

Philosophy as a Vocation and Personal Commitment: the Young Heidegger and the Question of Philosophy

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Abstract. Determining what philosophy is for the young Heidegger is a complex task. It is also an ambiguous task in that it is considered unresolved and intricate due to its subsidiary link to factual life. This paper will try to show that from the approach of worried concern and from a critique of the theoretical attitude and worldviews, Heidegger conceives that philosophizing is committing oneself to the possibility of carrying out a *personal transformation* lived as a commitment of a personal nature. From this situation, which will be critically scrutinized in the development of the present paper, I will determine philosophy to be the setting in motion of the self-enlightenment of the life of each existent.

Keywords: philosophy, authenticity, personal transformation, existence

Filosofija kaip pašaukimas ir asmeninis įsipareigojimas: jaunas Heideggeris ir filosofijos klausimas

Santrauka. Apibrėžti, kas yra filosofija jaunajam Heideggeriui, – sudėtingas uždavinys. Šią problemą sunkina ir tai, kad būdama išaknyta faktiniame gyvenime ji tampa neišvengiamai daugiareikšmė ir iš esmės neišsprendžiama galutinai. Straipsnyje bandoma parodyti, kad, remdamasis egzistencinio rūpesčio prieiga ir kritikuodamas teorinį požiūrį bei pasaulėžiūrą, Heideggeris filosofavimą suvokia kaip įsipareigojimą asmeninei transformacijai, išgyvenamai kaip prigimtinei asmens pareigai. Šiame straipsnyje detaliai ir kritiškai išanalizavęs tokią sampratą aš siūlysiu suprasti filosofiją kaip postūmį kiekvieno egzistuojančiojo sąvęs, savo buvimo supratimo link.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: filosofija, autentiškumas, asmeninė transformacija, egzistencija

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Introduction

Most exegetical studies on the work of the young Martin Heidegger focus on the period from 1919 to 1927 as a sort of genetic time of an evolutionary nature in order to explain the conditioning that preceded his great work *Being and Time*¹. This dominant interpretative task has been essential for correctly locating the context of such a great work and making it clear that it was not the product of some state of illumination². From this hermeneutic intention, Heidegger's work has been read from teleological criteria, whose purpose was *grosso modo* to make clear the assumptions that Heidegger started from: from the influence of his theological studies, through his criticism of neo-Kantianism, to the influential role played by Luther or his enemy, Aristotle. In any case, very few studies have concentrated their analysis on questioning the role that the notion of "philosophy", understood in a practical sense, would play in the thinking of the young Heidegger³. The exegetical task has been successful thanks to the vigorous effort of consulting documentary material, such as Heidegger's academic courses, which were transcribed by most of his students. In the great number of courses offered by Heidegger in the above-mentioned period, philosophy appears as an unavoidable horizon, but one buried and asphyxiated by Heidegger's own demands on it⁴, as if philosophy were a high, eminent task for only a few persons, in line with the commitment that philosophizing involved. Moreover, as I will justify in what follows, a clear and direct questioning of what philosophy is seems

¹ These studies have genetically understood Heidegger's philosophical path from his first courses at the University of Freiburg till the date of publication of *Being and Time* in 1927. Their reading hypothesis is that Heideggerian thought gestated evolutionarily from the work with other philosophers, such as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Kant, and neo-Kantianism or Husserl. The best representation of these studies, due to the rigour with which it is elaborated, is the work of Kisiel (1995), which was followed by numerous academic works. Sheehan (2014), who openly acknowledges that Heidegger's work, in its vastness and complexity, is determined by phenomenology, a phenomenology that Heidegger exploits creatively, but in the debt of his master, Husserl, deserves special attention. The case of Adrián (2014 and 2015) in Spain is identical. On the other hand, the hypothesis of reading that my paper pursues respecting this exegetical work, so important in that it brought clarity to Heidegger's own line of research, attempts to understand the project of factual life or the phenomenology of existence, developed for example in *Being and Time*, as a philosophy of a practical nature, open and experienced as a personal commitment. This interpretative path, as I say, has not had much echo in the hegemonic interpretations of Heidegger, although I have found small resonances of it in Crowe (2006), who presents a practical interpretation of the thought of the so-called young Heidegger, insofar as certain adherences to Protestantism and the figure of Luther are observed.

