

## reply to prof sheehan

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I would like to thank the staff at *Parrhesia* for generously offering me the opportunity to respond to Prof Sheehan's long critique of my review article about his important book *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift*. My original review article "A Response to Sheehan's Attempted Paradigm Shift" appeared in *Parrhesia* 26 (2016), pp. 117-135. Sheehan's critique of that review appears in this volume.

First of all, I very much welcome Prof Sheehan's attempt to clarify his position, especially with regard to (1) Heidegger's and Husserl's phenomenological reduction, and (2) the alleged insignificance of Dilthey and Schleiermacher as sources for Heidegger's hermeneutical philosophizing. However, I have no desire to engage the rhetorical armature Prof Sheehan put in place against me. Nor will I answer in detail the alleged egregious mistakes and errors he divines in my review article. Sheehan's public tutorial creates a smokescreen behind which the critical points of my original review disappear. It is not my intention to assist him in that, although I am quite willing to learn from him. In any case, the issue is Heidegger's philosophy and Prof Sheehan's interpretation of it, not my apparent failure to satisfy Prof Sheehan's criteria for excellence in Heidegger scholarship.

### *I. ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEIDEGGER'S AND HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION*

In his response to my critique of his book, Prof Sheehan accentuates the difference between Husserl and Heidegger in a new and illuminating way, going far beyond what he had claimed in his book *Making Sense of Heidegger*. He now holds that whereas for Husserl the “re-duction” is a veritable re-tracing of “the thing encountered” to “transcendental consciousness,” Heidegger instead envisions a kind of “in-duction” of the encountered thing into its meaningful possibilities within our lives, such that Dasein is not the underlying subject-pole or “sub-ject” for the object, but, rather, that which “e-jects” what it encounters into the horizon of its (Dasein’s) possibilities. As Sheehan writes in his response to me, Heidegger’s phenomenological “in-duction” must not be confused with Husserl’s phenomenological “re-duction.” Prof Sheehan even goes to the trouble of producing a beautiful diagram to illustrate this point.

I welcome this clarification and note only two things. First, what Sheehan expounds as Heidegger’s phenomenological “in-duction” of the encountered thing into Dasein’s possibilities is, I would like to submit, quite close to what Heidegger explicates as hermeneutical understanding in his 1922 “Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation.” In that piece Heidegger insists that instead of positing reified meanings, abstracted from the actual context in which they occur, proper hermeneutical understanding of an encountered thing unfolds along three axes: (1) *from* the appropriated perspective at the beginning, the “*Blickstand*,” the initial position of looking, that is, the factual situation of life in which the encountered thing appears in one’s field of vision, (2) *along* the direction of looking, or “*Blickhabe*,” which determines *as what* the encountered thing is kept in view, the hermeneutical as-structure, (3) *towards* the projected trajectory in light of which the encountered thing is seen, or what Heidegger calls the “*Blickbahn*.”<sup>1</sup> What Sheehan calls Heidegger’s “in-duction” of an encountered thing into Dasein’s possibilities corresponds to Heidegger’s conception of the trajectory of one’s view, the *Blickbahn*, in line of which the encountered thing is interpreted, understood, and explicated. However, Heidegger does not qualify this conception of the hermeneutical understanding as a variant to Husserl’s phenomenological reduction. The reason is simple enough: it isn’t part of the phenomenological method at all. The entire conception grows out of the hermeneutical tradition, as already the terminology betrays: *Blickstand*, *Blickhabe*, and *Blickbahn* can all be traced back to Chladenius.<sup>2</sup> In short what Sheehan presents as Heidegger’s version of the phenomenological reduction, the so-called “in-duction” of the encountered thing into Dasein’s possibilities, is in reality and truth much better and much more comprehensively explicated in terms of Heidegger’s conception of hermeneutical understanding.

(Husserl's protention and retention do not yield the same result at all.) I would argue that Heidegger introduces this specifically *hermeneutical conception* into phenomenology, whereby he turns reflective phenomenology to hermeneutical phenomenology.

But Prof Sheehan does not acknowledge this, for, although he frequently talks of Heidegger's hermeneutical tendencies, in his book *Making Sense of Heidegger*, he never isolates the directly hermeneutical contribution in Heidegger's philosophy, as I have done above, because of his overall thesis that Heidegger's philosophy is phenomenological through and through, from beginning to end. He thus misses the finer points, and the most crucial point, i.e., that Heidegger *transforms* Husserl's reflective and theoretical phenomenology into *hermeneutical phenomenology*.<sup>3</sup> And one of the big issues here is whether or not Heidegger hangs on to a kind of phenomenological reduction after the hermeneutical shift in phenomenology. If the phenomenological reduction requires recourse to a transcendental subject, Heidegger is surely not willing to practice it! While I think that Prof Sheehan agrees with this point, I doubt that his quick fix of naming Heidegger's phenomenological reduction an "in-duction" has sufficient conceptual clarity, complexity, and subtlety to settle this admittedly rather difficult theoretical issue.

