

Title:

'Heidegger East and West: Philosophy as Educative Contemplation'

Abstract:

Resonances between Heidegger's philosophy and Eastern religious traditions have been widely discussed by scholars. The significance of Heidegger's thinking for education has also become increasingly clear over recent years. In this article I argue that an important aspect of Heidegger's work whose relevance to education is relatively undeveloped, relates to his desire to overcome Western metaphysics, a project which invites an exploration of his connections with Eastern thought. I argue that Heidegger's desire to deconstruct the West implies the deconstruction of conventional views of learning because both aim to undercut the representational nature of thinking in order to recover thinking as a form of contemplation. Consequently education should not be conceived as the acquisition of a more or less correct mental picture, but suggests the opposite: the relinquishing of all images in a contemplative *aporia*.

Keywords:

Heidegger; Daoism; Buddhism; attention; will

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Introduction

This article addresses two related questions. First, can Heidegger's conception of thinking as a form of attention to being, illuminate pedagogy?; and second, to what extent will an appreciation of the parallels between Heidegger and Eastern philosophy help us understand this form of attention to being? These questions refer to a knotted bundle of related questions and ideas reflecting the fact that Heidegger's conception of thinking is intimately bound up with his attempts to overcome the Western metaphysical tradition. We will see that this overcoming entails a cautious, even reticent, encounter with Eastern thought. The argument will then examine Heidegger's way of writing and teaching, both of which illustrate his view of *thinking*, which has implications for the nature of pedagogy. The question of the role of the will is significant here since the complex nature of human willing for Heidegger has important implications for the role of will and agency in the processes of education. The nature of will is also of paramount significance to contemplative traditions where the agency of the religious subject is an ongoing question (Lewin 2011a). The article will conclude by arguing that the state of *aporia* that Heidegger himself hoped to achieve in his students through his Socratic approach entails, in some sense, the abandonment of representational metaphysics.

The literature exploring the resonances between Heidegger and Eastern thought is large. There is also a significant literature which seeks to demonstrate the relevance of Heidegger's philosophy to pedagogy. This paper is something of a synthesis between the two, though with a specific thesis concerning the deconstruction of Western thought. This paper does not pretend, then, to give a fulsome account of a range of Heideggerian concepts, or a detailed analysis of its relation to Eastern thought but is necessarily rather wider in its perspective. The aim is to think with and from Heidegger in order to 'catch sight' for ourselves of the resonances found in this interdisciplinary domain.

Overcoming the West

Heidegger is well known as a critic of the modern world. Running through Heidegger's oeuvre one finds a distinct skepticism towards the direction of Western thought particularly since Descartes. The modern epistemological project in which truth is understood as obtaining a correct representation of the world, is subject to relentless Heideggerian deconstruction because it presents modern science and technology as the dominant, if not exclusive, manner in which beings come to presence. This becomes a particular problem, so Heidegger believes, because human beings have lost touch with the question of being and have become content to inhabit a world that yields to humanity's determinations. The result is that philosophy and metaphysics have come to an end. If humanity has any future, we must learn 'thinking'. What Heidegger means by thinking is not straightforward; thinking is quite distinct from general senses of cogitation or having a more or less correct mental image, and is a key term that we will explore in detail later on.

Despite his critical stance and his efforts to secure a radical break from tradition, Heidegger's work is deeply rooted in Western thought. Heidegger's chief influences were the ancient Greeks, the scholastic theological tradition, German idealism, and phenomenology. Still, any consideration of his relationship to the history of Western thought should take account of the claim that his rejection of philosophy in favour of thinking is essentially an attempt to 'overcome' the tradition in which he finds himself. Does this central aim, the overcoming of metaphysics, in its attempt to go beyond the specifically Western tradition, suggest an encounter with Eastern thought? There are several reasons to think it could.

Heidegger's connection with Eastern thought is considerable, and has enjoyed significant attention over recent decades (see for example: Caputo 1978; Ma 2007; May

1996; Parkes 1990). In 1922 he made the acquaintance of the distinguished Japanese philosopher Tanabe Hajime, and subsequently became acquainted with three other major thinkers from Japan: Miki Kiyoshi, Kuki Shuzo, and Nishitani Keiji. Graham Parkes argues that Heidegger was able to discuss East Asian thought at a sophisticated level with these thinkers (May 1996, Introduction). In the summer of 1946 he invited a Chinese friend, Paul Shih-yi Hsiao, to collaborate on a German translation of the *Dao De Jing*, during which time they managed to translate only the first eight chapters (Hsiao 1990). Chung-yuan Chang remarks that, “Heidegger is the only Western philosopher who not only thoroughly intellectually understands but has intuitively grasped Taoist thought” (Chang, quoted in May 1996, p. 6; see also Chang 1970). Many commentators have made thematic parallels between Heidegger and Daoism, with particular reference to Heidegger’s discussions of the ‘way’ and ‘releasement’ (*gelassenheit*) and with the Daoist doctrines of the way (*dao*) and of non-doing (*wu wei*) (see for example Pöggeler 1990; Stambaugh 1990; May 1996; Zhang 1993; Chang 1970; Yao 1993). The action of inaction, a rough translation of *wu wei*, is concerned with letting human beings into a proper relatedness with the world that seems analogous, for example, to Heidegger’s image of the cabinetmaker who works with the shapes slumbering within the wood (Heidegger 1968, pp. 45-46). While the attempt to find such parallels can be fruitful, we must take care that the conclusions are not overdrawn, since some scholars appear to be overeager. As Ma tellingly points out, “[t]here seems to be a competition between scholars who ascribe greater similarities between Zen Buddhism and Heidegger and those who find more similarities between Daoism and Heidegger. In recent years, the latter have come to dominate” (Ma 2007, p. 15).

