**Death, Sex, and the Body: Phenomenology and Foucault**

**Worksheet on Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, sections 6-9**

Section 6, “The task of destructuring the transmission of ontology,” is fairly difficult going, so please don’t let it discourage you. What’s most important for our purposes is from the beginning of the section through the first full paragraph on p. 23. The word translated as “destructuring” is *Destruktion*, and is the basis for Jacques Derrida’s (1930-2004) coining the now famous term “deconstruction” (usually used in a much more conventional sense than Derrida had in mind). Heidegger makes it clear enough that what he means by this term isn’t purely negative, or destructive; that’s why I didn’t simply translate it as “destruction.” Heidegger thinks that “destructuring” is a necessary component to doing ontology, i.e., the study of the various basic ways in which we’re meaningfully directed toward entities. This is because ontology requires that we accomplish three things: (1) a phenomenological “reduction,” in which we shift our attention from entities to their ways of being, i.e., the basic, *a priori*, ways in which we can encounter them; (2) a phenomenological “construction,” which is what he calls in his lecture-course on *The History of the Concept of Time* an “analytic description” of intentional phenomena; and (3) a phenomenological destructuring, which is a kind of careful examination of the philosophical concepts we’ve inherited, with an eye to determining whether they’re really appropriate to use in our phenomenological analyses.

1. What can you gather about what Heidegger (on pp. 19-23) means by the fact that we, as Dasein, are “transmitted”? (This will become clearer after we’ve read Division II, Chapter Five, “Temporality and Transmittedness,” so don’t worry too much if you find this unclear at this point in the book.) How is “transmission” different from what we ordinarily call “history”?

Section 7, “The phenomenological method of the investigation,” is quite important for understanding how Heidegger approaches his phenomenological descriptions throughout *Being and Time*. As you can see from the sub-headings to sections 7a, 7b, and 7c, Heidegger lays out his method by examining the word “phenomen-o-logy.” In section 7a, he examines what a “phenomenon” is, and the basic different kinds of phenomena; in section 7b, he examines what the Greek word *lógos* means; and in section 7c, he puts the two definitions together into a definition of “phenomenology.”

In section 7a, Heidegger interprets what a “phenomenon” is. Try to move step by step through this discussion, addressing the following questions:

2. What’s the *fundamental* meaning of the term “phenomenon,” as discussed at the bottom half of p. 26?

3. From the last full sentence on p. 28 through the end of that paragraph (on p. 29), Heidegger identifies *one* “negative” kind, or mode,of phenomena, which Heidegger calls an “illusion,” sometimes translated as “semblance,” and that could be translated as “seeming.” (On p. 36, he comes up with the nice line “There is just as much ‘being’ [i.e., phenomenon], however, as there is illusion.” In other words, all illusions are still phenomena.) Explain what an illusion is, by giving an example, and explain why illusions are still phenomena in Heidegger’s sense.

4. Starting in the first full paragraph of p. 29 and going through the first full paragraph on p. 30, Heidegger moves on to a second “negative” kind, or mode, of phenomena: appearances. Explain what an *appearance* is, giving an example.

5. Heidegger’s discussion of “phenomenon” in section 7a is really quite subtle and sophisticated. One thing that he’s trying to do here is to point out that so many philosophers, especially including Husserl, wrongly treat *all* phenomena as if they were primarily “appearances.” A sensation, for example, is supposed to be an “appearance” of an aspect of a physical thing, and, for philosophers from Descartes through Kant and Husserl, we might never be able to get through the “veil” of such appearances to really know what the intentional object is like in itself (p. 30). How does this very common philosophical assumption get things backwards for Heidegger?

6. How does Heidegger, in section 7b, explain the basic concept of *lógos*? Here’s a starter: *lógos* is “discourse” about something, where “discourse” is understood in a very broad sense (p. 32). And all such “discourse” involves *interpretation* (pp. 37-38): taking something (i.e., what the discourse is about) *as* something, as opposed to simply staring at it.

7. How does Heidegger, on pp. 34-35, put together the concept of *phenomenon* with that of *lógos* to form the concept of *phenomen-o-logy*?

One thing that Heidegger does in section 7c is to *first* provide a formal, or general, definition of “phenomenology.” This is pretty much be what sciences aim at, i.e., to discover truths about the specific kinds of things that the science is about. *Then*, Heidegger provides a specifically *phenomenological* concept of phenomenology. He does this by suggesting that what’s most in need of phenomenology is the *being* of entities, since we almost always pay attention only to entities, not their ways of being. Indeed, “*Ontology* [i.e., the description of the ways of being in which we can encounter entities] *is possible only as phenomenology*” (p. 35). (When Heidegger says that the being of entities is “transcendental,” from the Latin from “stepping over,” he just means to emphasize the difference and relation between entities and their being. By definition, in order to be able to encounter an entity in a given way of being, we must *already* have “stepped over” these entities to understand their being.)

8. In the second full paragraph on p. 35, Heidegger lays out three ways in which something can *fail* to be a phenomenon: i.e., in which it can be *concealed*. Explain what these are, giving an example of each. Which, if any, of these kinds of concealment do you think applies best to the ways of being of entities?

In section 8, Heidegger lays out his ambitious plan for the whole treatise to be entitled *Being and Time*. As you can see, it was supposed to be around three times the length of the 437-page tome we have; the rest was never published as he originally intended it. But what we have is plenty interesting. This consists of the first two Divisions of Part One. Division I provides a phenomenological description of how we encounter entities. And Division II supplements this with a phenomenological account of how temporality (including, but going far beyond, what Husserl means by this term) makes such encounters possible.

9. Section 9 moves from the Introduction to *Being and Time* to the beginning of the actual phenomenological analyses. In this section, Heidegger makes some fascinating initial claims about us human beings (Dasein). He claims that one thing that distinguishes us from other entities is the fact that, in our being, or existence, we “revolve around” our *very own* being. In other words, we essentially, “at each moment,” *care* about who we are: that your being is a fundamental “issue” for you, as mine is for me. This claim has been misinterpreted as saying that we are all selfish egoists, caring only about ourselves, and never being really altruistic to anyone else. To show why this gets Heidegger wrong, try to give an example of someone who’s a person as Heidegger describes, but who isn’t simply a selfish egoist.

On pp. 42-44, Heidegger alludes to two modes in which we can carry out our being: (1) by taking *ownership* of ourselves through confronting our own death, which Heidegger will call the *certain possibility of the impossibility of existence at all*; and (2) as we exist “by and large,” i.e., in a “normal,” or “everyday” manner. These two modes will get extensive treatment in the rest of the book. What distinguishes mode (2) from mode (1) is that in mode (2) we tend to “flee” from the certain fact that we’re going to die, and tend to suppress the deep anxiety (Heidegger’s word is the now-famous *Angst*) that this fact can give rise to. Throughout (almost) the entire first of the two divisions of *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes us as we carry out our lives in the latter, “normal,” way; only in Division II does he discuss our self-ownership.

Terminological point: At the end of section 9, Heidegger distinguishes between two kinds of ontological concepts: *existentials*, which apply to our – Dasein’s – way of being; and *categories*, which apply to entities *other* than Dasein, like rocks.