

INTERVIEW WITH PROF. RICHARD CAPOBIANCO

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Interviewed by Prof. Vladimír Leško for „FILOZOFIA“ (Slovakia)

(In English and translated into Slovak for publication in the journal)

1. *You are well-known in Slovakia as a philosopher and the author of two original books about Heidegger's philosophy, „Engaging Heidegger“ and „Heidegger's Way of Being“. For a long time you have conducted research on Heidegger's work, but we know that you started with the study of Economics at the university and not philosophy. We are interested to know what prompted this change in direction?*

First, my heartfelt thanks to you and to your colleagues for your generous interest in my work on Heidegger. I am delighted to hear of this, and I extend my greetings and good wishes to your philosophical community in Slovakia.

Yes, it is true that my first studies were in Economics, and I remain very much interested in the history of economic ideas. Yet I also discovered in myself a concern for investigating even more fundamental issues about being human and about our existence and our reality. This led me to the study of philosophy, and I considered all the great ancient Greek thinkers. There is such wisdom in ancient Greek philosophy (and in classical philosophy generally), and to this day I continue to read and study and teach these great works.

As I advanced in my philosophical studies and concerned myself with all the other great philosophers in the history of philosophy, I also attended lectures by Hans-Georg Gadamer when he visited in the United States, and I recall that he spoke so glowingly about how Heidegger was such a dynamic and engaging teacher. Heidegger, he would say, brought ancient Greek philosophy alive in a new way. Heidegger wanted to dig down past all the tired and worn propositions that were handed down about ancient Greek thinking in order to unearth the vibrant “root” experiences that were the *source* of their thinking and their terminology—and indeed, these experiences are the source of all philosophical thinking. I remember being excited all over again to study Greek philosophy, and I immersed myself in the study of Heidegger's writings. With the guidance of the preeminent Heidegger commentator of the day, William J. Richardson, I engaged all that Heidegger had to say, and I was amazed at the richness of his thinking. Heidegger breathed life into the study of philosophy; he made it living and fresh. And after all these many years, I continue to try to approach my own teaching and writing in this same way; I wish for my students and for readers of my work to be brought into the “experiences” that flow into philosophical reflection, and not simply to memorize and recite “positions” and “propositions.”

So, to come back to your question, I think that there is, of course, great value in the study of all the disciplines, but when one is led to ask the deepest questions, one is led to the study of philosophy.

2. *Your philosophy studies are closely associated with Boston College and your professor and mentor W. J. Richardson, who wrote the important book „Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought“. Would you please tell us something about him and the importance of his research for us today.*

William J. Richardson was my teacher and mentor, and in the later years, he was a friend and colleague. In the last decade, I was delighted to give presentations with him, and I was honored that he provided a Foreword to my first book *Engaging Heidegger*. This past December, he passed away at the age of 96, and Heidegger Studies has lost a true giant. But he lived a full and rich life, and his work on Heidegger will continue to influence future generations of students of Heidegger's thinking.

Prof. Richardson's great book, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, was first published in 1963, and it brought into view the centrality of the *Seinsfrage* in Heidegger's lifetime of thinking. My own work continues and extends in new ways his foundational research. But on a personal note, Bill (as I knew him) had wonderful stories, which he told with great flair and relish, about the research and writing of his book, and especially about his decisive meeting with Heidegger in 1959. In my conversations with Bill right up to the very end, he always recalled Heidegger's generosity and graciousness, and he remained struck at how profoundly calm and meditative Heidegger became as he peered out into the wooded landscape—it was the countenance of a “nature mystic,” in Bill's own words.

The importance of Prof. Richardson's book remains that he showed, with such great philosophical rigor and clarity, how Heidegger unfolded the core matter of Being over his whole lifetime of thinking.