David Storey has recently identified three dimensions of Heidegger’s work that lend themselves to comparison with Zen Buddhism and Daoism, dimensions that will help to orient our discussion (Storey 2012). First of all, Zen Buddhism and Daoism are non-metaphysical, resisting grand theoretical narratives about the nature of reality.

Heidegger's way is very much concerned with resisting metaphysics in this sense. Second, Zen and Daoism are suspicious of overly rational formulations and doctrines, being highly poetic in nature, something with which the later Heidegger in particular, resonates strongly. Third, the teachings of Zen and Daoism concern a radical transformation of the subject that "forever alters his comportment toward himself, others, and the world, not to provide a theoretical proof or demonstration of theses about the mind and/or the world" (Storey 2012, p. 114). This final point has particular significance for education since it expresses the idea that education entails not just a conceptual repositioning, but a total change of being. This clearly correlates with the notion that Heidegger eschews the tradition of representational metaphysics in which knowledge can be exchanged, managed, and delivered.

John Caputo has been influential in drawing out parallels between Heidegger and particularly Meister Eckhart but also showing resonance with Zen Buddhism. Caputo compares Eugen Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery*, in which the student learns to release herself into the act of releasing the bow, with Heidegger's conception of thinking as *gelassenheit*. The archer "lets go" in order to "wait" for the tension that brings forth the shot. When the shot occurs of its own accord, the archer is said to be "self-less" or "egoless" and to have awakened (or stayed awake for) an enlightened state of "sunyata" (no-mind).¹ Here, in a cautious and preliminary way, we can only scratch the surface of the similarities between Heidegger and Eastern philosophy and will elaborate more in due course, yet already we can find connections not only in the conception of a kind of thinking as releasement, but also of the emptiness of self, ego, or direct agency entailed in the experience of this kind of thinking.

¹ Caputo uses the Sanskrit term *Sunyata* to refer to the void or emptiness and goes on to draw comparisons between this concept and Heidegger's thought. In using this term, Caputo is drawing on the work of D. T. Suzuki as well as Herrigel. In this paper I have employed the terms that are developed in the comparative literature. *Sunyata* is used in Buddhism in a variety of contexts and senses, though it is generally translated as emptiness, void, openness or vacuity. In Theravadan Buddhism in particular, it refers to the non-self (Sanskrit: anatman) and can also refer to states of meditation and experience.

Given the aforementioned parallels, it is strange that Heidegger remained virtually silent about Eastern thought for most of his career, especially in view of the fact that, “there has been a great deal of evidence that Heidegger gladly acknowledged to visitors the closeness of his thinking to the Taoist tradition and Zen Buddhism” (Pöggeler 1990, p. 49). It was not until the late 1950’s, that Heidegger finally presented a consideration of East Asian ideas, stimulated by a visit in 1954 from a Japanese professor of German literature, Tezuka Tomio. Heidegger’s *A Dialogue on Language* (Heidegger 1971) represents the only instance of Heidegger explicitly discussing East Asian ideas at any length. However, there are substantive reasons for Heidegger’s reticence to engage in the kind of philosophical cosmopolitanism that looks for cross-cultural connections. The impulse to draw parallels between, for example, Heidegger’s ‘way’ of thinking and the Daoist understanding of Dao/way (Ma 1996), or Heidegger’s discussion of the nothing and the Buddhist conception of sunyata/emptiness (Elberfeld 2011), could result in a rather blunt translation of ideas that essentially reduces one to the other, leading in the end to a misunderstanding of both. Ma, for example, worries about Stambaugh’s efforts to fit Heidegger and Daoism together: “it seems that Stambaugh has unquestioningly identified the notion *Weg* of Heidegger with the *dao* of Daoism. This is particularly evident when she writes ‘Way (*Weg*, *Tao*)’”. Unfortunately Ma hardly elaborates and we are left wondering precisely where Ma’s concerns lie since to some extent the identification seems justified.² In any case, there is a general danger that we are drawn into the comparison of facile representations of theoretical constructions which give accounts of only the outer shell of the lived tradition, and as we will see, it is precisely the representational dimension of Western thinking which is most objectionable and in need of overcoming. So the question is not whether parallels exist, which they clearly do, but

² It seems that Ma does not take exception to the identification of Heidegger’s *Weg* with *Dao* later in her book (Ma 2007, Chapter 6). Ma’s concern seems to be primarily about the way that Stambaugh makes an overly direct connection between *Weg* and *Tao*. In other words, there is some legitimacy to this connection, but it must be elaborated more carefully and patiently than Stambaugh does.

what can we learn from drawing parallels, which is a much stickier problem. This is a twofold question: it asks about the nature of knowing as well as the nature of learning. For to know something is not simply to maintain a correct representation or mental image of it. Following Plato's conception of *theoria*, Heidegger sees knowing as more contemplative than representational. It follows, then, that to learn something cannot be only to acquire a correct representation. For Heidegger Western metaphysics has become dominated by the development of ever more 'correct' and controlling representations of the world, and learning appears to be dominated by the transmission and acquisition of ever more correct representations. This correctness is no virtue. In Heidegger's view correctness does not get at the essence of the thing since it remains bound to representational or propositional metaphysics and is thus distinguished from the 'true' (Heidegger 1977, pp. 5-7). Do these problems with Western metaphysics suggest a turn to the Eastern thought?