² It should be known that before the publication of the lessons given first in Freiburg and later in Marburg, there was a documentary vacuum preventing the hermeneutic genesis of *Being and Time*, arriving, in part, at the consideration that such work was the product of a state of absolute illumination, the creation of a genius, a work that had come out of nowhere. One of the most influential aspects of the exegetical work of the last twenty years has been, precisely, to give an account of the motives and influences that made possible the materialization of such a book, considered one of the most important works of philosophy of the twentieth century.

³ I mean as the main, unique theme.

⁴ This demand continues beyond the time limit set. I reproduce an extract from the *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935) (2000: 13):

"It is entirely correct and completely in order to say: "You can't do anything with philosophy?" [*man kann damit nichts anfangen*]. The only mistake is to believe that with this, the judgment concerning philosophy is at an end. For a little epilogue arises in the form of a counter question: even if we can't do anything with it, may not philosophy in the end do something with us, provided that we engage ourselves with it? Let that suffice for us as an explication of what philosophy is not" (2000: 13). I will preferably use the English translation of Heidegger's complete work. I will also consult the original German edition. Sometimes I will accompany the English translation together with the original German version.

to have been excluded, discarded in favour of the very direction of the Heideggerian project, which can be summarized with the phrase “Phenomenological Hermeneutics of Facticity”. This caused the specific object of philosophy – if there is one – to appear to be blurred and dominated by an essential ambiguity, which will be shown and justified and, moreover, interpreted in relation to two reading hypotheses. First, what is philosophy? As a specific question of purely philosophical questioning, it is always going to appear to lean on the concern to clarify factual existence. This implies that the requirement for clarifying what philosophy is will depend on how far a human being can clarify his own Facticity. Second, in order not to “reify”, philosophy will be considered as the task of activating philosophizing, which is a commitment to an accentuated way of existing involving the vocational authenticity (ownedness) of existence. Clarifying this sinuous situation, which the task of the act of philosophizing is itself caught up in, is in my opinion an urgent question. This clarification of the task of philosophizing will enable an original lecture about the philosophy developed by Heidegger in this period.

The present paper, in the form of an essay, will seek to promote a hypothesis of reading on the question of what philosophy is for the project of the so-called “young Heidegger” or “first Heidegger”. Specifically, it will not seek to leave for granted a thesis in the strict sense, but to open horizons and questions that reinforce a future path of research focused on a practical way forward on the problem of what philosophy is, the question of its object, and the development of phenomenology of factual life. This paper will try to show that from the approach of worried concern and from a critique of the theoretical attitude and worldviews, Heidegger conceives that philosophizing is committing oneself to the possibility of carrying out a *personal transformation*, lived as a commitment of a personal nature. From this situation, which will be critically opened up in the development of the present paper, I will determine philosophy to be the setting in motion of the self-enlightenment of the life of each existent.

On Scientific Philosophy and Philosophy as Worldview

What would be the essential task of philosophy? Such a question must be answered, but first, it is necessary to consider what would not be the philosophy for the young Heidegger; that is to say, before determining what philosophy is, I am going to say what it is not. Very early on, it seems that Heidegger denied that philosophy had to be constituted as a scientific activity, that is, a theoretical science. Nor does he think that philosophy can be a world view, within an approach close to a type of philosophy of culture. If one looks at the historical context, one can clearly see that 19th century Germany, in terms of cultural and philosophical domains, was seduced by the idea of science being very close to naturalism, psychologism, and positivism⁵. This manner of proximity and eroticization of

⁵ Bambach (1995: 21-56) has done an excellent job of interpreting the cultural and philosophical situation inherited by Heidegger. In 1925 Heidegger emphasizes the domain of this scientific attitude as the “theoretical nature of science, of the logic of science” [*Charakter der Wissenschaftstheorie, der Logik der Wissenschaften*] (1985: 13).

philosophy towards universal tendencies will be the ground, as is known, of the criticism made against Husserl and his idea of philosophy as a rigorous science. With regard to the procedure concerning “worldviews” [*Weltanschauungen*], Heideggerian reluctance is based on the accentuated subjectivist character on which the worldview depends on philosophizing. For Heidegger, the task of philosophy can never be considered as a sort of cultural compass by which to know how to answer life’s questions and satisfy individual living conditions. In addition, Heideggerian thought determines that philosophy as a worldview entails a relativism: how many worldviews would be needed?