3. *In 2011, when I began reading your book „Engaging Heidegger“, I was struck by how Prof. Richardson had praise for your studies. I agreed with the three things that he highlighted about your book. Would you present to our readers who have not read your book yet how you see the essence of Heidegger's „engaging“ thinking.*

My first book *Engaging Heidegger* was an effort to show the centrality of the Being question in the whole of Heidegger's work, but I wanted to use texts that had not been carefully considered in the scholarship thus far, for example, the *Four Seminars* (*Vier Seminare*) that Heidegger conducted for French colleagues in the years 1966-1973. My discussion of the *Four Seminars*, which forms the heart of Ch. 1, shows clearly that the later Heidegger remained focused on the matter of Being right to the very end of his life. In Ch. 2, I considered both his early *Ereignis*-writings and the later *Ereignis*-writings to make clear that Heidegger thought of his distinctive term, *Ereignis*, as another name for Being itself (*Sein selbst*). And this is also true for his other original term, *Lichtung*, which is the topic of both Chs. 5 and 6. These chapters bring into view what had not been clarified before in the scholarship: that Being remained Heidegger's principal concern and that his key terms *Ereignis* and *Lichtung* are other names for Being; that is, these terms say “the same,” to use his language, but they are not simply “identical” in an empty, logical sense.

Engaging Heidegger is also centrally concerned with the relation of the human being to Being, and through careful textual analysis I highlight how the early Heidegger is quite different from the later Heidegger in characterizing this relation existentially. Chapters 3 and 4 chart the movement in his thinking from emphasizing the mood of *Angst* to the mood of “astonishment,” and from the theme of our “homelessness” to our “being-at-home” in relation to Being. This kind of thorough analysis of the development of Heidegger’s thinking on these issues had never been taken up in the scholarship beforehand.

Finally, *Engaging Heidegger* seeks to highlight the beauty and resonance of Heidegger’s thinking. Heidegger was arguably the most “engaging” philosopher of the 20th century, and I wanted to help make that clear by “engaging” his thinking in a careful and rigorous way—but also in a lively and “engaging” manner. And I hope readers will agree.

4. *For the moment, let us stay with „Engaging Heidegger“. In this book you emphasize Heidegger’s teaching in the context of his four seminars with his French colleagues – in Le Thor (1966, 1968, 1969) and in Zähringen (1973). You propose that Heidegger’s later thought is a reaffirmation of the beginning of his Denkweg. For our readers, could you summarize this point?*

Some recent Heidegger commentators have argued that Heidegger neglected the *Seinsfrage* in the later years, but the *Four Seminars* confirm that the Being-question remained central to his thinking to the very end. In the last seminar in 1973 in Zähringen, it is stated clearly and decisively that “We must emphasize again and again that the only question that has ever moved Heidegger is the question of Being: What does Being mean?”

Thus, in *Engaging Heidegger*, I show how in each of the many seminars over the years 1966 to 1973, Heidegger returned again and again to clarifying the fundamental features of Being. In addition, Being—understood as the temporal-spatial emerging and unfolding of all beings—is also named *physis*, *aletheia*, the primordial *Logos*, *kosmos*, *Ereignis*, and *Lichtung*. Heidegger had maintained this position for many years, as I have also shown in *Heidegger’s Way of Being*, but in the *Four Seminars* he affirms his readings once again. On p. 30, I quote from a letter that Heidegger wrote to Manfred Frings in 1966: “For it is this question of Being—and it alone—that determines the way of my thought and its boundaries.”

5. *In the last seminar in 1973, Heidegger offered an important reading about Parmenides. How do you understand its importance?*

As you observe, in the last seminar in Zähringen in 1973, Heidegger read a short statement on Parmenides that we may say sums up his lifetime of thinking about Being. What I note, however, is that his final statement on Parmenides is similar to the many other statements that he had composed over the whole course of his lifetime. In particular, Heidegger’s statement recalls his reading of the fragments of Parmenides in

his 1951-52 lecture course *What is Called Thinking?* (*Was Heisst Denken?*). At the heart of Heidegger's reflection is his effort to elucidate fragment 6 that calls upon us to say and take to heart "*eon: emmenai*" (the archaic Greek spelling of "*on: einai*").

