

ERFAHREN AND ERLEBEN: METAPHYSICAL EXPERIENCE AND ITS OVERCOMING IN HEIDEGGER'S BEITRÄGE

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This paper presents the origin, development and trajectory of our modes of experiencing beings as presented in Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy. It begins by detailing the historical development of our subjective experience of beings leading up to its current arrangement within the modern, technological worldview, and then proceeds to grapple with Heidegger's recommended pathway out of our technological mode of experience into a more primordial one. I close with some critical reflections on Heidegger's leap out of technological 'lived-experience' (Erleben) into a more authentic 'experience' (Erfahren) of beings.

Despite its radical re-conceptions of history, subjectivity, thought, time and language, Heidegger's *Beiträge*¹ is, above all, a provisional book. While Heidegger seeks and directs the reader toward a new thought of Being, or rather an 'enthinking (*Erdenken*)' of *Seyn* not grounded in the metaphysics of presence, at no point does he offer an example of or model for it. Rather, he elucidates the preparatory path through which an opening for such thinking, completely free from the metaphysical tradition, can be cleared. As Heidegger puts it, in order to open up thinking to "an other beginning, philosophy has to have achieved one crucial thing: projecting-open, i.e., the grounding enopening of the free play of the time-space of the truth of be-ing (*Seyn*)" (4/5).

If an other beginning requires a preparatory clearing, this is because the overcoming of metaphysics cannot be accomplished in thought, no matter how great one's will or efforts to achieve it. Metaphysics, for Heidegger, is not confined to a canon of philosophical texts or concepts, but constitutes the entire historical development of "the one and only first beginning" (4/5) as the trajectory of Western culture. Metaphysics is not a 'history of ideas', but the history of human relations to beings or modes of experience. One particular mode, Heidegger contends, has come to regulate any and every experience we have of beings. Accordingly, the metaphysics that Heidegger seeks to overcome is not simply a style of philosophy, but the dominant "'worldview' [that] arranges [...] experience in a certain direction and into its range" (26/37). Heidegger argues that this worldview has become so dominant that it essen-

tially prevents an other beginning for thinking; not just because the will and effort for it are lacking (although in general they are), but because it makes the experience of beings requisite to such thinking impossible. Thus, a clearing for an other thinking can only be opened if it also inaugurates “the beginning of another history” (8/10) for human experience.² Accordingly, Heidegger’s provisional project must reveal the specific conditions necessary for the preparatory clearing that liberates our experience of beings from our current worldview, such that we can become “able to experience [beings] in a fundamental way” (9/11), or at least to project-open the preparatory clearing for such an experience, should it be possible.

In what follows, I detail both the *Beiträge*’s account of the origin, historical development, and domination of the Western experiential worldview as well as the pathway towards the liberation of human experience indicated within it. I will exclusively focus on the historical development of our modes of experience in Heidegger’s account. My goal is to bring to light the experiential, rather than the more frequently treated poetic or thoughtful, changes that our entire culture (rather than simply the few and rare who seek it) must undergo to project-open a clearing for an other beginning. My account will proceed in two parts: The first details the historical development of our subjective experience of beings, leading up to its current arrangement within the modern worldview, which for Heidegger is essentially determined by technological science.³ The second stage grapples with the pathway out of our technological mode of experience into a more primordial one. Although each of the stages within this trajectory are defined as experiences of beings, Heidegger articulates them as drastically different from each other; so different, in fact, that the terminology he employs to express them changes from stage to stage. Much of Heidegger’s account depends on the distinctions between (and within) two German words for experiencing: *erfahren* and *erleben*. Roughly speaking, experience shifts from *erfahren* to *erleben* in the first part, and then back again in the second, although as we shall see the words subtly alter their meaning throughout their trajectory.

I From *erfahren* to *erleben*: As noted above, Heidegger contends that the modern worldview is dominated by technological science. Thus, to understand our worldview we must grasp the development of modern science by retraversing the “sequence of steps of ‘experiencing’ [*Erfarhens*]” (110/160) from which it arose. Our worldview, then, arises from the history of human experience conceived as *erfahren*.

