense of being (vgl. GA 43: 69): 'Die Härte und Verbindlichkeit des Denkens muß eine Gründung in den Sachen selbst erfahren, wie sie die bisherige Philosophie nicht kannte'.<sup>46</sup> The philosophical test consists in the question if will as resolute openness effectively marks our existence.

Einen wesentlichen Gedanken von dieser Art wahrhaft *denken*, heißt, in die neue Klarheit, die der Gedanke eröffnet, eingehen und in ihrem Lichte stehend alle Dinge sehen und mit dem ganzen Willen zu allen darin beschlossenen Entscheidungen in sie einrücken.<sup>47</sup>

In this concept of attempting, we recognize the momentous character of confrontation, which we saw in section two. This eventual character of the confrontation shows that Heidegger cannot perform the leap in the other commencement for us, but that we have to test it for ourselves over and over again. Only when we see that the human being is not the subject of thinking but is exposed to the sense of being in the continuous test of our preparing confrontation with it, we are 'at home in genuine questioning' (GA 43: 7; trans. 6).<sup>48</sup>

When we really become involved with such a confrontation, then this has consequences for the way we read Heidegger. When Heidegger cannot perform the leap in the other commencement for us and we have to test the transitivity by ourselves over and over again, then the confrontation should also characterize *our* philosophical thinking and questioning. What is demanded from us is that we leave interpretation behind and become involved with the confrontation between being and thinking. Can we claim we have performed such a confrontation with Heidegger in this article? Or have we simply stayed on the level of an interpretation of Heidegger's understanding of this concept?

Corresponding to the first characteristic of the confrontation, a confrontation with Heidegger would demand from us the experience of a vast difference between him and ourselves. In what else would the *Anstoß* for such a confrontation exist than in his concept of confrontation itself?

Although we characterized the *auseinander* as a difference between first and other commencement, this *auseinander* seems to be oriented to unity. Heidegger does not just speak of the farewell to the subject, but of destruction (*Zerstörung*), i.e., 'destruction' of the subject. In his confrontation with Nietzsche, all that matters for Heidegger is to get 'distance' to Nietzsche. Because he distances himself from the first commencement through the destruction of the subject, his thinking becomes free for its utmost effort, namely the questioning of the grounding question and with this the transition to *Da-sein* (GA 43: 6). The confrontation destructs the subject and ends up in the freedom of thinking, namely a thinking that is 'released' from the subject. Although we saw that the confrontation is governed by a logic of difference, Heidegger's understanding of it – at least in this lecture – seems to be overshadowed by a logic of identity; the confrontation purifies the first commencement out, ends up in the creative explanation (*schöpferische Auslegung*) of the other commencement and consists therefore in the *transcendence* to this other commencement (vgl. *ZSF*: 394). That means that Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, notwithstanding his efforts to say farewell to the interpretation of his work, is in fact overshadowed by the *Wille zur Denkbarkeit*, the will to 'thinkability', which characterize every communication and interpretation.

Is it possible that Heidegger's creative explanation of *Wille* as *Entschlossenheit* is still dominated by the will to identity? Is it possible that the desire for identity is inherently bound up to the concept of the will?<sup>49</sup> If so, then we do not only have a notion that the will as such obstructs the resolute exposure to the sense of being, but also enough reason to confront ourselves with the pro-position, the *Satz* and its *setzen* in philosophy.

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Ausgestaltungen sind' (KSA 13: 14[121]). Gerard Visser shows that Heidegger discussion of affectivity in relation to Nietzsche is insufficient (Visser 1987: 53; vgl. 52–67). In this article, we restrict ourselves to the thinking of Nietzsche's, as it is received by Heidegger.

33. 'Only in *confrontation*, the creative explanation (*schöpferische Auslegung*) is developing, by which Nietzsche becomes positioned on his own and in his strongest position'.
34. „aber Auseinandersetzung ist etwas völlig anderes: den Gegner wählen und sich und ihn gegeneinander in Stellung bringen, und zwar zu einem Kampf um das Wesentlichste' (GA 43: 276). Dit wezenlijkste is het 'zijn', zoals dat in het ambigue begrip van de wil van zich blijkt geeft.
35. 'And the greatest destruction rises up against the creator himself. First of all he has to stop to be his own contemporary, because he least of all belongs to himself, but to the becoming of being'.
36. 'That here it is not a matter of psychology, nor even for a psychology undergirded by physiology and biology. It is a matter of the basic modes that constitute Dasein, a matter of the ways man confronts the *Da*, the openness and concealment of