As Heidegger brilliantly worked this out, Parmenides, at the very dawn of Western thinking, gave us to think Being as the one fundamental "process" or "way" that unfolds all beings. In other words, "*eon: emmenai*" means *the emergent being (eon) in its very emerging (emmenai)*. Or to put this another way, it refers to that-which-is present (*das Anwesende*) in its very presencing (*anwesen selbst*). Admittedly, Heidegger's elucidation of the fragment is dense and difficult, but his meaning is apparent enough: to meditate on Being is to meditate on the temporal dynamic process whereby and wherein all beings issue forth and come to be, that is, the emerging of all that emerges.

6. *In your work, you write at length and well about how Heidegger's understanding of Being (Sein) needs to be carefully clarified. On the one hand, there is the being-ness of beings, but his emphasis was always on recovering an understanding of Being itself (das Sein selbst; das Sein als solches; das Sein als Sein) – Being considered, as he sometimes said, without regard to beings. Could you say more about Being itself in this way. Is it possible to „know“ Being itself?*

Your question goes to the heart of a clarification that must be made in order to understand Heidegger's original and distinctive thinking about Being, and it is a clarification that I seek to make in both of my books. What we may glean from his life-long reflections and meditations is that Being itself or Beyng (*Sein selbst/Seyn*) lets beings (*das Seiende*) be in their beingness (*die Seiendheit*). As he put this simply and elegantly in 1945: "Now Beyng is that which lets each and every being be what it is and how it is, precisely because Beyng is the freeing that lets every single thing rest in its abiding fullness; that is, Beyng safeguards each and every thing." In other words, Being, which is not a particular being, is the temporal-spatial ontological "way" or "process" whereby and wherein all beings issue forth, come to be, in their beingness (*Seiendheit*), that is, in their full appearance or "full look" (the ancient Greek philosophical terms *eidos, morphe*; the medieval terms *essentia, quidditas*). Being is the pure emerging of all that emerges (*physis*). Being is the pure manifesting of all that is manifest (*aletheia*). Being is the pure laying-out and gathering of all that is (the primordial *Logos*). This understanding of Being, although already in evidence in the early work, came into fullest view in his "later" writings and reflections. So, yes, indeed, "knowing" Being is possible, but we do not know—and say—Being in the same way that we know and say beings; and that's the challenge.

7. *Some researchers such as O. Pöggeler think that the second most important work of Heidegger's is „Contributions to Philosophy (From Ereignis)“. I was very pleased when reading both of your books that you consider Heidegger's most important work in the 1930's to be „Introduction to Metaphysics“ (1935). What is your thinking about „Contributions“ in relation to „Introduction to Metaphysics“?*

It is true that in recent years, Heidegger's private manuscript *Beiträge* or *Contributions to Philosophy (From Ereignis)*, which he composed between 1936-38, has become the focal point of a number of Heidegger commentators. This may be understandable because this text was not published until after Heidegger's death and it is a very enigmatic work. Some of the scholarship has been superb; but some commentators wish to see in this text the promise of getting to some "secret" teaching of Heidegger or of getting to the *Ur-Heidegger* that somehow unlocks the meaning of all of his other writings—and neither is the case.

More simply, this manuscript represents Heidegger's experimental efforts in the 1930s to revise and restate his core concerns. It is a notable work because it gives us a vivid picture of Heidegger wrestling with language to say in a fresh way the basic themes of his thinking, especially as he was making the transition to his "later" work. Yet we must not overstate the importance of this text. From the longer perspective of Heidegger's place in the history of philosophy, I think that the two most important texts from the 1930s will be his *Introduction to Metaphysics* and his essay "The Origin of the Work of Art." As I point out in Ch. 4 of *Heidegger's Way of Being*, Heidegger himself considered *Introduction to Metaphysics* to be one of his most important statements, and we must return to it if we are to understand and appreciate the core matter of his thinking—and communicate it clearly to others. *Introduction to Metaphysics* is a masterwork that is more accessible to a larger philosophical audience—now and in the future—than *Beiträge*.