Philosophy as Theoretical Science

Whatever is theoretical for Heidegger has to be understood as an “attitude” [*Haltung*]. This implies that his criticism is based on understanding science as a task and the work carried out by a scientist and not something obtained from a conceptual definition that guides and determines what is scientific. According to Heidegger, science establishes a relationship with an entity or things from a distance in which the subject of knowledge would be left out, unquestioned. This relationship would be determined by what he calls *Vorhandenheit*, that is, taking the entities as an effective reality, as “something” that is there before our eyes, as a *quiddity* (*quiddidad*)⁶. In this way the theoretical attitude makes the world appear, and the entities that surround us, as something placed before the gaze, are susceptible to the objective analysis proper to a contemplative attitude. It is from here, for example, that the criticism of an epistemological model, which considers the optimal way to develop a scientific activity must start from a model that implements mathematical science, is situated. Heidegger’s critique, therefore, would not be about the validity or not of such knowledge, but about an insufficiency in discerning the situation in which philosophical “questionability” arises, characterized by a specific way of asking, and which would be related, as the Greek tradition says, by the *ti estin*, the *what-is it*. In this way, the philosophy that would call itself scientific, in order to apply the model emanated from the “mathematization” of nature, calls into question the conditions of its *genesis of meaning*, which Heidegger sees in the own factual life:

The worlds of life are led by science to a tendency of “devitalization” [*Entlebung*] and thus deprive the continuation of factual life of the possibility to live its factual “execution” [*Volzugs*]. What has been given to us as urgent, exciting, questionable and yet always satisfying and overflowing from one richness to another and emerges and flows into it for the “world of the self” [*Selbstwelt*] in an incomparable way – all this is devastated, levelled perhaps into a multiform thematic area, but without the “rhythm” [*Rhythmik*] and the “relational character” [*Zusammenhangscharakter*] of a living life. (1993: 77-78)⁷

This supposes affirming that *a theoretical attitude is situated against the possibility of achieving a principle of linkage with an immediate experience of life*, an experience

⁶ See Heidegger 2008: 52-67.

⁷ My translation.

that is supposed to appear from a holistic, contextual character, lived by each subject from a concrete historical situation. So, where does philosophy come from? Of course, according to Heidegger, not from a conceptual domain marked by a scientific attitude, but, as I am already seeing more clearly, from the act of existing, of living, the *here and now*. Therefore, criticism of the theoretical attitude, if it is thought with the intention of clarifying what philosophy is, is not invalidated because the discoveries of the sciences were false, but rather because philosophy is determined from an attitude that is *enveloped by life itself*, from its concrete way of giving itself. This situation of philosophy would mean that it could not simply be accepted, despite the fact that objective truth provides us with secure and universal knowledge. Philosophy grounded only in mathematics cannot be accepted. Heidegger makes it clear:

Philosophy cannot be defined in the usual way, nor can it be characterized through an ordering in a “thematic relationship” [*Sachzusammenhang*], as when it is said: chemistry is a science and painting is an art. An attempt has also been made to put philosophy in its place through a “conceptual system” [*Regriffssystem*], saying that it dealt with a certain object in a certain way. But here, too, the scientific conception of philosophy is being inoculated. The principles of thinking and knowledge remain constantly unexplained... (1995: 8)⁸

Philosophy is not a (theoretical) science because it lacks its own object and at the same time this lack is revealed as the impossibility of fixing a thematic domain. Philosophy could not be just another science because of the extent of its most genuine issues. As can be seen in the fragment recently quoted, philosophy should question the principles of “thinking” [*denken*] and “knowledge” [*erkennen*], which theoretical science takes for granted. One historical example is clear: the way in which Galileo, against Aristotle, asserted mathematics as the only criterion for discovering nature⁹.

The lack of a specific object on the part of philosophy is only a clear sign of *great weakness and vulnerability* since it manifests powerlessness to be able to establish its own constitution as knowledge (science). What Heidegger pronounced in the 1923 course “Hermeneutic Ontology of Facticity” should be recalled: phenomenological hermeneutics is not philosophy.¹⁰ The vulnerability of philosophy lies in the fact that it has to conquer the indispensable conditions for its own access to thinking every time, making the irruption of hermeneutics necessary precisely in order to gain pertinent access that will make it possible for philosophizing to become established, to take root, to start from its own *principle*, which must be life, factual existence, itself, as I have been maintaining.¹¹

⁸ My translation.