Heidegger does not believe that an appeal to Eastern thought is an appropriate move in overcoming the metaphysical tradition. In the *Spiegel* interview of 1966 Heidegger famously claims that the transformation of the Western tradition cannot emerge: "through the adoption of Zen Buddhism or other Eastern experiences of the world. Rethinking requires the help of the European tradition and a reappropriation of it. Thinking is transformed only by thinking that has the same origin and destiny" (Wolin 1993, p. 113). Here Heidegger is referring not only to the roots of Western metaphysics in ancient Greek thinking but also, and more obscurely, to the destiny of Western thought. That destiny is bound up with the crisis of technological being and enframing (*Gestell*), in which the only way of being is to see the world in terms of resources (Heidegger 1977; Lewin 2011a). For Heidegger the crisis of technological *Gestell* has its roots in the Socratic conception of being (as eternal idea: *eidōs*) since this idea renders us incapable of remaining open to being. The problem seems connected with the desire for fixed conceptual or representational understandings by elevating knowledge to the realm of

the ideal of formal. But in arguing that we cannot simply import a solution to this Western crisis from the Orient, doesn't Heidegger rather foreclose the scope of revelation? Storey argues that Heidegger's attempt at a 'retrieval' from within the Western tradition represents a reification of "the West" (Storey 2012, p. 115). Furthermore, as Ma points out, "[a]lmost all of Heidegger's oblique references to East-West dialogue appear in the context of a deep concern with the *Ge-stell*" (Ma 2007, p. 7). We could see *Gestell* as encapsulating the problem faced by the West for which an encounter with the East might offer a solution. In the *Spiegel* interview Heidegger famously states that "...only a god can save us", a phrase which suggests our impotence and invokes a *transcendent* agency (in the sense that it escapes technological *Gestell*) as being capable of interrupting the direction of the West. This is a mysterious claim given Heidegger's critique of Western philosophy and theology as 'ontotheological' in which our conception of God and being are unhelpfully conflated. So this god must escape ontotheology and must, therefore, be properly other, and transcendent. It is plausible that this transcendent dimension would find its source in an Eastern tradition which does not belong to the Indo-European linguistic and cultural heritage. But Heidegger is a hermeneutic philosopher who proceeds on the basis that our freedom is formed and structured by contextualised historicity (Heidegger 1996). He is, therefore, unwilling to sever the cord that attaches his thinking to the destiny of Western thought, even though, in Heidegger's view, all other efforts to develop the metaphysical tradition - from Socrates up to and including Nietzsche, who for Heidegger precisely completes the Western tradition's movement towards nihilism - appear only to result in representational thinking, technological enframing, and ultimately nihilism. But that representational problem is what makes importing solutions from the East so troubling: we will inevitably import the representation that conforms most completely to the technological *Gestell*. In other words, we will import an image of the East and put it to use, a tendency evident in the

appropriation of Eastern traditions to Western patterns of consumption and spiritual consciousness (Carrette and King 2005).

This direction of thinking and being has profound implications for education as we will see. Today we have become almost entirely inured to seeing education as the transmission and manipulation of more or less correct representations of the world. We have likewise taken for granted that education should be placed in service of global forces that seem to be incorporated into technological enframing. In other words, education is defined and justified in utilitarian terms. However, there is still much to be said before the implications for education can be fully elaborated. I now turn to Heidegger's understanding of *thought* (Denken), a notion that implies a kind of *releasement* (gelassenheit) that, as we have already noted, invites comparison with contemplative traditions East and West.

Thinking as Releasement

Perhaps more than anywhere else, it is in Heidegger's *Discourse on Thinking* that the idea of thinking as releasement is explored. The conceptual register of this term corresponds in tantalizing ways to ideas from contemplative traditions the world over, both East and West, from Shankara to Eckhart, from the Dalai Lama to Thomas Merton. But what are we to make of the strange juxtaposition between *thinking*, normally understood as referring to conceptions or considerations that take place in the mind, and *releasement*? We are perhaps more able to understand what *thinking* is not for Heidegger than to establish directly what *thinking* is. Thinking here has little to do with the kind of conceptual reasoning of the logician, or the internal narration that accompanies everyday life. Thinking is responsive, entailing an attention to being, which is why the question of thinking directly follows the question of being. The notion of *attention* is closely related.

Attention captures the sense of a kind of thinking that does not re-present to itself a mental picture, but abides in pure awareness. That pedagogy should be concerned with the cultivation of attention is an important idea for a number of philosophers (such as William James and Simone Weil) (see Lewin 2014b), and provides an interesting way of connecting Heidegger's discussion of thinking with education. The idea of attention also evokes a range of cross-cultural conceptions of awareness or contemplation, from Christian prayer to Buddhist meditation, and so offers a way to bring together a number of related ideas. But again I would advise caution here. Heidegger's conception of releasement has a specific role in his wider philosophical concerns.

Heidegger's conception of releasement begins with the analysis of the history of Western metaphysics as the forgetting of being and the loss of true thought. Modern humanity has isolated discursive reasoning or representational thought, characterized by modern science and philosophy (particularly in its analytic and positivist strains), as not only paradigmatic, but as the exclusive form of thought. This kind of calculative thinking has its place, but like a virulent virus, seeks to reproduce itself at the expense of all other forms of thinking. Taken on its own, calculative thinking is in danger of ascribing truth and reality only to that which can be defined and measured scientifically. As Caputo puts it, "[w]e are rapidly coming to believe that the only form of truth is the truth which the mathematical sciences establish, and that such science is the only legitimate form of thinking" (Caputo 1978, p. 264). Heidegger's understanding of real thought is described in a variety of ways: meditative thinking, reflecting, releasing, letting-be, shepherding being, and coming into the clearing. In the *Discourse on Thinking* Heidegger says, "anyone can follow the path of meditative thinking in his own manner and within his own limits. Why? Because man is a thinking, that is, a meditating being" (Heidegger 1969, p. 47). What does Heidegger mean by meditative thought, and can it legitimately be related to the contemplative traditions of the East? Is this thinking evocative of a contemplative, meditative, or mystical state?