8. *Heidegger brings to the philosophy of the twentieth century many new philosophical ideas and terms, and two of the most important are die Lichtung and das Ereignis. You rightly pay great attention to them in your researches. How do you understand these terms, and how important is it that Heidegger states that „Die Lichtung selber aber ist das Sein“?*

Heidegger loved language, and he was always trying to find new ways to bring to language the core matter that he had in view. His principal concern was with Being/Beyng, but he also found new and refreshed ways of saying this, and *Ereignis* and *Lichtung* are his own distinctive terms, his *terms of art*, if you will. In *Engaging Heidegger*, I examine Heidegger's understanding of *Lichtung* in Chapters 5 and 6, which represents a step forward in the scholarship, as you point out. There is so much to say about Heidegger's use of this term, but to answer your question more directly, it is clear that Heidegger understood *Lichtung* to be another name for Being/Beyng. As you note, he states this most decisively in the 1946 "Letter on Humanism": "But the clearing itself is Being." What this means is that although there is a cor-relation between the human being and Being, it is Being that is the clearing or opening of all things in the first place. We human beings are able to "clear" or "open" things up in language only because Being has cleared or opened all things—that is, allowed them to come to be—in the first place. Heidegger emphasizes the priority and primacy of Being as "the clearing itself" (*die Lichtung selbst*) or as "the open itself" (*das Offene selbst*).

9. *You ask in Chapter 2 of „Engaging Heidegger“, what is the case with das Ereignis? How is it that Ereignis is (only) another name for Being itself?*

Some recent commentators have stated that Heidegger subordinated his notion of Being/Beyng to the notion of *Ereignis*, but this is not the case. In the early *Beiträge* and the *Beiträge*-related manuscripts, he often states that “*Ereignis* is Beyng” or that “Beyng is *Ereignis*,” and he also frequently cites “Beyng as *Ereignis*” or “*Ereignis* as Beyng.” This is also the case in his later *Ereignis*-writings of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Most notably, in his famous 1962 lecture “Time and Being,” he brings his remarks on *Ereignis* to a conclusion by stating that “the sole aim of this lecture has been to bring into view Being itself as *Ereignis*.” In Ch. 2 of *Engaging Heidegger* and in other articles, I present all of this textual evidence to show that Heidegger always considered his distinctive term *Ereignis* to be only another name for Being/Beyng. In other words, both names bring into view the core matter (*die Sache selbst*), but perhaps we can say that the word *Ereignis* is especially effective in bringing into view the temporal “happening” or “coming-to-pass” of all beings, including ourselves.

10. In „*Engaging Heidegger*“ you give much attention to the investigation of Plato’s understanding of „light“ and Heidegger’s phenomenon of „the clearing“. How do you see the relation of Plato’s understanding of light to the phenomenon of the clearing?

Yes, both Chapters 5 and 6 of *Engaging Heidegger* are concerned with Heidegger’s notion of *die Lichtung* and the long and interesting story of his engagement with Plato’s metaphor of “light,” especially as we find it in the “Allegory of the Cave” as told by Socrates in Bk. VII of the *Republic*. I also make mention of the medieval “metaphysics of light” as another source of inspiration for Heidegger.

One key issue is that in his multiple readings of Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,” from 1926 to 1940, Heidegger does not read the light of the sun as “ontic” or “onto-theological.” Indeed, the sun, this “light-source” or “primordial light,” as he puts it, is precisely what makes *possible* all that is lighted and therefore visible. In other words, for Heidegger, the sun, Plato’s “symbol” for the Idea of the Good, is what enables/ lets through/ opens up/ frees up all beings and all ontic truth about beings—and this “letting” is the fundamental matter, *die Sache selbst*. In all these readings, therefore, Heidegger elucidated his own fundamental concern with Being—the letting be of beings in their beingness—in terms of the metaphor of light that he appropriated from Plato. Although Heidegger regarded the *manifested* light as “ontic,” this is not the case with respect to the *manifesting* light of the sun—which represents Being itself. Thus, this distinction between the manifesting/manifested light is the figurative equivalent of the “ontological difference” between Being and beings. The later Heidegger had a more ambivalent relationship with Plato’s metaphor of “light,” and I explore this matter further in both *Engaging Heidegger* and *Heidegger’s Way of Being* (Ch. 2 and pp. 101-102, footnote 6).