⁹ Cf. Koyré (2000:183): “We are also so familiar with the use of mathematics for the study of nature that we do not see Galileo’s audacity that ‘the book of nature is written in geometrical characters’, nor are we aware of the paradoxical nature of his decision to treat mechanics as a branch of mathematics, that is, to replace the real world of everyday experience with a geometrical world and to explain the real by the impossible”. My translation.

¹⁰ “Hermeneutics is itself not philosophy” [*daß die Hermeneutik gar nicht Philosophie*] (Heidegger 1999: 16).

¹¹ Heidegger (2005a: 1): “no foundation, no program or system, is given here; not even philosophy should be expected. It is my conviction that philosophy is at an end [*Es ist meine Überzeugung, daß es mit der Philosophie zu Ende ist*]. We stand before completely new tasks that have nothing to do with traditional philosophy”.

Philosophy, from a radical principle, involves a full transformation of one's own life, since, if the motivational principle of the philosophical attitude is rooted in existence, *not every mode of existence will be one that rightly motivates the philosophical attitude.*

Philosophy as Worldview

In the same way that Heidegger's critique was situated against the positivism inherited from the 19th century, the critique of the worldview will be nourished by an alert reflection on the philosophies of life that also abounded at that time. Heidegger seems to denounce the possibility of philosophy spreading, of reaching everyone equally¹², and he likewise criticizes the fact that philosophy is becoming a theoretical science: Philosophy as a worldview already defines a specific field that serves as a principle for all philosophizing, incarnating it in a context of cultural reference¹³ in which diverse modes of interpretation of human life are accepted uncritically, emphasizing the value of social and individual life, content with bourgeois modes of existence¹⁴. Heidegger considers that the radical principle of life, where it emerges through an indomitable force, cannot and must not be replaced by the significant horizons that emanate from words such as *culture*, *sociability* or *worldview*. In this case, these horizons, as well as the objective domains of theoretical science, are situated if not to the detriment, then as stoppers before the possibility of preparing a way of human questioning that is capable of opening up *life in its immediacy*, in its *radical harshness*, or – which is the same – from its respective facticity. Heidegger understands this going against facticity as an attitude that sweetens life, a lenitive principle of unfortunate consequences if the purpose of all philosophizing, besides being anchored in existence, tries to preserve an alert attitude before all that “is”:

We do not philosophize in order to become philosophers [*Wir philosophieren nicht, um Philosophen zu werden*], no more than to fashion for ourselves and others a salutary worldview that could be procured like a coat and hat. The goal of philosophy is not a system of interesting information, nor a sentimental edification for faltering souls. (Heidegger 2000b: 22)

Neither salvation nor hope nor ethics nor theology. To get back to the “things themselves” of philosophizing means getting rid of any worldview that serves as a motivational, foundational principle. Philosophizing must be based on the very act of existing. However, as will be seen, not just any mode of existence will be valid to radically open up philosophizing.

¹² See Heidegger 2008: 3-4.

¹³ Heidegger 2008: 165: “Phenomenological philosophy and worldview are opposed to one another”.

¹⁴ From a very young age, Heidegger repudiated bourgeois lifestyles based on liberal political principles as well as the accompanying philosophy, German idealism and philosophy of culture and values. What he says in (2010: 130-131) is very paradigmatic: “Philosophy cannot be science; it may not lapse into the attitudinal determination. Philosophizing lies before the turn into attitude and before the shaping of experience into the tasks of theoretical research (...) All worldview philosophy spoils the primordial motive of all philosophizing.” [*Alle Weltanschauungsphilosophie verdirbt das urSprüngliche Motiv alles Philosophierens*]. I recommend reading Denker (2001: 25-38) in order to understand Heidegger's critique of bourgeois lifestyles from a clearly anti-modern orientation.