Caputo argues that since Heidegger steps back from philosophy and metaphysics that thinking takes on more of a likeness to that which lies beyond philosophy; namely poetry and mysticism. In support of this claim Caputo draws on Heidegger's lecture course *The Principle of Reason*, in which Heidegger says "the most extreme sharpness and depth of thought belongs to genuine and great mysticism" (Caputo 1978, p. 6).³ There does seem to be a close proximity between thinking and poetry, or perhaps it is more accurate to say that poetry offers a language and a form in which thinking can take place (See Heidegger 1976, p. 20). The poetic turn in Heidegger's later work, both in its encounter with the poetry of Hölderlin, Rilke, and Trakl, and the somewhat poetic form that Heidegger's later work takes, draws attention to language that affords the opportunity to encounter language itself. But is this poetic turn a kind of mysticism of language? Heidegger is cautious about connecting his thinking with mysticism, explicitly denying that his thinking entails any kind of spiritual or mystical state of experience, always orienting the reader back to being: "experiencing (the experience of Being: thinking) is nothing mystical, not an act of illumination, but rather the entry into dwelling in Appropriation" (Heidegger 1972, p. 53). With the notable exception of Wittgenstein and the more recent 'theological turn' in phenomenology, which owes a great deal to the influence of Heidegger (see Janicaud 2000), skepticism towards the mystical, with its connotation of mystification and experientialism, has been commonplace across post-Enlightenment philosophy. For Heidegger there is the additional problem that the Western theological tradition has had a tendency towards *ontotheology*, the identification of God as the ground of being and the ground of creatures. There is, then, a danger that thinking gets entangled here with another representation, this time of mystical experience. So while thinking is not easily defined, Heidegger wants us to see it in terms of appropriation: a mutual appropriation between human beings and the world, where

³ Familiarity with the original context, and the care with which Heidegger chooses his words will make Caputo's use of the quotation seem questionable. Heidegger precedes this quote with the words, "one is inclined to get the idea" (Heidegger 1996c, p. 36), suggesting in fact a quite different interpretation.

attention unfolds into presence. Thinking does not take us away from being, as certain forms of meditative practice which call for the end of thought might suppose, rather thinking is the ground and possibility of such practices. Hence Heidegger develops Parmenides' insight that thinking and being are the same (Heidegger 1976). I now turn to Heidegger's way of writing, itself suggestive of a distinctive pedagogical strategy that has both rhetorical and substantive significance.

Heidegger's Way

Heidegger's way of thinking suggests an openness to being which appropriates attention. Particularly in *What is Called Thinking?*, Heidegger draws attention to attention. There is as much performative as propositional significance to this since Heidegger is concerned with engaging the attention of the reader directly. By this I mean that reading Heidegger is a form of inquiry that should result in an *encounter* with the text, going beyond *understanding* in the representational sense of the word (a clear picture which I could, for example, explain to another). Can we go as far as to call reading Heidegger a contemplative act? Heidegger's abstruse style conceptually disarms the reader, demanding fresh attention to what may previously have appeared to be simple, or settled philosophical ideas.⁴ It is almost as if what is being said is less important than how it is being said. George Steiner remarks, "It is not 'understanding' that Heidegger's discourse solicits primarily. It is an 'experiencing,' an acceptance of felt strangeness" (Steiner 1992, p. 11). This experiencing can be realized through the artful writing of the philosopher-poet. Steiner says,

⁴ What might be called Heidegger's method in much of his work is consistent: he begins with a characterization of the everyday sense of a term, or the conventional view of an idea (philosophy; technology; truth; language; art...), which is immediately deconstructed.

Heidegger's seemingly lapidary plainness, his use of short sentences - so contrastive with the German idealist philosophy from Kant to Schopenhauer - in effect masks a fiercely personal and intentionally 'delaying' or even 'blockading' idiom. We are to be slowed down, bewildered and barred in our reading so that we may be driven deep (Steiner 1992, p. 8).

For the most part, our habits of reading and thinking precede us. We tend to read without care, and think what is given us to think through the structures of being that precede our existence. Thus Heidegger wants to break the spell of the *idle talk* that philosophy has fallen into. This requires, to some extent, a new idiom in which words are allowed to speak afresh, through which the strangeness of being can again be felt. We might be tempted to seek that new idiom in the language of Eastern wisdom traditions. But this is only possible where those traditions have not been appropriated by Western representational metaphysics: where we do not read Eastern traditions through the reductive lens of, for example, a 'belief system' or a 'world-view'.⁵ It is the conquest of the other in terms of subjective representation that characterizes the culmination of Western metaphysics and is the danger of cross-cultural analysis. In his reading of Heidegger, Michael Peters draws attention to the relation between subjectivity and representation where he says, "the

