

## Week 2

### Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*

[Dasein; leap; ground; metaphysics; spirit]

Dasein: 'Being there' (German: da - there; sein - being); translated as 'being-in-the-world' (in basic terms: something aware of its own existence). Dasein does not mean 'the biological human being' and does not mean 'the person'. Instead, dasein refers to a mode of being realized (mainly) by human beings. Heidegger states in *Being and Time* (4.32) that 'Dasein is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it'. The phrase 'being is an issue for it' means that being makes us think and care about existence. Heidegger describes 'care' as a mood in *Being and Time*, a mood in which we're open to others and think about how we might leave our lives in relation to others. Some critics (Thomas Sheehan, for example) define dasein precisely as 'being-the-open; being-open; openness'. While inanimate objects persist through time, and plants and some animals have their lives determined by the demands of survival and reproduction, humans have to think about how to lead their lives. We have to be open (have dasein) because human life is not pre-set.

Leap: Heidegger uses the word 'leap' to describe a way of 'arriving at' a deeper understanding of the world; he says we need to 'leap' or spring from our current state (metaphysical homelessness) to get a better view of our world (we don't leap out of our context). Heidegger says: 'rather, the realm from which one leaps first becomes surveyable when one makes the leap – surveyable in a different way from before. The leap of thinking does not leave behind it that from which it leaps; rather, it assimilates it in a more original fashion' – *The Principle of Reason* (1953-56).

Ground: Heidegger is concerned with the 'ground of being': this sometimes means the physical ground on which we stand (the earth; the land); and sometimes means being-in-the-world (everydayness –daily getting on with our lives).

Metaphysics: Metaphysics is philosophy that asks questions about being. It asks 'what is being', 'what is really there', 'what is it like', 'how do we understand our world'? A key branch of metaphysics is called 'ontology', which specifically studies the nature of being, existence and reality. Some philosophers (David Hume, Richard Dawkins) argue that metaphysics is pointless and that science and mathematics can explain all aspects of life (even if science hasn't yet explained everything, it will one day). Heidegger argues that metaphysics has been overlooked through the history of philosophy and asks what kind of thinking happens when we put being back at the centre of study.

Spirit: Before we can understand what Heidegger means by spirit, we have to turn back to Hegel's definition in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel uses the word 'geist' in his title, which means both mind and spirit (and Hegel's original title for the book was *Science of the Experience of Consciousness*, so we might want to interpret spirit as consciousness as well). Hegel's study of spirit/mind is notoriously difficult: for simplicity, think of spirit/mind as self-

knowing or self-conscious reason. Hegel's main point is that this process of self-knowing evolves through time and it will one day allow the self to achieve 'freedom' (by which Hegel means knowledge of everything, a universal understanding of all existence).

In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger quotes another essay, his Rectoral Address (also called 'The Self-Assertion of the German University'), to define spirit: 'spirit is originally attuned, knowing resolution to the essence of Being' and then: 'Spirit is the empowering of the powers of beings as such and as a whole'. The term is controversial because Heidegger is accused of endorsing Nazism in the Rectoral Address. Heidegger denied this, and argued that the self-assertion of the German university (the German 'spirit') was to learn, to know and to question and signifies the human potential 'to be' (to have Dasein, and thus, to care for others). There are several critics who engage with the 'danger' of spirit in Heidegger – famously, Jacques Derrida in *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (and see David Wood's collection of essays by various authors, *Of Derrida, Heidegger and Spirit*); and see also Emmanuel Faye's *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy* (who argues that Heidegger's books should not be censored, but should be housed under 'Nazism' in the library, rather than under 'Philosophy').

### Gerard Manley Hopkins

[inscape; instress; bidding]

Inscape: the life inside something, a flower, a bird, a tree, an object; its internal and unique design or pattern, one instilled by God which brings us closer to why God created that particular object

Instress: the force that holds the unique design or pattern of a thing together and communicates it to the human imagination; instress carries inscape into our heads

Example of inscape/instress: 'I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it. Its inscape is mixed of strength and grace, like an ash tree. The head is strongly drawn over backwards and arched down like a cutwater drawing itself back from the line of the keel. The lines of the bells strike and overlie this, rayed but not symmetrically, some lie parallel. They look steely against the paper, the shades lying between the bells and behind the cocked petal-ends and nursing up the precision of their distinctness, the petal-ends themselves being delicately lit. Then there is the straightness of the trumpets in the bells softened by the slight entasis and by the square play of the mouth.' - Hopkins, *Journal*

Bidding: '... a nameless quality which is of the first importance both in oratory and drama: I sometimes call it *bidding*. I mean the art or virtue of saying everything right *to* or *at* the hearer, interesting him, holding him in the attitude of correspondent or addressed or at least concerned, making it everywhere an act of intercourse—and of discarding everything that does not bid, does not tell' - letter to Robert Bridges, November 4, 1882