On What Philosophy Is: Belonging to Worried Concern as a Primary Motive

I observe a fundamental flaw in the Heideggerian *motto*: “bringing philosophy to life”. If philosophy were to lack an object of its own, so would life. Especially if one considers life, beyond any biological definition, as the fact, not at all ascetic, of finding itself existing here and now, subjected to the power of temporality, sheltered from meaning and interpretation. Life is the foundation by which every human attitude is possible. As far as I know there would not be, *prima facie*, a solid argument in the Heideggerian courses to sustain a sort of primacy of philosophy when it comes to gaining clarity about life. If the argument observes Heidegger’s gesture, having determined science and the worldview to be orphan knowledge when it comes to rethinking its own foundations and limits, one soon realizes the insufficiency of both positions. Now, this lack is certainly worth noting, but it is also stimulating, for it leaves the way open: it leaves a cleft for interpretation to be able to unfold the usufruct of the philosophy whose ownership would lie in life itself. This is why I am going to focus on life taken from this existential imprint, that is to say as a phenomenon linked to being-in-the-world, in order to refine the research being conducted and to see to what extent – if philosophy is as subsidiary to life as the soil in which it takes root – not every mode of existence is valid, i.e. valid to motivate philosophizing. In Heidegger’s case, the motivation for philosophizing being rooted in existence is found in part of his long and varied correspondence. In a letter dated 27 January 1917 sent to Heinrich Rickert, one of the representatives of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Freiburg, Heidegger compares the death of Emil Lask, whom he admired, in the battles that took place in the First World War, and his philosophical activity, based on *a motivation to live life from the unity that can give a commitment of the personal*¹⁵. What Heidegger says to Father Krebs is also worth noting:

I believe that I have the inner calling to philosophy and, through my research and teaching, to do what stands in my power for the sake of the eternal vocation of the inner man and to do it for this alone and so justify my existence [*Dasein*] and work ultimately before God. (2002: 70)

It is very clear from this letter that the motivation for philosophizing is the consideration of philosophy as a vocation of life, an integral commitment that involves the human being in his totality. If criticism is focused on what has already been expressed about the theoretical attitude and the worldview, then it will be understood that the criticism, beyond all that has been announced, has to be thought of in correlation with the possibility that philosophy not only emerges from life but also commits, *obliges the human being to transform his life*. Hence, beyond what Heidegger announced when he said that philosophy is motivated in life, the important thing would not be, therefore, that philosophy remains linked to life, but rather that it arises from an accentuated way of living it, in the making

¹⁵ [Heidegger 2002]: 37: “This obituary is again the wonderful thing, as in Lask’s work: «the living unity of personal life and creative philosophical work»” [*die lebendige Einheit von persönlichem Leben und philosophisch schöpferischer Arbeit*]. My translation.

of a practical commitment, of transformation and change to our modes of behaviour. When in the “War Emergency Course” Heidegger speaks of a possibility of renewing life using a notion known to the phenomenological world: “(im) Rückgang”, which could be translated as the act of “retreat”, “return” and “turning back”, or even “support”, if one considers the noun *Rücken*, I believe I am right in emphasizing this transformative power that must be produced if life is to be made again, renewed, and that philosophy appears as a phenomenon composed of a plethora of genuine meanings. This life renewed should not be taken as a life transformed by practical rules in the manner of the insertion of the commandments in the life of a believer, but as a “pre-life” [*Vorlebens*] that is fostered by taking a philosophical attitude from a personal, indelible vocation, a pre-life that emerges from the binding force of the motivation that comes rigged with the vocation. The power of a vocation lies in the call that one’s own existence makes for an accentuated “ownership/authenticity” [*Eigentlichkeit*] by which the problem of philosophy and of human knowledge in general, in addition to becoming urgent, is marked by the task of an integral and holistic clarification. Philosophy should be transformed by the contours of the Heideggerian project into an “original science of life” [*Urwissenschaft des Leben*], that is, into a radical knowledge, a science:

genuine, original, living, constantly renewing the problem of consciousness, never resting – a “genuine science” [*echte Wissenschaft*], which has been lost in our time and in the 19th century, which cannot be demonstrated in a new dawn, but which wants to be lived again. A question of life, personal being and a creative act (=radicalism). (Heidegger 1993: 5)¹⁶

To turn science into radical knowledge would mean to inoculate it with the motivation of a personal, vocational nature and committed to human life in a full and open sense. In the specific case of philosophy, it would be necessary that the questions legitimized by the philosophical tradition be nested in a “worried concern” [*Bekümmernung*], taken as a primary concern, by which the task of existing becomes a deep problem in itself. The motivation of philosophy would be found in a radical concern with respect to the problems bequeathed by tradition, the fundamental questions that inaugurated the historical path of philosophy as knowledge. However, to consider that philosophy is developed from the horizon of a personal commitment necessarily implies that the questioning subject is within the same question to elucidate. The implications of this “concern”, or primordial restlessness, as a driving motive of philosophy will not be without difficulties, especially in a certain approach of philosophy towards the irrational tendencies typical of German Romanticism. As far as the Heideggerian project is concerned, its main way would be “worried concern” [*Bekümmernung*], which should be understood as an accentuated disturbance of human life whose manifestation would try to stir up life in a peculiar sense, from which it would be possible to ask in another way, where the main problem is the experience of the self¹⁷:

¹⁶ My translation.