Heidegger begins this sequence by placing *erfahren* between quotation marks (110/160), which might be intended to indicate the distance of this experience from the dominant connotation of *erfahren*, i.e., to find out or learn. As the inaugural experience in the development of our worldview, this “*er-fahren*” must be the most basic and un-interpreted of all possible experiences of entities or it must be the merely receptive, non-interpretive experiencing of that which we “come upon” only insofar as it “pushes against” [*stossen*] us (111/161, tr. modified). This is a bare affective encounter in which something imposes itself upon us such that we “must take it in” just as it imposes itself (111/161). Beings, here, cannot be experienced other than in the way in which they push against us, and each push is singularly specific to the being pushing and, moreover, to the specific experience of it taken in. These experiences, then, are not grounded in any presupposed or determinate interpretation of beings or their Being, but are always, with every fresh push, new and estranging.⁴

Insofar as beings estrange us, however, we are not simply swept up in what we come across, but react to the objects we encounter with a certain wonder or curiosity about what it is that we are experiencing. In Heidegger’s terms, “*erfahren*” gives way to *er-fahren*, minus the quotation marks and with a hyphen after its prefix (110/160).⁵ The hyphen indicates that our passive, estranging experience develops necessarily into an active, curious one in which our encounters both enable us, and compel us, to respond out of interest and wonder by approaching the entities that push against us. Having received the push of that which comes upon us, we are correspondingly stimulated or carried over to primitive inquiry, or to “*er-fahren* as *going up to something* [*Zugehen auf etwas*]” that affects us (111/160). Pushed against by beings, we react by seeking to experience them as they are. Estrangement both enables and compels us to approach and explore the singular existence of each encountered entity. This inquiring approach (i.e., *er-fahren*), however, is only enabled (i.e., *er-fahren*) by the fact that estranging beings push us into it. Thus, this experience is still not guided by any particular interpretation of beings, but is limited simply to exploring “how [any encountered entity] looks and whether it is extant at all and approachable” (111/160). In short, we seek to experience entities as they show themselves in our experience.

Nevertheless, *er-fahren* does mark the dawn of human understanding and interpretation, for the very exploration of entities (even in terms, e.g., of their presence or non-presence, approachability or non-approachability, etc.) presupposes some standard according to which our experiences can be determined as experiences of entities. In other words, the attempt to explore our

experiences of entities presupposes criteria that are “always already somehow *sought*” (111/160) within the entities being explored. Each experience, through the “changing conditions of its encountering and coming forth” (111/160) gives us standards to expect in experience (e.g., an entity that affects us with its colour gives us a standard for seeking not only repeated encounters with that entity as so coloured, but that colour as an affect, and colour more generally, etc.). As such, our exploratory approach leads to the further determination of experience (still, however, as *er-fahren*) as the “testing [*Erprobung*]” (111/160) of beings in accordance with presupposed standards of experience. We now seek to find, within each new experience, the (previously experienced) standards that make things what they are (approachable presence, determinate qualities, demarcations of quantity, etc.). Thus, within our testing “what is *sought after* is always *more or less something definite*” (112/161) that can be judged according to the criteria developed from past experiences, which (so we presuppose) “can be found again and expected” (111/160) in every ‘real’ experience. This observation may then be—and, in fact, is compelled by our very testing to be—developed further and extended by new methods and instruments of observation (magnifying glasses, microscopes, iterable conditions, etc.) that *intervene* within entities to make them more rigorously comparable to our standards. In so doing, we “provide ourselves with determinate experiences [*bestimmte Erfahrungen*] [through] the application of determinate conditions of more exact seeing and determining” (111/160, tr. modified).

Out of this trajectory of progressively more determinate *Erfahrungen*, then, we unconsciously but necessarily develop an interpretation of beings and their Being in terms of their approachable presence and availability for determinate testing in accordance with the conditions of determinate experience. Experience, then, has shifted from estrangement by unique, pushing beings to the concrete ‘learning’ or ‘finding out about’ them by inquiring into them through determinate experiential standards. As such, “experiencing [*Das Erfahren*] focuses in advance on working out a regularity [i.e.,] grasping ahead to what has the character of a rule and that means: to what constantly returns under the same conditions” (111/161). By applying pre-set criteria to beings, we determine in advance the general rules according to which determinate experience of any being whatsoever is possible (e.g., allowing repeated observation through their stable presence, being empirically observable in their essential properties, meeting expectations within iterable conditions, etc.).

