

born and spent his life), Heidegger published his leading book in 1927. For many, *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time) stands alongside intellectual milestones such as Plato's *Republic* (4th century BCE) or Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).

For Heidegger, there are two types of thought: "calculating" thought, associated with technology, rationalization, and dehumanization of the world, and "meditating," or "poetic," thought, associated with human authenticity. By alienating the self to modernity and to the idle talk peddled by everyone around them, humans had fallen for inauthentic life and foregone scrutiny of the world. To overcome this abdication, humans had to "step ahead" of themselves and resolve to make "being" an issue: humans must care for what it is to be, given the "being in the world" that a human necessarily is.

Against René Descartes's (1596–1650) ascription of man's reasoning ability as primordial and his positioning of the self as the ultimate cognitive foundation, Heidegger claimed that man is an historical being. The historicity with which he is saturated is an inherent feature of his present condition. Because man is thrown into a world that is always already there and defines the possibilities available to him, facticity and temporality determine his existentiality. Prerational or inherited habits, moods, and dispositions (such as language) appear earlier than any reasoning ability. One's experience with objects as tools (such as a hammer) occur prior to any conceptualization of tools as objects. Along with the Cartesian view of the transcendental self, connecting truth with an ability to perceive and represent correctly, one must also reject Platonic metaphysics and universals. Truth cannot be divorced from an historical setting and arises from an uncovering process assuming deep understanding.

Heidegger called for man to change his relationship to the world through existential self-affirmation. Rather than banalize and harness the world via reductionist strategies conducted for efficacy's sake, man must act according to the strictures of authenticity: to let the world be and to disclose alertness to the irreducibility of specificity or difference. Man must become an (anxious) interpreter, a decoder of language and other signs—themselves already world laden—although, owing to his "situatedness," explication can

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## HEIDEGGER, MARTIN (1889–1976)

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Martin Heidegger addressed the average person's everyday experience. Drawing on idiosyncratic readings of Greek and German philosophers, writing in critical engagement with Edmund Husserl's (1859–1938) phenomenological investigations into mental processes, and reflecting a deep attachment to the rural ways of southwest Germany (where he was

only occur against preconceptions or structures of anticipation. The ideal of certain, full, and permanent knowledge yields before the poetic values of ambiguity, incompleteness, and transience.

Heidegger's exacerbated nationalism, purporting to place perceived German exceptionalism on a firm ontological footing, led him to join the Nazi party in the 1930s and defend Nazi ideology into the 1950s. Although some of his critics dismiss his philosophy as inherently fascist, many consider Heidegger's "destruction" of "rational being" and its replacement by "imaginative being" as the most significant post-Cartesian philosophical development. It has inspired contemporary strands of hermeneutical and deconstructive thought.

—*Pierre Legrand*