

**Richard Capobianco.** *Heidegger's Way of Being*. University of Toronto Press 2014. 136 pp. \$40.00 CAD (Hardcover ISBN 9781442649637); \$18.95 CAD (Paperback ISBN 9781442630697).

In his most recent book, Richard Capobianco highlights the central importance of the question of Being (*Seinsfrage*) across Heidegger's vast corpus. The need for such an account emerges in light of the trend in recent scholarship toward an increasingly 'applied' Heidegger. One need only call to mind the outsized influence of Heidegger across a variety of disciplines, such as environmental ethics, philosophy of technology, aesthetics, literary criticism, and medical ethics, among many others. Although Capobianco is clear that this wide application is indeed worthwhile, his concern is that the appropriation of Heidegger threatens to obscure what is essential to his work – the 'structural priority' of Being (see 4-5, 11, 16, 41, 63, and 94).

Capobianco sees much of the applied work in Heidegger as committed not to the priority of Being, but to the priority of Dasein as the interpreter of Being. (See Heidegger's often cited, and according to Capobianco, often misunderstood description of human Dasein as the 'shepherd of Being.') Such use runs the risk of unfairly framing Heidegger's thought in sharply anthropocentric terms, understanding Being itself primarily in terms of sense (*Sinn*), i.e., as a function of Dasein's ability to establish relations among beings. In this way, the intelligibility of Being comes to define Being itself. Being *is* as it is meaningful, or perhaps more accurately, Being *is* as it is useful for human activity. Thomas Sheehan's recent work, *Making Sense of Heidegger*, stands as Capobianco's paradigmatic example of this approach and is referenced repeatedly throughout the book as an antagonist. It is important to note, however, that variations on an ontology of *Sinn* extend far beyond the rather narrow world of Heidegger studies. Capobianco draws careful distinctions between Heidegger, hermeneutics (70-71), and phenomenology (17, 63), finding in both of the latter an elevation of sense that fails to adequately retain the irreducible antecedence of Being. Even contemporary analytic epistemology turns to *Sinn* as the foundation for a new realism. (See Markus Gabriel's *Fields of Sense: A New Realist Ontology* as the most compelling account of this argument.) For these reasons, Capobianco's book is especially timely in its call for 'the primacy of Being in relation to human Dasein' (4). By offering a consistent account of Heidegger's commitment to the transcendence of Being, it positions Heidegger as a compelling critic of the growing calls for pragmatic justification of philosophy, and for the narrowing of thought from contemplation to application.

In contrast to the various ontologies of *Sinn*, Capobianco's reading emphasizes the kinetic character of Being as the 'temporal-spatial emerging and shining-forth of beings' (7). Being is 'manifestness' (*Offenbarkeit*), arrival and departure of beings from appearance. As such, Being is the singular sameness (notably, the Greek idea of *to hen* appears frequently) from which difference breaks forth and to which difference returns. This is not to reify Being with the unbending substantiality of *ens realissimum*, or to regard Being as the unchanging background against which beings move in the foreground. Rather, Being is itself the 'spontaneous and ungrounded' movement of beings, yet is not itself one being among others (18). It is the 'pure giving of what is given' that lets beings be (*Gelassenheit*) as they are (38). As such, Being is perpetually *on its way* without ever itself being fixed in place. To that end, Capobianco introduces the expression 'Being-way,' as his preferred rendering of Heideggerian *Sein*. The "Being-way" is that 'wherein and whereby beings emerge, linger in their "full look" or "presence" (*eidōs*), wane, and pass away' (18). The use of 'Being-way' is particularly effective for a number of reasons. First, it aligns with and amplifies Heidegger's frequent image of the path as a model for the thinking of Being. Second, it nicely suggests the resonances between Heidegger and various Eastern philosophical traditions.

Lastly, and I believe, most importantly, it stands as a synchrony of form and content, inviting us to travel along with rather than to appropriate Being. Capobianco's invocation of Whitman's and Hölderlin's poetry, his description of sculptor Manuel Carbonell's *El Centinela del Rio* and its environs on Biscayne Bay, and the meditative quality of the book as a whole open the 'Being-way' by directing our attention more so than through offering a logical analysis of concepts. It is both a literal and metaphorical interpretation of thinking as itself a *way of Being*.

The paradox of an abiding dynamism at the heart of Being is the lens through which Capobianco reads a deep continuity across Heidegger's work. Capobianco is emphatic in his conviction that 'the Being-question was always the *Grund*-question for Heidegger' (5). This is not so much a refutation of the famous 'turn,' as it is a sense that any attempt to divide Heidegger's corpus into discrete units fails to grasp the consistency and insistency with which Heidegger aims at the question of Being. In this light, his well-known convolutions and re-inventions of language present themselves not as obscurantist, but as models for the movement of the 'Being-way.' If the 'Being-way' is the One that opens and gathers the Many (beings), then it follows that language gives voice to Being through a rich plurivocity that attests to a sameness amidst difference. What stands out as Capobianco's truly unique contribution to the literature on Heidegger is how he carefully unfolds the subtle differences in Heidegger's many names for Being, all of which attempt to say the same, yet each in its own way. *Physis*, *Aletheia*, *Logos*, *Hen*, *Ereignis*, *Lichtung*, *Gegend*, *Es Gibt* each receive thoughtful articulation in close dialogue with the original texts, and in connection to Capobianco's central thesis. This has the double effect of drawing the reader into the unity of Heidegger's project, while simultaneously engaging the 'Being-way' as an inexhaustible provocation toward the task of thinking.

Overall, this is not a book for those who are new to Heidegger (or 20th-century continental philosophy more broadly), nor is it intended to be. The book assumes a familiarity with the basic terrain of Heidegger's thought and vocabulary, especially the 'Ontological Difference' between Being and beings, and his profound indebtedness to Plato and Aristotle. (For those who are looking for more of an introductory resource, I would recommend Capobianco's previous book, *Engaging Heidegger*, published in 2010 by University of Toronto Press.) Of special interest to students of Heidegger is the inclusion of many selections previously untranslated into English. Given Capobianco's emphasis on the unity of sameness and difference, Heidegger's 1943 and 1944 Heraclitus lectures feature prominently to great effect. Additionally, Capobianco opens passages from the 1926-27 lecture course in reference to Aquinas's *De Veritate*, the 1928-29 lecture course entitled *Introduction to Philosophy*, the 1932 lecture course on *Anaximander and Parmenides*, a travelogue entitled *On the Islands of the Aegean*, among others. Each of these texts is underrepresented in the secondary scholarship, and informs new avenues for engaging the central questions at stake in Heidegger's project.

In the end, the reader is left with a renewed appreciation not only for the continued relevance of Heidegger's work, but for the beauty and necessity of thought itself.

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