From uniquely individual estrangement, then, we have moved to experiences which, in principle, could be had equally by anyone, of any being.

These general criteria are those that any experiencing subject can and would develop, as they arise directly from estrangement itself. As such, they constitute the public and universal standards for the experience of any being, or the standards of *objectivity*, and it is not accidental, but necessary, that these standards arise. Objective experience, then, is capable of becoming a worldview precisely because it articulates general conditions for determinate experience of any being that are valid for and graspable by any and all experiencing human beings. Objectivity, thus, becomes the cultural worldview according to which our experience of beings (and the interpretation of their Being) is universally and univocally regulated. This worldview determines beings univocally as objectively experienced and experience-able by everyone in accordance with public and objective standards.

Within this worldview, all possible experiences of beings—or, more precisely, of objects—are predictable, for we now determine experience of beings “in such a way that generally the rule and *only* this determines in advance what is *objective* in its domain and that the domain is not graspable in any other way than by working out *rules*, and this only by demonstrating regularity [...] in such a way that the rule is the rule for the *regulation of measure* and for possible measurability (space, time)” (112/162). Beings are preconceived, or ‘fore-grasped’ according to objective criteria, and all beings are equally subsumed under these criteria.⁶ Objectivity, then, is “a grasping ahead to [the] merely quantitatively and regulationally [*quantitativ-regelhaft*] determined domain of the object” (112/162).⁷

The modern worldview is made possible, then, only insofar as human experience has, in fact, cut itself off from anything resembling “*erfahren*”, or even *er-fahren*. In other words, the experience requisite for modern science is not *empirical*, if by empirical we mean testified to by direct “*experiencing* [*Er-fahren*], [i.e.,] *running into something*, [having] *something thrust upon one*, [e.g.] I have had my experiences [of things]” (114/165). Rather, modern science is a “[s]etting up [*Ansetzung*]” (113/164) of beings *prior* to their actual experience as always already subsumed under the univocal criteria of objectivity determined by—and determining of—‘rational-mathematical,’ rather than empirical, science. Science, then, stands “*against* [*gegen*]” (113/164) experience as *erfahren* by fore-grasping all possible experiences according to objective standards.

Through this fore-grasping, we re-present [*vor-stellen*] objects to ourselves, “in the sense of a *grasping* that reaches ahead, plans and arranges everything [...] this re-presentation recognizes no limit in [its grasp of] the given,

and *wants* to find no limit (94-5/135-6).” The laws of this re-presentation (most prominently the law of causality)⁸ allow us not only to determine with precision and exactness the current objective world; they give us the power to reach ahead and grasp all of the objects we have yet to encounter, even those that we could never encounter (the experience of others, possible worlds, theoretical origins of the universe, etc.). New experiences, then, are merely the working out or enactment of calculable predictions from other experiences.

Thus, a being is not an individually experienced content, but a determinate consequence or cause that is predictable through the rules of objectivity. An object is 'made' by predictable forces and, as such, can be re-made by simply working out and employing the same forces. Modern science thoroughly replaces the mystery of unique singularities with "the domination of making and what is made" (92/131). In other words, our worldview is technological. In the *Beiträge*, Heidegger calls this technological worldview “machination [*Machenschaft*]” (92/131). Under machination, there is no longer any need to question the Being of beings, because all objects are subsumed under the univocal interpretation of objectivity, even before their appearance. In this worldview, "only what man is able to bring to and before himself can count as 'a being'" (90/129).

Because all of the beings that we can and do experience are already and univocally fore-grasped through objective re-presentation, our technological interpretation of beings and their Being recedes from view as an interpretation, making the age of machination also “*the epoch of the total lack of questioning*” (76/108) regarding beings and their Being. The cost of this unlimited fore-grasping of beings, then, is the loss of any experience of beings that is not already calculated by machination. Every experience we have is, in its essential aspects, the same, as every being is always already understandable in terms of univocal, universal and well-known laws.