⁵ From Heidegger's point of view, no one holds a world view still less a belief system. Heidegger's essay 'The Age of the World Picture' (Heidegger 1977, pp. 115-154) gives an indication of the predicament of the modern West which regards cultures in terms of cultural representations. The point here has implications for any wider cross-cultural comparison. That we see other cultures in terms of world views demonstrates only that we have a representational conception of lived experience. It is worth quoting Heidegger at length: "As soon as the world becomes picture, the position of man is conceived as a world view. To be sure, the phrase "world view" is open to misunderstanding, as though it were merely a matter here of a passive contemplation of the world. For this reason, already in the nineteenth century it was emphasized with justification that "world view" also meant and even meant primarily "view of life." The fact that, despite this, the phrase "world view" asserts itself as the name for the position of man in the midst of all that is, is proof of how decisively the world became picture as soon as man brought his life as *subiectum* into precedence over other centers of relationship. This means: whatever is, is considered to be in being only to the degree and to the extent that it is taken into and referred back to this life, i.e., is lived out, and becomes life-experience. Just as unsuited to the Greek spirit as every humanism had to be, just so impossible was a medieval world view, and just as absurd is a Catholic world view. Just as necessarily and legitimately as everything must change into life-experience for modern man the more unlimitedly he takes charge of the shaping of his essence, just so certainly could the Greeks at the Olympian festivals never have had life-experiences" (Heidegger 1977, p. 133-134).

world becoming a 'view' and man becoming a *subjectum* is part and parcel of the same metaphysical process" (Peters 2002, p. 8), a metaphysical process rooted in the conception of truth as representational accuracy. Peters goes on to quote from Heidegger's essay 'The Age of the World Picture':

The fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture. The word "picture" [*Bild*] now means the structured image [*Gebild*] that is the creature of man's producing which represents and sets before. In such producing, man contends for the position in which he can be that particular being who gives the measure and draws up the guidelines for everything that is (Heidegger 1977 in Peters 2002, p. 8).

The temptation towards easy and lazy syncretism, the natural expression of representational thinking, is great, and often the result is not a true encounter, dialogue or reconciliation, but a projection of the known over the unknown where neither is illuminated. The mind that engages only in representational thinking struggles to dwell with the unknown, not having the patience of Keat's 'negative capability' as discussed by Sharon Todd in her article within this issue.

It is not, of course, that the wisdom of the East is intrinsically lacking, but rather that our representation will always conceal more than it reveals. So for Heidegger the Western tradition from Plato up to and including Nietzsche has, in different ways, prioritised representational thinking at the expense of the more contemplative modes that might correspond to attentive reading. This is the predicament of Western metaphysics that Heidegger is attempting to overcome. It is a metaphysical tradition that seeks to represent presence rather than let what is come into presence. In contrast to the modern conception of truth as correct correspondence between the representation and the world, Heidegger understands truth as *aletheia* (unconcealment): this entails the

event of letting *what is* come into presence. As we shall see, this letting has particular significance for pedagogy since the educator depends upon the work of being to come into appearance; being itself has the pedagogical initiative.

In the preface to Richardson's *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, Heidegger indicates that what holds for ontology generally, also holds for efforts to make his philosophy accessible by way of secondary literature: "every effort to bring what has been thought closer to prevailing modes of (re)presentation must assimilate what-is-to-be-thought to those (re)presentations and thereby inevitably deform the matter" (Richardson 2003, p. viii). In other words, the secondary representation of thinking occludes the encounter. Heidegger is critical of much secondary literature in philosophy and seeks instead a kind of thinking which does not rely on representation; seeking, in other words, a kind of unmediated experience predicated on a kind of attention. This conception of thinking suggests a philosophy of education that would question both teaching as an act of mediation between the world and the student, and learning as the process by which the student acquires and refines a representation in the mind. In the end, the teacher must let the encounter between the student and the world take place by withdrawing herself. To teach is to draw attention to world and then, in a sense, the learning is between the world and the student. It is not enough for the student to have a correct representation of the world that they bring, for example, to the exam hall. For Heidegger, education has to have an 'ontological' dimension in the sense that it must reach all the way down (Heidegger 1998; Thomson 2002).

But is this paper not attempting to mediate Heidegger through a more or less correct representation? The attentive reader may be aware of an ongoing dilemma: how do we read 'about' Heidegger without his ideas being represented and thereby deformed? Can the secondary author simply 'draw attention to' or 'bear witness to' what is to be thought? Can this drawing of attention bring academic discourse into the realm of a language that bears witness, that is, the poetic? Journal articles are not normally read in

the way poetry is read (it is, perhaps, inaccurate to speak of one 'way' of reading poetry – or indeed journal articles!). We are left wondering whether the academic discussion of Heidegger will inevitably fall into the kind of representational thinking that he always sought to overcome. But is this concern predicated on too stark a dichotomy? Are we in danger of opposing the poetic with the philosophical (or academic)? In the lecture course *Parmenides*, for example, Heidegger himself suggests that *mythos* and *logos* are too readily placed in opposition (Heidegger 1992, p. 6). What do these tensions mean for pedagogy? Although these tensions are never fully resolved – indeed their presence can perform the creative function of continually drawing our attention back from the settled philosophical position – Heidegger's reflections on poetry are instructive.

Some of Heidegger's writings on poetry are particularly relevant to pedagogy in that they demonstrate the process of thinking the difference between being and representation. In his opening remarks on Hölderlin's hymn *Der Ister*, Heidegger says,

We must first become attentive to this poetry. Once we have become attentive, we can then "pay attention to," that is, retain, some things that, at favourable moments, will perhaps let us "attend to," that is, have some intimation of what might be said in the word of this poet (Heidegger 1996, p. 1).