The other point to make here is that, pace Prof Sheehan, Heidegger nowhere contrasts a so-called phenomenological "in-duction" to Husserl's phenomenological "re-duction." In other words, Sheehan's clarification concerning the two different types of phenomenological reduction, and thereby the two different conceptions of phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger, has absolutely no basis in Heidegger's texts. (For, as I have shown above, where we can find a connection from Sheehan's so-called "in-duction" to Heidegger's texts, it is through his view of hermeneutic understanding, not his explication of a phenomenological reduction, as Sheehan insinuates.) Moreover, if we now go to the one passage where Heidegger directly elaborates on the phenomenological *reduction*, *nota bene*, not "in-duction," as Prof Sheehan would have it, namely in Heidegger's 1927 *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, we find the following. Contra Prof Sheehan's claim, Heidegger explicitly understands the phenomenological reduction as a *reduction* from entities to Being, "*die Rückführung des Blickes zum Sein*."<sup>4</sup> Heidegger sees this in contrast to the phenomenological reduction to *consciousness* in Husserl. Heidegger reiterates his commitment to this kind of a "re-ductive" method or "reduction" several times in the text! No word or idea of an in-duction, as Prof Sheehan would have it. But not only is Heidegger holding on to a concept of a

“phenomenological *reduction* to Being,” he also insists that a proper phenomenological method must include a phenomenological “construction” of Being, which requires a proper “projection” [*Entwurf*] of the meaning of Being gained from the investigator’s unique historical situation.<sup>5</sup> It is precisely here that Prof Sheehan can rightly claim that Heidegger does refer to projection. But he overlooks that all of this is part of a method involving at least *three* distinct moments. (It is not just projection or, as Prof Sheehan would have it “e-jection” or “in-duction.”) For, as Heidegger points out, besides reduction and construction, the phenomenological method also includes the “deconstruction” [*Destruktion*] of accumulated layers of distorted traditional meanings.<sup>6</sup> With this, then, we enter into a full hermeneutical phenomenology, the kind of which Heidegger pursues. In Sheehan’s reconstruction of Heidegger’s phenomenological reduction, however, we get in lieu of Heidegger’s rich tripartite hermeneutical structure the rather bland quasi-logical opposition between Husserl’s “re-duction,” and Heidegger’s “in-duction.” Prof Sheehan’s theory does not hold water, in my view.

After this theoretical excursion, I would like to say a few words about Prof Sheehan’s critique of me. For, when in his *Response* Prof Sheehan chides me for failing to recognize Heidegger’s “in-duction” as Heidegger’s very own version of Husserl’s reduction, I must confess that I am baffled not only because it is not to be found in Heidegger’s texts, as shown above, but also because it is not to be found in Prof Sheehan’s own book *Making Sense of Heidegger*, the book I reviewed! Although there are indeed at least three texts in which Prof Sheehan elaborates the distinction between a phenomenological “in-duction” in opposition to a Husserlian “reduction,” all these texts appeared *after* my review article,<sup>7</sup> and none of this is part of his original book. I believe that Prof Sheehan will concede that I cannot be held responsible for missing something that wasn’t there in the first place, not in the original Heidegger texts, nor his own book!

To return one more time to the theoretical matter at hand, I understand that Prof Sheehan is particularly upset at me for having dared to call Heidegger’s phenomenological reduction an “ontological reduction,” by which I only meant a reduction to Being, in the sense that Heidegger spells this out. I do not think that I am therefore guilty of attributing a metaphysical understanding of Being to Heidegger or harbouring such evil metaphysical thoughts in my own mind, as Prof Sheehan seems to think. But it is quite instructive to reflect on the fact that Heidegger’s reduction to Being does resurface in his later work again, albeit in a different context, the history of Being. In “Anaximander’s Saying,” Heidegger