The technological world, in other words, is *boring*, for there is nothing within it that can surprise us any longer. The world is merely a set of details to be calculated, like inputs in a ledger, and has lost all awe for experiencing human beings. This loss, coupled with the silent residue that resides within us of estrangement (as the faint memory of the wonder of earlier experiences) leads, Heidegger claims, to a kind of sentimental yearning for a more wondrous experience of beings. Under machination, we are consequently “driven by the anxiety of boredom” (85/121) to seek novel, estranging experiences. Under machination, however, beings can no longer push against us in estranging encounters. Our worldview objectively fore-grasps all possible experiences, and

because machination conceals itself as an interpretation, we cannot and do not raise questions about beings outside of it. If we cannot find an estranging encounter with beings *outside* of machination, then we can only seek for new experiences *within* it. This yearning arises specifically as a lack of satisfaction with human experience *as it is lived within machination*; it is also the restless desire to make *technological life* less predictable. How, then, can our technological experience become more estranging?

Recall that under machination there is no possible experience that could not be had by anyone (e.g., if I want to experience Cuban life, all I have to do is get on a plane; if I want to experience cosmic events, all I have to do is look through a telescope or at a computer model, etc.). This means that my experience is not limited to any specific encounters; on the contrary, it consists of the seemingly limitless field of all possible technological experiences. Heidegger calls the individual experience of machinational objects *lived-experience* [*Erlebnis*] and refers to this mode of experience with the verb *erleben*.⁹ Machination calculates the making of all beings, thus creating possible lived-experiences that could be had by anyone and everyone.

However, while all objects within machination are calculable in advance, for each individual human the *first* experiences one has of these objects are fresh and new. Objectivity makes the ‘new’ experience of a near infinity of objects available to everyone through its technological control of beings. In such experiences, of course, beings no longer push upon us as estranging, encounter-specific beings; what we come across, instead, are calculable objects as uniquely experienced by individuals. Thus, *erleben* does not denote the estranging experience *brought about* by a unique being, but the novel experience *one has* with things that are objectively open to all. By exploiting the possibilities for novel *individual* experiences made possible by *universal* objectivity, all can have *new Erlebnis* that relieve the boredom caused by the essential predictability of technological objects (e.g., when I first board a plane, it is a fascinating experience for me, although not for experienced flyers; when I first see an eclipse it is mystifying, although not for experienced astronomers).

While technology makes lived-experiences available to individuals, it also takes the wonder out of them precisely through the calculation that make the new experience open to all. Our boredom is not relieved by any particular lived-experience, for each can only be lived insofar as it is *not* wondrous and estranging, but is *necessarily* calculable and predictable. As a result, we yearn again for new lived-experiences that break the newly-produced tedium. Of course, the more lived-experiences we have, the more experiences within the

technological world become un-estranging for us and, therefore, the more difficult it becomes to satisfy our quest for something new. As we experience more and more of what our fore-grasped world has to offer, the novelty within it will start to run dry and we will want to experience more and more of what there is to be had (e.g., if we have already ridden in planes, we may want to ride faster planes that arrive in half the time or planes that fly beyond the atmosphere; if we have seen eclipses, we may demand to see more intense ones, or forge fantastic versions of them using virtual imaging technology, etc.). If we are to achieve any manner of (even short-lived) satisfaction, our new lived-experiences must become proportionally more difficult to calculate. The very nature of *erleben*, in other words, demands that the world progressively turn "into a larger, more unprecedented, more screaming 'Erlebnis'" (77/109).¹⁰ As such, the desire for individual *Erlebnisse* is not opposed to the expansion of machination; rather, machination both satisfies (by providing new lived-experiences) and re-invigorates (by making them immediately boring) our yearning for them. *Erleben* and machination, then, are essentially intertwined and "mutually drive each other into the extreme" (93/133).¹¹

In sum, with novel *Erlebnisse* we have (temporary) wonder and, yet, need never (and can never) call beings or their Being into question. *Erleben* results from a worldview that has forgotten its experiential (i.e., *erfahren*) origins, being content with the mere progression/extension of the always already calculated through the momentarily novel. Under machination and *Erlebnisse*, then, we necessarily fail to recognize that other experiences of beings may be possible; by contrast, in tracing the historical sequence from *erfahren* to *erleben*, Heidegger seeks to reveal their essential possibility. In reminding us of the origins of machination and *erleben*, Heidegger aims to open our experience up once again to the estrangement of beings, creating the possibility of an other thinking of beings and their Being; one more primordial than that possible within our self-concealing worldview. This opening for an other experience of beings is the clearing as projecting-open for which the *Beiträge* is the preparation.