To discover what is said in the word of the poet seems to require a double-movement of attention, hence the circuitous, or paradoxical, manner in which attention is possible only after we have become attentive. An orientation of attentiveness (which is not directly controlled by the will) is the precondition of paying attention as an action of will. But it is more complicated than this. The orientation of attentiveness is indeed not entirely outside the domain of human willing since we can conceivably work upon our orientation by, for example, creating a space in which distractions are minimized. Conversely even this second moment of paying attention involves a 'letting' which undermines the notion

of a clear agent engaged in straightforward action. Heidegger goes on to reflect on the nature of interpreting poetry. Why is poetry in need of interpretation? Does interpretation help us behold the poetic word, or does it merely mediate and represent? Are we transported into the “dwelling place” of the poetic, or is the poetic word structured, interpreted, and domesticated into the digestible curricula and schemes of work appropriate to measurable educational outcomes? Does the positioning of the poem into an educational syllabus represent the enframing or imprisoning of the poetic word? Is this not the death of poetry? Heidegger is ambivalent about his own relationship (as teacher and philosopher) to the word of the poet: “At the risk of missing the truth of Hölderlin’s poetry, the remarks merely provide a few markers, signs that call our attention, pauses for reflection.” (Heidegger 1996, p. 2) This is Heidegger’s pedagogy: to be an accompaniment that draws attention through markers and signs, to open spaces for reflection. Any other more explicative move would not teach through a kind of bearing witness, but would represent and thereby deface or replace. Similar to Jacotot’s emancipatory method in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (Ranciere 1991), the task of teaching for Heidegger is not explication since that entails representational thinking. There is a patient, contemplative dimension to the relation to being that Heidegger’s pedagogy evokes.

In attempting to understand how Heidegger can contribute to educational thinking we must also consider why it is that Heidegger relied primarily on the spoken word. The priority of dialogue goes some way to explain why most of his published writings were originally lecture courses and why he regards Socrates as the “purest thinker in the West” (Heidegger 1968, p. 17). Since Plato’s *Phaedrus*, speech has tended to be prioritised over writing for its ability to remain literally in dialogue. Writing, in contrast, fixes the discourse to a particular representation, a process that is philosophically and pedagogically significant. Heidegger wished to ‘let learning occur’ not by giving his students a strong command of the facts, or considerations to be made, still

less by establishing the correct interpretations of ideas or texts, but rather by showing a certain *way* of relating to the subject matter. For Heidegger this requires the teacher to be “more teachable than the apprentices” (Heidegger 1968, p. 15). It is because his students could see for themselves an approach to thinking taking place that his students could learn what it means to approach thought. Heidegger’s writings are best appreciated as a “way”, or a movement towards what is to be thought. We could go further and say that Heidegger himself is on the way to thought and that we are invited to witness the ‘path of thinking’: “[l]et us also in the days ahead remain as wanderers on the way into the neighbourhood of Being” (Heidegger 1993, p. 224). Walter Biemel, one of Heidegger’s students, writes:

Those who know Martin Heidegger only through his published writings can hardly form an idea of his unique style of teaching. Even with beginners, he was able in no time to coax them into thinking, not just learning various views or reproducing what they had read, but entering into the movement of thinking. It seemed as if by some miracle the Socratic practice of address and rejoinder had come to life again (Biemel 1977, p. 7).

This brings us again to the understanding of thinking as a kind of attention that leaves behind representations and in which being is let into its own nature. This is a thinking that can only occur at ‘the end of philosophy’. In 1959 Heidegger wrote “(b)ut with the end of philosophy, thinking is not also at its end, but in transition to another beginning” (Heidegger 1973, p. 96). Elsewhere Heidegger says, “Heraclitus and Parmenides were not yet ‘philosophers.’ Why not? Because they were the greatest thinkers” (Heidegger 1956, p. 52-53). Philosophy as it has come to be practised in the modern West has little to do with thought. Part and parcel with the representational nature of Western thought is the way in which philosophy has become ‘a matter of reason’, basically equivalent to Western

'rationality' or 'metaphysics'. Here philosophy is concerned to supply rational grounds or reasons and argumentation, but it is this effort to find a 'rational account' that Heidegger contrasts with real thinking. Caputo shows how Heidegger perceives the problematic nature of providing reasons (*rationem reddere*):

Many major philosophers in the past - Descartes, Kant, Fichte, Husserl, Wittgenstein - have called for "reform" of philosophy and have laid claim to having finally discovered what philosophy truly is (...) They each proposed the definitive way to give an account (*rationem reddere*) of things in philosophy. But Heidegger's revolution is far more radical than any of these (...) Heidegger's call is a call to leave the domain of rational argumentation—the sphere of ratio—behind (...) Heidegger calls for a leap beyond the realm of giving reasons in order to take up a non-conceptual, non-discursive, non-representational kind of "thinking" which is profoundly divided from any of the traditional varieties of philosophy (Caputo 1978, p. 3-4).

Compare this disavowal of the conceptual and discursive, with, for example, the warnings expressed by the 2nd/3rd century Buddhist Nagarjuna about conceiving of truth in reified or conceptual terms. This is one well-known expression of suspicion towards conceptual reasoning and associated essentialism in Buddhist thought. David Storey has argued that Nagarjuna's negative dialectic is best suited to this non-conceptual register of Heidegger's later thought (Storey 2012, pp. 122-127).

As we have seen, Heidegger's understanding of *thinking* is complex and must be separated from a range of ideas conventionally associated with the term (conceptualising; representation; calculative thought; providing rational grounds). Heidegger wants us to "radically unlearn what thinking has been traditionally" (Heidegger 1968, p. 8), and he wants to retain the term in part for etymological reasons; *Denken* shares an etymological

root with Danken (to thank) (Heidegger 1968, p. 138 ff.). That thinking might entail an orientation of thankfulness encourages a realisation that thinking is not something we simply determine through a matter of will but comes to us as something of a gift. After all, what *occurs* to us is often not directly up to us. This attenuation of agency brings us to the deconstruction of the willful self.