¹⁷ For an explanation of the formal indication as a hermeneutic-phenomenological method, I recommend reading: Kisiel 1995: 116-149. I would also like to recommend my own articles: Garrido-Periñán 2019a: 175-200; 2019b: 887-911 and 2019c: 159-175.

Philosophy has the task of maintaining the facticity of life and strengthening the facticity of “existence” [*Dasein*]. Philosophy as a factual life experience demands a motive, where the worried concern for the factual life experience itself remains. We call this the “fundamental philosophical experience” [*philosophische Grunderfahrung*] (this is the proof of this motive). This is not a special enlightenment, but it is possible in every “concrete existence” [*konkreten Dasein*], where the worried concern returns to the present existence (...) and from there the entire “terminology of philosophy” [*Begrifflichkeit der Philosophie*] can be understood and determined. It is from this that the original purpose of philosophy itself acquires its meaning. “The rigour of philosophy is more original than all scientific rigour” [*Die Strenge der Philosophie ist ursprünglicher als alle wissenschaftliche Strenge*]. It is an explanation beyond all scientific rigour to elevate the “worried-being” [*Bekümmertsein*] in its constant renewal in the facticity of existence “and to make present existence finally insecure” [*and the current Dasein letztlich unsicher zu machen*]. (Heidegger 1993: 174)

Philosophy is a type of questioning that, being born from a radical worried concern, tries to articulate and make lucid not only its own motive – its respective why – but the genuine debtor tendencies of such preoccupation, for which the real problem to be elucidated is: the original challenge is my own life taken as *the fact of having to exist*, here and now, under the prevailing demand of decisions, what in *Being and Time* will be called *Können-sein*.

Philosophy: Reversal and Practical Transformation

I must note that a recent definition exercised on the label “philosophy”, indebted to a type of experience marked as worried concern, has its own development in Heidegger’s courses, both those belonging to the Freiburg period and also to the Marburg period, with special attention to his analysis of the Pauline Epistles,¹⁸ although the definitional task on philosophy finds a certain place in a deepening of the factual life, which I must omit here for reasons of length. I am now going to focus on what I consider to be most important for my interests and which Heidegger explained in an ambiguous way. This topic would focus on the effects that worried concern had in defining the object of philosophy, which is based on the need for an authentic transformation of human life:

Philosophy itself can only be achieved by a reversal in the path, but not by a simple reversal, so that knowledge would be directed only to other objects, but, in a more radical way, by “an authentic transformation” [*eine eigentliche Umwandlung*]. (Heidegger 1995: 10)¹⁹

This transformation is a complete “reversal” [*Umwendung*] of the customary way of living, which implies a change in the way we occupy ourselves. This means, taken negatively, that the “normal” ways of life are insufficient, insofar as they do not incorporate a productive and disruptive element on the possible affections²⁰ or worries that every human

¹⁸ If the reader is interested in this topic, allow me to cite: Garrido-Perriñán, 2017: 533-556.

¹⁹ My translation.

²⁰ For this reason, since Heidegger, several exegetical studies have been carried out whose topics attempt to develop a phenomenology of moods. This topic concentrates countless bibliographical references. Due to the rigour with which he works, it is worth highlighting the book by Ferrera (2002).