Heidegger's critical history of machination and *erleben*, however, is not *sufficient* to accomplish this clearing, for we still can have no experience of beings outside of machination. On Heidegger's account, even if we were to ask whether or not such beings could be experienced otherwise, we could never so experience them, because all human experience is under the domination of machination, which conceals itself as an interpretation. Thus, it is not enough to question in thought or memory whether or not the objects of our ex-

perience could be thought otherwise (i.e., simply contemplate the possibility, as though the question of beings and their Being were a mere *thought experiment*). Rather, we must *experience* the fact that technological experience arises from only one interpretation of their Being.¹² By experiencing our metaphysical worldview as an imposition upon beings, we may reveal an experience of beings outside of objectivity (i.e., we may decisively project-open the clearing within which an *experiment with thinking* about beings and their Being can occur). Somehow we (i.e., the whole culture of our worldview, not just individual thinkers, poets or artists) must experience our worldview as the dominant, concealed, unquestioning interpretation that it is. In the second part, I will describe this movement from machination and *erleben* back to a more primordial *Erfahren* of beings.

II From *erleben* to *erfahren*: To reiterate, the remembrance of the experiential origin of machination and lived-experience alone cannot overcome the technological worldview within which beings exist for us as calculable. Moreover, even if we could return to our initial experience (in the sense of “*erfahren*”) of entities, this would not allow us to escape our worldview, for we have seen that machination is grounded in the unique push of estranging beings. If all experiences with beings hitherto lead only to machination, upon what can we found an overcoming of our worldview?

The only aspect of beings left outside of technological experience is their coming-to-be, or what Heidegger calls their *Sein* (Be-ing). The *Sein* of beings is the event (*Ereignis*) of their coming-to-be. What machination essentially covers over is the fact that beings do not originate with our technological calculations (for it considers them only in terms of their make-ability once existent), but originally come-to-be in an event that gives them over to our experience. Beings come-to-be through *Sein*, “wherein all beings must originally arise and appear strange” (78/111) and by definition the *Sein* of beings is concealed within machination.

As such, *Sein* does not ensure that we will interpret beings in accordance with their coming-to-be. The fact of machination demonstrates that beings come-to-be such that they are interpreted without consideration for their *Sein*. *Sein* brings about beings such that their coming-to-be *can be* and *is* covered over by the technological worldview. Thus, *Sein* can be defined as the “[a]bandonment of Being: [which means] that *Sein* abandons beings and leaves beings to themselves and thus lets beings become objects of machination (78/111, tr. modified).” Beings come-to-be as abandoned to have their *Sein* concealed by machination.

So, if an experience beings outside of our worldview remains possible, it must occur in accordance with their *Seyn* (for this is all that remains of them beyond machination), but *Seyn* essentially abandons beings to machination's self-concealment. As such, to experience beings within machination in terms of their *Seyn* would be to experience them *as abandoned*. It is this experience that must be enacted if we are to project open the clearing for "shifting man into the basic relations with beings" (9/12) requisite for an other beginning. What might such an experience look like?