11. The German thinker G. Figal has given much attention to Heidegger’s work on Aristotle. He has argued that Heidegger remained an Aristotelian philosopher (Figal, G.: *Heidegger als Aristoteliker*. In: *Heidegger-Jahrbuch 3. Heidegger und Aristoteles*. Hrsg. A. Denker, G. Figal, F. Volpi, H. Zaborowski. Munchen/Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber 2007, p. 53). I do not agree. It seems that Heidegger had interest in Aristotle between 1922—1930, but that after that period he turned his attention more and more

to the pre-Platonic thinkers Parmenides and Heraclitus. In „Introduction to Metaphysics“ (1935), Aristotle and Plato are less important than Parmenides and Heraclitus. What is your opinion on Heidegger and Aristotle?

This is a very complex question to answer in a short space! To put it briefly, I do think that Aristotle played a crucial role in Heidegger's whole lifetime of thinking, but I also agree with you that Heidegger ultimately favored the pre-Socratic thinkers Anaximander, Parmenides, and Heraclitus (as he understood them) over Aristotle.

To me, the most important statement made by Heidegger on Aristotle is his essay "On the Essence and Concept of *physis* in Aristotle's *Physics*, B 1," which he composed in 1939 (but not published until 1958). This essay goes well beyond his earlier discussions of Aristotle in the 1920s, and it reflects his more fully developed and mature understanding of Aristotle's thinking. In particular, Heidegger brilliantly illuminates Aristotle's fundamental insight into the *temporal* character of Being (*kinesis*) and how, in this way, Aristotle remained closer than Plato to the originary understanding of Being in Anaximander, Parmenides, and Heraclitus. Heidegger never ceased admiring Aristotle's thinking, but he also recognized that Aristotle also contributed to the devolution in the thinking of Being by shifting attention to the "timeless" "form" of things. Consequently, in this latter respect, we can say, as you suggest, that for Heidegger, the earliest Greek thinkers (the pre-Socratic or pre-Platonic thinkers) remained more decisive for his thinking of Being than Aristotle.

12. *In „Engaging Heidegger“ on p. 51 we find: „Heidegger meditated a lifetime on what was first named in the West by Parmenides and Heraclitus as eon - Being...“ The further development of this idea we find in your your second book „Heidegger's Way of Being“ (2014). Today we know that it is unfortunate that Heidegger connected the beginning of Greek philosophy with the revival of „the German university“ in his Rectoral Address (1933). But my question is not about Heidegger's connection to National Socialism, but with his connection to the two great pre-Platonic thinkers, Heraclitus and Parmenides. One could say that the main topic for both thinkers was the same – Being. One was thinking about Being as a happening, and the second was thinking about Being as permanence. Would you agree with this?*

In my view, Heidegger's readings of Parmenides and Heraclitus (and of the Greeks generally) have no essential connection to his politics, and the matter of his politics is a separate topic for discussion, as you point out. But to your question about his readings of Parmenides and Heraclitus: Heidegger commented on both of these early Greek thinkers throughout his lifetime. Both thinkers remained important to him to the very end in his elucidation of the matter of Being.

In the traditional readings that you refer to, Parmenides is the thinker of "permanence" and Heraclitus is the thinker of "change" and "flux." Yet what is so engaging about Heidegger's account is that he considers these traditional readings to be fundamentally wrong or short-sighted; that is, he reads both Parmenides and Heraclitus as bringing to language Being as the *one* temporal "process" or "way" that includes or encompasses *both* "movement" and "rest as abiding." In other words, he understands

these two early Greek thinkers as saying the “same” about Being but in different ways, and whether this is a “fair” or “accurate” reading remains open for debate. In any case, the larger point is this: One cannot fully understand Heidegger’s original and distinctive understanding of Being/Beyng without appreciating his elucidations of Parmenides and Heraclitus. And this is why in *Heidegger’s Way of Being*, I place so much emphasis in Chapters 5 and 6 on Heidegger’s brilliant lecture courses on Heraclitus in 1943 and 1944, which have not received enough consideration in the scholarship.