The deconstruction of the willful self

We have seen that Heidegger's conception of thinking is fundamentally about the call to attend to being, and we have related this way of being attentive to a form of pedagogy. Heidegger's pedagogy can be characterised as a kind of gathering of attention that acts in a participative way to let being come into appearance. To be attentive is, therefore, to respond to the call of being. This raises questions of identity and agency since this responsiveness involves a self whose agency is not absolute. Elsewhere I have argued that Heidegger's language deliberately evokes the linguistic form of the middle voice in which agency is neither fully active nor passive (Lewin 2011b). In modern metaphysics this conception of the self, founded on Cartesian and Kantian philosophy, has been constituted as a stable ego identity: the ideal rational subject whose sovereign will is autonomous. For Heidegger this subject is an expression of representational metaphysics since only a representation can confer the total power to the subject. The fact that this subject is linguistically subverted in Heidegger's later thought in particular offers an opportunity to relate Heidegger to the contemplative elements of Eastern traditions in, for example, the negative dialectics of Nagarjuna. We have noted a connection with the self-less art of archery in Zen Buddhism and have seen that paying attention to the word of the poet entails an attenuation of the voluntarist conception of the will. The transcendence or negation of the substance both of being and of self is an important theme within the

meditative practices of Buddhism and Daoism. In Daoist thinking, we see not so much a negation of substance and self as the non-duality of the self and Dao. This suggests a spiritual life that yields the power and dominance of the autonomous subject in favour of a harmonious immanence with the world. An important theme within Daoism is the way in which the will is in harmony with the world whereby action is effortless in *wu wei*. Each tradition has its specific forms of spiritual practice but there are broad themes that are consistent to do with a *realization* (and the non-representational nature of this realization is of critical importance) that the illusion of the individual and autonomous self must be attenuated or abandoned. Caputo draws similar parallels here between Zen Buddhism, Eckhart and Heidegger:

In Zen, when the self has become entirely egoless and will-less, it is admitted into "satori." In Heidegger, Dasein is admitted into the truth of Being, the "event of appropriation." Thus, to satori, the state of "enlightenment," we relate the "lighting" (lichten) process of the "clearing" (Lichtung) which is made in Dasein for the event of truth. In and through this "event," Dasein enters into its own most essential being (Wesen), even as the soul enters into its innermost ground (Seelengrund; Eckhart) and the self in Zen is awakened to its "Buddha-nature" or "self-nature" (Caputo 1978, p. 214).

Like the contemplative traditions of Buddhism and Daoism, knowledge arises from (at least in part) a deconstruction of the self and the will. The refinement of human will is explored by Heidegger in many places, for example his *Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking* (Heidegger 1970), in which he presents a fictional dialogue on the nature of thinking, and indicates a turn to meditative rather than calculative thinking. I argue that the form of the conversation can evoke an *aporia* in the reader which enacts the philosophical point. It can bring the reader to the kind of thinking and attention that I

argued earlier was important to Heidegger's way. In other words, the conversation both shows and says. For many spiritual practices, the relation between the will, subjectivity and spiritual practice, entails a complexity and ambiguity that is shared by Heidegger's conception of thinking. For this reason, one of the first questions that occurs in the conversation is about the nature of the will: whether non-willing is a will to not will or an attempt to remain absolutely outside the domain of the will. There would seem to be the 'will' or desire to awaken releasement within oneself, and yet this very desire holds us back:

Scholar: So far as we can wean ourselves from willing, we contribute to the awakening of releasement.

Teacher: Say rather, keeping awake for releasement.

Scholar: Why not, to the awakening?

Teacher: Because on our own we do not awaken releasement in ourselves
(Heidegger 1970, p. 60-61)

The strategy of negation here resonates with the teaching practices of the Zen master: "Like a Zen master, Heidegger does not tell us what to do, only what not to do. And in response to the natural question complaining of the resulting disorientation, he intensifies instead of relieving the disorientation, again like a Zen master" (Kreeft 1971, p. 535). This is one explanation for the aporia of the dialogue. But still we want to know who or what can awaken releasement in us? Beyond the aporetic, there is a logical problem which our general conception of agency forces on us: the binary logic that we are either active or passive. But Heidegger is pointing to the idea that agency is both present and absent. A higher acting, which is yet not activity, is required and is, therefore, beyond the distinction between activity and passivity. This acting has already been evoked as the Daoist conception of *wu wei*. Yet, a kind of releasement (not 'true' releasement) often

remains within the domain of the will, if, for example, it attains to a divine will. Although Heidegger adopts the term *gelassenheit* from his reading of Eckhart (see Hackett 2012, pp. 687ff.), he seems to regard Eckhart's conception of releasement as still within the domain of this submission to divine will and so cannot fully assent to it (Heidegger 1970, p. 62).⁶ In this conversation it is made plain that releasement cannot be represented to the mind, but it becomes less clear what the interlocutors can 'do' in order to learn a thinking that is a releasement. So the teacher says: "We are to do nothing but wait" (Heidegger 1970, p. 62). And though they know not what they wait for, they must learn to wait if they are to learn thinking. Again the contemplative mood evoked in the dialogue is (to use a Wittgensteinian characterisation) both shown and said. Heidegger both brings the questions to presence and enacts the philosophical points. The interlocutors are hoping to learn what releasement means though the agency of teaching and learning is similarly in question. Who teaches and who learns in the dialogue is complex and shifting, giving the reader a sense that the subjective agent cannot maintain a grip on the movement of the dialogue and must enter into an unstable movement.