Experiencing beings as abandoned would be to experience them as in some way *needy* or *impoverished*, because they are cut off from their *Seyn*, which alone can preserve them as they are in their coming-to-be in the face of ever-increasing technological control. Moreover, it would be to experience this impoverishment and need for preservation as a *crisis* or *distress* within beings, i.e., to experience calculable objects, due to their grounding in something outside of machination, as endangered by machination. Above all, it would be to experience this impoverishment and need as a *necessary* crisis, in that it arises from the coming-to-be of beings.¹³ As such, it would be the experience of what Heidegger calls *Not*, or the necessary distress/need of the impoverishment of beings (79/112).¹⁴

The glaring and seemingly intractable problem, then, is how to experience objects as abandoned, since machination conceals itself as an interpretation, thus concealing the abandonment of beings. We must recall that it is not enough to think that such an experience is possible, because it is our experiential worldview in general that must be overcome, and within it "[e]ven the will to [project-open the clearing for the other beginning] gets no hearing as long as the *truth* of *Seyn* and its uniqueness has not yet become *Not*" (9/12). In other words, we cannot individually will ourselves out of our current mode of experience into a more originary one as though it was an arbitrary choice or mere subjective habit. The technological worldview dominates beings and places them in need and crisis, and any of the other historical or subjective options that seem to be available to us for founding alternate interpretations of them are simply stages on the path back to *erleben*. We cannot simply meditate anew on objects, undertake renewed testing of things to see what may be found, or try to grasp entities out of earlier or more remote paradigms of beings, etc., for "[m]ere modifications of what we now have do not get us underway, even if they happened with the greatest possible mixture of historically known ways of thinking" (4/5).¹⁵ How, then, can the experience of *Not* possibly be effectuated?

If there is no outside to technological experience (or those that lead to it), then the only aspect of the abandonment of beings that can be experienced within it is the *concealing of distress/need itself*. The only experience of abandonment available to us is the “lack of necessary distress/need [*Notlosigkeit*]” (87/125, tr. modified) or the impossibility of recognizing the impoverished abandonment that defines machination. Our freedom from distress is, in fact, the very distress that must be experienced, for it is precisely machination’s complete and controlling concealment of *Seyn* that is the necessary impoverishment to which beings are abandoned. The problem is not, then, how to experience the abandonment of being, for we experience nothing but this abandonment; rather, the problem is how to experience the *lack of* distress that is our experience *as* distress. How, then, can we experience [as *erfahren*] our experience [as *erleben*] as the necessary distress/need of beings? In short, “[h]ow can *Not* be effected *as Not*?” (83/119)

Heidegger’s answer to this is somewhat elusive and is, unfortunately, only hinted at in the text, but it nonetheless can be deduced from the preceding. Machination conceals the abandonment of beings by *Seyn* by imposing objective standards and controls on them, thereby producing an incessant demand for ever more extravagant *Erlebnisse*. In order to experience the lack of distress as distress, then, we must somehow draw out of machination the *Erlebnisse* available within it that bring to light both the imposition that our worldview is upon beings, and the coming-to-be of beings prior to *erleben*. In other words, we can only become aware of the distress of the lack of distress by being “brought nearer [to *Not*] by being mindful of the darkening [...] and the destruction” (83/119) taking place within machination through our accelerated demand for larger, more unprecedented lived-experiences. We are to take this reference to darkening and destruction, it would seem, quite literally. Because we are ‘at-home’ within the calculating control of beings, we can never become aware of the imposition of our worldview on beings through either the more predictable or the more ‘enchanted’ yet still calculable lived-experiences made available within our worldview. Within such control, beings do not seem impoverished or needful, let alone in crisis, but appear as full, complete beings. Thus, we can only be made mindful of beings as impoverished and in crisis insofar as we experience the effects of machination on beings that are *not* calculable, i.e., that *exceed* our prediction and control. In other words, we can only come to an awareness of our lack of distress as distress if, precisely as and within the technological experience of beings defining of our epoch, “something unusual [*ein Ungewöhnliches*] and not-devisable [*Nicht-*

ersinnbares] pushes [*stossen*] [us] into this distress/need” (83/119, tr. modified). We must experience the mutual driving of machination and *erleben* into the extreme until it is no longer calculable—not just novel, but genuinely beyond our capacity to devise or control it—thus pushing an encounter with beings outside of such control upon us once again. It is only when technological objects are experienced as beyond our calculation and control that the possibility of an experience of beings outside of our worldview can be opened up.