- beings, in which he stands' (GA 43: 52; trans. 45).
37. Aber diese Unterschiede der Sprache beherrscht man nicht dadurch, daß man sie sich äußerlich anlernt und merkt, sondern nur so, daß wir aus der Auseinandersetzung mit der Sache selbst in das gewachsene Wort selbst hineinwachsen' (GA 44: 26).
38. 'That genuine willing which surges forward in resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*), that 'yes', is what instigates the seizure of our entire being, of the very essence within us' (GA 43: 54–55; trans. 47).
39. 'Das Wesen des Wollens wird hier in die Entschlossenheit zurückgenommen. Aber das Wesen der Entschlossenheit liegt in der Entborgenheit des menschlichen Daseins für die Lichtung des Seins und keineswegs in einer Kraftspeicherung des Agierens. Vgl. Sein und Zeit §44 und §60. Der Bezug zum Sein aber ist das Lassen (GA 40: 23). Die in Sein und Zeit gedachte Entschlossenheit ist nicht die entschiedene Aktion eines Subjekts, sondern die Eröffnung des Daseins aus der Befangenheit im Seienden zur Offenheit des Seins' (UKW: 55).
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## End notes continued

42. 'der Wille zur Vorbereitung *der* Entscheidungen, denen das Abendland in diesem und dem kommenden Jahrhundert entgegenggeht' (GA 43: 282). Heidegger says that the decisive question about the overcoming of metaphysics stays indeed in the background in this lecture about the will to power as art and only comes up in the differentiation between the guiding question and the grounding question, but is the actual task of it (GA 43: 288–289).
43. 'The thought of eternal return was not discovered in or calculated from other doctrines. It simply came. But like all great thoughts it came only because, surreptitiously, its way had been paved by long labours and great travail. ... The span of the thinker's vision no longer ends at the horizon of his 'personal experiences'. Something other than he himself looms there, abiding beneath, above, and beyond him, something that no longer pertains to him, the thinker, but to which he can only devote himself' (GA 44: 11–12; trans. 12–13).
44. 'Wenn die Vorbereitung einer Denkerfahrung noch ein Entwurf genannt werden könnte, dann wäre dieser Entwurf ein Sich-Wegwerfen von sich selbst, das in sich schon ein Widerfahren ist: *als* Sich-Entwerfen weggeworfen, entrückt aus seinem schon festgestellten Wesen. Das Werfende im Entwerfen ist nicht der Mensch – der Mensch wird in die Ek-stasis entsetzt, in das Draußen schlechthin, und zwar aus dem Draußen schlechthin heraus' (Oudemans 1998: 21).
45. 'The new thinkers must attempt and tempt. That means they must put beings themselves to the test, tempt them with questions concerning their Being and truth' (GA 43: 32; trans. 28).
46. 'The solidity and binding quality of thought must undergo a grounding in the things themselves in a way that prior philosophy does not know' (GA 43: 32; trans. 28).
47. 'Truly *to think* as essential thought of this sort means to enter into the novel lucidity opened up by the thought; it means to see all things in its light and to find oneself totally ready and willing to face all the decisions implicated in the thought' (GA 44: 11; trans. 13).
48. 'Hier ist alles auf die einzige *Frage* nach der Wahrheit des Seyns gestellt: Auf das *Fragen*. Damit dieser Versuch ein Anstoß werde, muß das *Wunder* des Fragens im Vollzug erfahren und zur Weckung und Stärkung der Fragekraft wirksam gemacht werden' (GA 65: 10).
49. Later on, Heidegger sees for himself that the will obstructs every exposure to the sense of being (vgl. Blok 2008).

liegt, daß er sich selbst sich erschließt, also nicht erst Überwindung durch ein dazukommendes Verhalten, etwa ein Beobachten des Willensvorganges und ein Nachdenken darüber, sondern der Wille selbst hat den Charakter des eröffnenden Offenhalts' (GA 43: 60)

41. 'Will as mastery of oneself is never encapsulation of the ego from its surroundings. Will is, in our terms, resolute openness, in which he who wills stations himself abroad among beings in order to keep them firmly within his field of action' (GA 43: 56; trans. 48).



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