The idea of attention likewise entails an attenuation of the will. We spoke earlier of Heidegger's evocation of poetry as a double-movement between the orientation of attentiveness that precedes and structures the possibility of the act of letting attention into itself. This shifting and ambiguous notion of agency has left Heidegger open to the charge that he equivocates on his philosophical (and political) commitments; that, for example, the destiny of technological thinking is paradoxically both determining us, and determined by us, leaving no clear statement of what is to be (or indeed can be) done (Heidegger, 1977). We are brought to an *aporia*, left without a clear method of approach

⁶ Pöggeler argues that this understanding of Eckhart might apply to the pedagogical discourses where the traditional religious language still very much persists (Pöggeler 1990). But Eckhart as the non-dualist, where the ground of the soul and the Godhead are one, would seem to accord with a releasement beyond the domain of the will altogether. Caputo suggests that Heidegger's misunderstanding of Eckhart's releasement results from the fact that Heidegger supposes Eckhart's releasement to be a willing to not will, and as such, to be an ethical and moral category (Caputo 1978, pp. 180f).

to the problems of our age. This problem cannot be dissociated from Heidegger's efforts to deconstruct the subject of Western metaphysics that found its apex in the Cartesian cogito and the Kantian autonomous will. This equivocation is not a failure but a feature of Heideggerian thinking. So I suggest the same equivocation would be detected were we to seek a stable Heideggerian *doctrine of attention*. Any such doctrine of attention would itself be prone to the representational metaphysics of the modern age.

Could it be that the recent interest in mindfulness in education, in which mindfulness is employed for managing anxiety and behaviour to improve educational outcomes, depends on just such a doctrine of attention? I suggest that for Heidegger the current interest in mindfulness would represent a concealment of the essence of attention and precisely the oblivion to being that needs to be overcome. This is because the representation of attention-management as a method to harness the contemplative power of the mind is a product of a technology of the self in which the self is managed within an enframed totality of control. It entails a representation of happiness and the good life that conceals the complex and circuitous nature of being-in-the-world and supposes that Dasein can be circumscribed and satisfied by a representation of happiness.

I have tried to suggest that Heidegger's understanding of agency is not incidentally related to the nature of attention but centrally so. I have also wanted to suggest that Heidegger's pedagogy, such as it is, invokes that understanding of agency. Heidegger's philosophical movement can be interpreted as an elaboration of the nature of attention, whether in terms of the care structure of Dasein's being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1996), of thinking as thanking (Heidegger, 1976) and the meditative thinking of his *Discourse on Thinking* (Heidegger, 1970), or man as the 'shepherd of Being' in the *Letter on Humanism* (Heidegger, 1993); the complex double-movement of attention mirrors the complex double-nature of identity itself because attention is significantly constitutive of Dasein. The thereness of Dasein's being appears as the opening of being onto itself: i.e. as attention. We could take this further if we consider how language

constitutes Being and human being. In a certain sense, all speech grants the world in terms of structuring our orientation to it, and so speech intimates the tripartite gathering of aletheia which involves Being, Dasein, and mediation (See Lewin 2014b). This is because speech requires a speaker, a hearer, and a world, and is therefore “the clearing-concealing advent of Being itself” (Heidegger, 1993, p. 230). Speech too entails the transcendental condition for speaking, namely being, though Heidegger’s philosophy of language is beyond my present scope.

From the perspective of the desire to locate Heidegger’s thinking within a philosophical history it might seem natural to ask again, what does Heidegger mean by thinking? One reading of Heidegger could suggest that *attention* is the essence of thinking. But this answer elides the dynamic character of thinking as attention and, in fact, the tendency to want to project the ‘thought’ of Heidegger into clear formulations seems itself to emerge from a ‘will to know’ that, so Heidegger argues, places us in the state of inattention (or oblivion of being). The ready answer may have the ring of correctness to it, but that does not make it ‘true’ since it functions not to draw attention out but rather to stifle attention. Only when human beings can “get beyond the “will-fulness” of Western metaphysics which is preoccupied with beings and the manipulation of beings” (Caputo 1978, p. 24), will the still voice of the truth of Being be heard. The task of thinking then is to “meditate upon Being as such, which metaphysics, despite all its talk about Being, is never able to think - except in terms of beings” (Caputo 1978, p. 24). In the attempt to overcome metaphysics, Heidegger has distinguished “representational thinking” from “essential thinking”: representational thinking as the metaphysical method, and essential thinking as that which “spends itself” on the truth of Being itself. In other words, the sciences and traditional philosophy, indeed metaphysics as a whole, involve a mode of “representing” (*Vorstellen*) or “manufacturing” (*Herstellen*) beings which necessarily conceals the Truth of Being. To know the difference is one mark of the educated person: the person who has learnt to wait for being to show itself.

Conclusion

I have only been able to indicate some of the resonances between Heidegger and Eastern traditions in this paper. The priority has been rather to show that Heidegger's approach to doing philosophy is indicative of a philosophical and pedagogical view that has generally gone unrecognized. What dominates pedagogy today is the construction, transmission, and refinement of mental representations. For Heidegger this is not thinking. Heidegger's method follows the Socratic endeavor of reducing students to aporia in which it is the representations that must be abandoned to the appropriation of being (Allen and Axiotis 2002, p. 16). The student must abandon all images if they are to let themselves be reduced to the aporia that is an essential moment in education. Thus Heidegger's reconceptualization of thinking entails an equally radical and profound reconceptualization of education. A comparison with Eastern traditions does offer, I think, some important opportunities to see this reconceptualization at work. This is because to learn from a Zen Buddhist master, for example, does not only entail a correct understanding of Zen doctrine – that we have associated with representational thinking – but also involves a more complete change of perspective that forms the ground of 'rational thought'. This total shift is ontological/epistemological (a distinction between the two is difficult to maintain here) and resonates with Heidegger's view of education.

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