argues that as Being manifests itself in and through entities, it thereby also conceals itself as itself, withdraws itself, and thus keeps to itself.<sup>8</sup> Heidegger holds that this keeping to itself may very well be called “the *epoché* of Being.”<sup>9</sup> There is a kind of “reserve” and “withholding” in Being that has a structural resemblance to the withholding or bracketing in Husserl’s reduction, albeit with the big difference that here Being becomes accentuated, not consciousness. In fact, in the 1969 seminar at Le Thor, the one that Prof Sheehan likes so much, Heidegger again refers to the “*epoché* of Being,” arguing that in this *epoché* one comes to stand “vis-à-vis Being as Being,” that is, without its relation to beings.<sup>10</sup> What Heidegger means is the genuine and unmediated encounter with what is outside the mere intentionality or immanence of consciousness. In leaving behind the immanence of consciousness, humans come to themselves by standing in the “clearing of Being,” which is something “entirely different” from the human.<sup>11</sup> I believe that Prof Sheehan would agree with that. Everything hinges on “giving up the priority of consciousness” [*Vorrang des Bewusstseins*] for the sake of entering into the region where humans encounter “what is not human,” but which determines them nevertheless.<sup>12</sup> Heidegger holds that we must think of this as entering the “*Ortschaft des Denkens*.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, the turn away from Husserl and the turn to post-subjectivist thought is a turn towards the topology of Being.<sup>14</sup> But, regrettably, on the topology of Being Sheehan has nothing much to say. It is precisely his lack of engagement of interpretations that investigate Heidegger’s post-subjectivist turn that Prof Sheehan’s own distance to a post-subjectivist phenomenology fails to get its own profile, especially when coupled with his rousing defence of modern subjectivity, technology, etc. The point here is that a post-subjectivist phenomenology does not at all require abandoning the reciprocity that binds Dasein to Being and Being to Dasein.

## II. ON THE ALLEGED RELATIVE INSIGNIFICANCE OF DILTHEY AND SCHLEIERMACHER FOR HEIDEGGER

I welcome Prof Sheehan’s clarification on this point. It was not my intention to claim that Aristotle is not of the highest importance for Heidegger, especially in terms of his understanding of metaphysics and even phenomenology, and, in particular, hermeneutics. However, Prof Sheehan surely has read Heidegger’s “*Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache*,” in which Heidegger does assert that he first encountered “hermeneutics” through his “theologies studies,” and that “without this theological provenance” he would never had come upon the path of hermeneutics.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Heidegger continues by writing that after his theological studies

he not only studied hermeneutics in the context of Dilthey's hermeneutical philosophy, but that he also studied Schleiermacher himself. Indeed, Schleiermacher is so important for Heidegger that he even quotes a long paragraph from Schleiermacher in the dialogue on language.<sup>16</sup> All of this is only to say that Sheehan's blanket dismissal of Schleiermacher and his slightly more qualified judgment about Dilthey needs to be scrutinized against Heidegger's own very different comments *and* his systematic reliance on hermeneutics, as I have tried to show above with regard to one particular area.<sup>17</sup> Again, I think that Prof Sheehan's mono-focal interpretation of Heidegger, namely that Heidegger was a phenomenologist through and through and nothing else, blocks him from seeing the many philosophical currents that issue in Heidegger's thinking, without, of course, thereby entirely determining it. I wish something of the hermeneutical spirit could also soften the current discussions about Heidegger's philosophy. After all, philosophy is an ongoing conversation, not a collection of propositions that are either true or false, which does not mean that analytic and conceptual clarity is unimportant. It is in the sense of an ongoing conversation that I read and keep re-reading Prof Sheehan's book, *Making Sense of Heidegger*.

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## Endnotes

1. Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretationen ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zur Ontologie und Logik* in *Gesammelte Werke* Vol. 62, ed. Günther Neumann, (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2005), 345.
2. See Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), especially chapter 1, 27-62.
3. See for instance, Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Hermeneutik und Reflexion* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2000); for Heidegger's proximity to hermeneutical philosophy, see also *Hermeneutical Heidegger*, ed. Michael Bowler and Ingo Farin (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2016); see also my "Heidegger: Transformation of Hermeneutics," in *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Jeff Malpas and Hans-Helmuth Gander (New York: Routledge, 2015), 107-126.
4. Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 24, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1975), 29.
5. *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 29.
6. *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 29.
7. Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger and the Right Heideggerians: Phenomenology vs. crypto-metaphysics," in *Kronos VI* (2017): 78-90; "Making Sense of Heidegger," in *After Heidegger*, ed. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 41-56. The third text is his Response to me in this volume.
8. Martin Heidegger, "Der Spruch des Anaximander," in *Holzwege*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol 5, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2003), 321-373, especially 337/338.
9. "Der Spruch des Anaximander," 337.
10. Martin Heidegger, *Seminare* in *Gesamtausgabe* Vol. 15, ed. Curd Ochwadt (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2005), 365.
11. *Seminare*, 386.
12. *Seminare*, 390.
13. *Seminare*, 385.
14. See Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006); and *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2012).
15. Martin Heidegger, "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache," in *Gesamtausgabe* Vol. 12, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1985), 91.
16. "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache," 92.
17. See also, *Hermeneutical Heidegger*, ed. Michael Bowler and Ingo Farin (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2016), especially the essay by Daniel O. Dahlstrom, "Hermeneutics in *Being and Time*," which traces out Heidegger's relation to the hermeneutical tradition in Dilthey, Schleiermacher, and beyond.