being can suffer from the mere fact of existing. This productive element, launched from what has been called “worried concern” [*Bekümmern*], must be the capacity to transform existence so that it becomes clear, lucid. This would mean taking into consideration all the types of masking that make us impotent when it comes to being able to activate such a transformation, the human possibility of activating philosophizing from the fundamental experience that such a worried concern implies²¹. But if philosophy is determined by a transformative power over human life, what kind of transformation is it? Towards what should it be oriented? Are there better and worse ways of transformation? Could rules be established to ensure success in the task? What definition of philosophy does Heidegger use to direct the transformation that is presupposed to philosophy itself? There are exegetes who, having realised this necessary condition, which belongs to philosophy itself, have wanted to see that Heidegger’s philosophical gesture is exclusively that of phenomenological reconstruction²². Heidegger’s philosophical would pass if and only if through the phenomenological, as a task of articulation and thematization of one’s own (intentional) life, but this would suppose understanding the philosophical character as always *deferred with respect to life given in its immediacy*, and, consequently, following in the wake of what Heidegger himself criticizes regarding the theoretical attitude: *philosophy would be a reflexive, almost abstractive gesture whose task would be that of reconstruction of what is lived*, for which it would be a matter of articulating with a view to a certain thematization of phenomena. These interpretations, moreover, have been deeply rooted in the course of so-called Heideggerian studies and are undoubtedly valid, especially if one considers that, from the outset, when inquiring about the thematic object proper to philosophy, the researcher comes up against an ambiguous, obscure and difficult-to-understand horizon, leaving the way open for almost any well-justified interpretation. Likewise, this reading, which makes philosophy an exercise that attempts to determine the constitutive spheres of meaning of phenomena always refractory to the immediacy of living, relies heavily on hermeneutics as a method conducive to achieving the task of reconstruction, since it starts, not without reason, from the assumption that existence is a phenomenon that is governed by horizons of interpretation. Now, as I have already said, Heidegger makes it quite clear that hermeneutics is not philosophical (See note 10). Therefore, placing the hermeneutic task as the enabling centre in an attempt to explain the philosophical aspect of Heidegger’s thought could be a crass error, even if it is backed by rigorous and documented work, but fragmentary and partial in that it has omitted the in-depth development of the consequences, so to speak, the “practical”, that can be drawn from questioning the object that would belong to philosophy in the so-called project of the young Heidegger.

²¹ What he says in 1923 is remarkable (1999: 26): “Dasein speaks about itself and sees itself in such and such a manner, and yet this is only a *mask* which it holds up before itself in order not to be frightened by itself. [*Das Dasein spricht von ihm selbst, es sieht sich so und so, und doch ist es nur eine Maske, die es sich vorhält, um nicht vor sich selbst zu erschrecken*]”».

²² This is the case, in Spanish, of Ramón Rodríguez (2008: 65-81), whose reading is based on the hypothesis that the binding motivation of worried concern would be “a strictly phenomenological concept, which only tries to make comprehensible the fact of the determined appearance of things” (74) and that, furthermore, it could be reconstructed by appealing to the notion of intentionality, which would underpin the existential, fundamental experience for Heidegger, of worried concern (also of existential care).

In what remains, I will try to make more explicit my practical reading of Heideggerian philosophy with the intention of not closing the possibility of continuing research, but leaving open paths of development to be continued in future works.

Conclusions: On the Practical Possibility of Philosophy

In the so-called “Natorp Report”, Heidegger manifests that what we risk with the task of philosophy is like a struggle emanating from a concrete way of maturing or carrying out what worried concern offers us, a concern that is the root experience of our existing being:

The possibility of such “contemporization” [*Mitzeitigung*] is based on the fact that philosophical research is the explicit execution of a fundamental movement of factual life and is constantly maintained within it. (2005b: 351)²³

In this situation, if philosophy is retained by the fact that it finds itself alive, existing, being accentuated in a radical experience called “worried concern”, where life is placed in radical insecurity without the possibility of diverting the look towards the horizons that entertain us, where the problem is me as soon as I exist, then a theoretical model based on the imposition of distance in ascetic treatment and contemplation is invalid because if my existence becomes the problem, it means that the problem that I must clarify does not involve only the existing one of flesh and blood, but the manner in which life, existence, resembles me, through a commitment that obliges me to act, to realize, to resolve myself. When Heidegger speaks of “fundamental experience” [*Grunderfahrung*], the adjective “fundamental” implies that what is experienced summons us, in an inexorable way, to have to face what happens to us or happens to us as humans, and therefore, it puts us in way of a transformation where it would reside, according to my interpretation, as a philosophical gesture. Hence, what is being dealt with when a human being philosophizes is not only the arguing and deciphering of the phenomenological morphology of the rational motive on worried concern in order to make it explicit in relation to a horizon based on the temporality of *Dasein*²⁴; the other part is also indispensable: *what we are dealing with in philosophy is a possibility, stretched from a personal vocation, of transforming what we are, our acts and actions*. One can quickly see this practical tendency of philosophy for Heidegger when he takes into consideration that the lived experience of worried concern already presupposes