13. *The relation between Heidegger and Husserl remains a topic of discussion. How do you understand Heidegger’s work in relation to Husserl’s?*

The relation between the thinking of Husserl and Heidegger is quite complex and would require a much longer answer, but I would offer this overview. Already in 1919, Heidegger began to take issue with Husserl’s phenomenological perspective, yet in some other ways, he remained within Husserl’s transcendental-phenomenological framework throughout the 1920s, including in *Being and Time*.

Heidegger’s break from transcendental-phenomenology is much more decisive in the 1930s and in later years. He came to understand Husserl’s “phenomenology” as another version of the modern “subjectism” that was inaugurated by Descartes. In other words, Husserl never did arrive at “the things themselves” because his thinking was so strongly inflected toward transcendental subjectivity (*noesis*) and its “constitution” of the objects (*noema*) of thought. Now, whether Husserl’s transcendental idealism is, in the end, a metaphysical idealism remains very much in question—even among Husserl scholars. Nevertheless, the point is that Heidegger came to see Husserl as largely trapped within a modern tradition of thinking that was so focused on human subjectivity that it had “forgotten” *Being*. It is in this context that Heidegger made a concerted effort to retrieve Aristotle’s more originary thinking (and ancient Greek thinking generally) in order to overcome the prevailing “subjectism” of the modern age. Heidegger thought it was necessary to get back behind the modern thinking from Descartes to Kant to Husserl and return to the “origins” of Western thinking among the Greeks in order to recover the richest thinking—and experience—of Being.

14. *In Heidegger’s researches on Parmenides and Heraclitus over many years, he emphasized a new understanding of „aletheia“ as „unconcealedness“. In what do you see the sameness or difference in their understanding of truth?*

As I noted in an earlier response, whatever the traditional thinking may be about the difference between Parmenides and Heraclitus, for Heidegger these two thinkers say the “same” about Being. Let us recall that Heidegger thought that *aletheia* and *physis* were both ancient Greek names for Being; thus, Being and *aletheia* and *physis* say the “same.” In Heidegger’s reading, Parmenides’s “*aletheia*” names the temporal unconcealment (manifestation, showing-forth) of all beings in which inheres a dimension of concealment (withdrawal, reserve). Likewise, Heraclitus’s *physis* names the arising or emergence of all beings in which inheres a dimension of concealment, and this is said especially by Heraclitus’s fragment 123: *physis kryptheisthai philei*. Thus,

for Heidegger, both Parmenides and Heraclitus speak the “same” about Being as “the primordial truth” that shines forth but also holds back in reserve. Put another way, Being “is” *Aletheia* “is” *Physis*.

15. *Your book „Heidegger’s Way of Being“ is very rich, and you show the indisputable place of Heraclitus’s thinking in Heidegger’s philosophical thought of the question of Being. What do you think is an important point in Heraclitus’s thought that was an impulse for Heidegger’s own question of Being (Seinsfrage)?*

You are right to observe that my book *Heidegger’s Way of Being* highlights Heidegger’s readings of Heraclitus in the 1943 and 1944 lecture courses. These lecture courses are remarkable, and English-speaking readers and scholars have largely overlooked their importance because the German volume, GA 55, has not yet been translated into English. In Chapters 5 and 6, I present translations and discussions of these texts that have not appeared before in the English-language scholarship, and I have highlighted the importance of Heraclitus’s fragments for Heidegger’s thinking.

I cannot identify just one “impulse” from Heraclitus because there are so many! Broadly speaking, Heidegger elucidated his understanding of Being in terms of Heraclitus’s key fragments on *physis* and on *Logos* (or what Heidegger calls “the primordial Logos,” *der ursprüngliche Logos*). For Heidegger, Heraclitus’s *physis* and *Logos* are among the earliest names for Being itself, and he unfolds this theme in a variety of brilliant ways. I hope that your readers will consult these chapters in the book along with a reading of GA 55 in order to appreciate the creativity of Heidegger’s readings. To give just one example, consider the poetic philosophical way that Heidegger describes the relation of the human being (and all beings) to Being in terms of the theme and imagery of “breathing in and breathing out,” which I discuss in Chapter 6.

16. *It seems that one of Heidegger’s final comments on Heraclitus was in the seminar with Fink in 1967. What do you think about this seminar, and do you think that there is something new in Heidegger’s understanding of Heraclitus in relation to his earlier appreciations?*

I refer to this 1967 seminar in the article that you are graciously publishing in your philosophy journal. The article further explores Heidegger’s reading of Heraclitus, but with special attention on Heraclitus’s “*kosmos*” as another name for Being itself. The seminar with Fink is interesting, but all the key elements of Heidegger’s reading of Heraclitus are already in the 1943 and 1944 lecture courses.

17. *It is well-known that Heidegger never answered two questions in interviews: the question about God and the question about what he was working on. I would like to ask you about Heidegger’s understanding of God, and especially about his notion of „the last god“ from his „Contributions to Philosophy“. What did he mean by this?*

This is very difficult to say, especially with respect to his enigmatic references to “the last god” in *Beiträge*, as you mention. So, allow me to answer this question about “the gods” more generally. The matter of the significance of the gods in Heidegger’s thinking is difficult, but we should at least keep in view that he always insisted that “the gods” are never mere projections of the human being; that is, “the gods,” no less than we “mortals,” emerge from out of Being, the temporal-spatial emerging or unfolding “way” (or ontological process) wherein and whereby all beings issue forth and come to be. Certainly, for Heidegger, the “gods” or “divinities” are not traditional onto-theological timeless entities, for they, too, are “temporal” as they emerge from out of the temporal way itself—Being—their “source,” as he says.

Some recent readings of Heidegger—which are no more than variations of Husserl’s transcendental idealism—are entirely off the mark to suggest that for the later Heidegger the human being is the “source” of “Being,” and, accordingly, these readings are also mistaken in trying to settle the matter of “the gods” in his thinking by claiming them for the human being, that is, by claiming that “the gods” are only insofar as the human being is. Heidegger—at every turn—upends this kind of position. His point is always that we have to learn once more how to be attentive and *listen*. Ours is the age of “egoity” (*Ichheit*) and of the increasing demand to make the human being the measure of all things. Heidegger calls on us to remain “open” to “the gods,” but I must admit that it remains uncertain what Heidegger precisely means by these “gods” or “divinities.” I suspect that he deliberately kept the matter uncertain.

18. *What are you currently working on in connection with Heidegger’s work?*

I am pursuing a variety of topics with regard to Heidegger’s thought. For example, Chapter 2 of *Heidegger’s Way of Being* is concerned with Heidegger’s reading of one of Hölderlin’s “last poems,” and I remain astonished at how beautiful and resonant his reading is. In recent work, I have been concerned with bringing Heidegger’s thinking into relation with the poets of the American tradition, and in particular with Walt Whitman. Indeed, I think there is so much to be learned by bringing Heidegger’s thinking into dialogue with the great poets of every cultural tradition.

19. *And, finally, I would like to ask you to suggest productive ways for future research into Heidegger’s work.*

As you know, at the present time there is a great deal of discussion about Heidegger’s personal life and politics, but I think that we must keep in mind that no matter how strenuous the effort made by some recently, the distinction between Heidegger the man and his times and Heidegger the thinker cannot be collapsed. The work of every great philosopher, poet, artist, composer—the creative work of any person—can never be reduced to simple biography. If we keep this in mind, then there will continue to be ample room for us to admire and appreciate the extraordinary reach

and richness of his thinking and for us to learn several essential philosophical and existential lessons from his work. I encourage young scholars to engage Heidegger's thinking with an open mind and an open heart.

To conclude, I wish to thank you, Vladimir, and your colleagues and readers for this opportunity to share my thoughts. I look forward to future exchanges with your philosophical community.