²³ My translation. I reproduce this important fragment from the same text: “The object of philosophical research is the ‘human *Dasein*’ [*menschliche Dasein*] insofar as it questions its character of being. This fundamental direction of philosophical questioning is not imposed and ‘unscrewed’ [*aufgeschraubt*] from the outside by the questioned object but must be understood as the explicit apprehension of a fundamental movement of factual life itself, which is of such a ‘manner’ [*Weise*] that it is concerned with its being in the concrete ‘temporization’ [*Zeitigung*] of its being, even when it is avoiding itself (. . .) Philosophical research can only be sustained by this obligation if it does not want to completely lose sight of its object (2005b: 348-349).

²⁴ An explanation would be needed as to why phenomenological treatment would imply a reflexive attitude, one that seeks to determine the constitutive basis of experience through *epochè* and mainly reduction. See: Garrido-Perrián 2019: 175-200; 2019b: 887-911 and 2019c: 159-175. In these works, I have carried out a phenomenological exercise around the notion of Selfhood in the work *Being and Time*, understanding the very limits of the phenomenological position and the relationship between temporality and selfhood.

taking into account of the whole alienating domain of existence called, at the time, the “wreck” [*Ruinaz*] and the “fall” [*Verfall*]. Therefore, the experience in which all philosophy is rooted, then called “worried concern”, calls for destruction, but not only understood as a hermeneutic model, but from a vital commitment of clear Lutheran resonance, where what is questioned are those horizons that subject and enslave our existence²⁵. That Heidegger took Destruction as an eminently positive phenomenon is made clear in some of the courses, where he explained that the purpose of destruction is to free the past from its state of confinement in order to provoke a new relationship with it and to transform the way we understand the present, which is the only way we can exist²⁶. This gesture of transformation on human life is, for me, the key to all philosophy, exemplified in *Being and Time*, in conformity with the explanation of existential authenticity, and it is what I believe supposes the great failure of Heideggerian thought with regard to the work of 1927, but, as I am showing, also with regard to the project of phenomenology of factual life. And this practical commitment of philosophy can be seen in the documentary evidence, which we can read, namely when in various correspondences Heidegger and Jaspers deal with the possibility of a “community of struggle” [*Kampfgemeinschaft*]²⁷, or also in the reluctance with which Heidegger accepts the university model, showing himself to be very much against it, with aspirations to change it²⁸. Whatever existential authenticity is would deserve exclusive treatment, but I can say in this respect that the authenticity to which philosophizing leads us, according to Heidegger, would be on the side of making possible an awake attitude in the world that does not take anything for granted, nor any thought a priori, that does not accept things uncritically. The lack of a thematic object on the part of philosophy should not be considered a symptom of its weakness, of a squalid or parasitic constitution because philosophy is not only due to life, *it is due to life in order to enhance it*. Philosophy has no object because it is based on the unfolding of a way, a manner; philosophy is an attitude of struggle against the alienations that embody our existence. It should be remembered, as I have seen here, that Heidegger’s criticism of theoretical science comes from a reading in which science is deprived of any *quidditative* attribute, being taken within the order of an attitude. If science is defined as an attitude, why shouldn’t philosophy be the same? But philosophy is an eminently free attitude, because it fights against all those instances that, being hegemonic or passing projects of any fashion, undermine existence, impoverish it by stealing the most valuable thing from it: the human capacity to question itself and to question what surrounds it in order to be what we are.

²⁵ I am going to refrain from making a detailed reflection on the importance of the method of *Destruktion* in providing the ground or from-where of all philosophizing. I recommend reading Crowe 2006: 231-266 and van Buren 1994b: 159-174 to see Luther’s influences on the Heideggerian model of destruction.

²⁶ See: Heidegger 2005a: 117-123.

²⁷ The quotations that can be extracted from the correspondence between the two philosophers ([Heidegger 1992]) are many and varied.

²⁸ See: Heidegger 2001: 49, 54-55, 56-57 and 1999: 26-27; [Heidegger 1990]: 28-30. Later on, this concern would become one of the driving motives of his time at the Rectorate.

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