If we are to open up the possibility of such an experience, machination and *erleben* should not simply be (precisely because, from within, they *cannot* be) questioned, challenged, or modified; rather, we must drive them to the extreme point at which our relationship to beings ceases to be calculable and controllable. We can only experience beings outside of machination when their abandonment by *Seyn* to machination becomes *so complete*, making our drive for lived-experiences *so excessive* that it becomes impossible to control our technology. Only then do we experience (in retrospect) the concealment of *Seyn*'s abandonment. Thus, “the preparing for the preparation [for the other beginning] indeed rests in the necessary distress/need of *finally* only *accelerating* [machination] and the necessary distress/need of *hardening* its conditions” (67/97, tr. modified, emphasis added), for it is only “in its end” (78/111) that our worldview brings us to “the awareness that here, in all [of our epoch's] desolation and terror [...] the [experience of] the abandonment of beings by *Seyn* (as machination and lived-experience) dawns” (77/110).¹⁶ The projecting-open of a clearing for an other beginning can only arise when this “innermost *Not* of abandonment [...] is experienced [*erfahren*]” (66/96) in the only manner it can be *within* our worldview, i.e., precisely *as* our worldview.

Consequently, one can only conclude that actively seeking to project-open a clearing for an other beginning would amount to “finding the shortest way to annihilation” (79/113), revealing to the “masses of humanity [who are] no longer even deemed worthy of” it (79/113) and “who are hardly worth mentioning as one turns away from them [towards the] pathway of thinking” (14/18) that they are indeed the “strong[est] proof for the abandonment” of *Seyn* (79/113).¹⁷ Only this “greatest occurrence [...] can still save us from being lost in the bustle of mere events and machinations” (41/58). Our worldview can only be truly overcome when technology reveals itself as “a power which man himself does not control,” and it is the task of those who seek another beginning to use all available means to “help [humanity achieve] this realization.”¹⁸

Conclusion: The experience of excessive, uncontrollable machination is necessary because our technological “direction of inquiry [...] must be given up *completely*” (31/45, emphasis added), (not individually, but historically and decisively) because it so thoroughly “constricts and thwarts genuine experience [*Erfahrung*]” (26/37) of beings in terms of their *Sein*. In order to open experience up to something more originary and genuine, we must overcome both the trajectory of scientific *er-fahren* and the technological *Erlebenisse* to which it leads by destroying the worldview—and thus the world—within which they rage. Only then can “the deep stillness come over the world” (25/34) that projects-open the clearing for an other experience of beings. Thus, overcoming metaphysics means overcoming our experiential worldview from within.

This, then, is the cost of following Heidegger’s path to project-open a clearing for an other beginning. While it is true that the *Beiträge* details many ways of seeking this other beginning (e.g., thinking, artistic and poetic creation, being-towards-death, etc.), in order to actually open a genuine clearing for it we would above all need to overcome machination completely and decisively; we “cannot turn away from *this* destiny, namely to *prepare* the time-space for the *final* [emphasis added] decision concerning whether and how we experience [*erfahren*] and ground” (10/13) beings in their *Sein*.¹⁹ This “decision [will be] made when the necessity of the utmost *mandate* from within the innermost distress of abandonment of being is experienced and empowered into *unendurable* [emphasis added] power” (66/96). Thus, thinkers, artists and poets, despite their best efforts and will, can never get a hearing within our worldview and, therefore, will never clear a still space for thinking until—through machination itself—“all beings are sacrificed to *Sein*” (163/230)²⁰ such that we are once again forced “to face *that* a being *is*, whereas before a being was for [us] just a [for-grasped, calculable] being” (11/15). Only the strange fact of beings prior to our interpretation and control of them can ground a new experience outside of machination and, with it, a new thinking.

Of course, we have faced this fact before. Such estranging, uninterpreted beings are what began leading us down the path to machination. Even the achieved overcoming of the technological worldview, then, does not guarantee an other experience of beings. Indeed, nothing within the history of our experience indicates that an other beginning is possible. The grounding of experience in *Sein* is not a *result* of the clearing; rather, the clearing is simply the preparation requisite for the *possibility* of such an experience. If there is to be such an experience, it can only be determined by the manner in which *Sein*

brings them into being. In other words, in projecting open a preparatory clearing for an other beginning, we simply make it possible for a re-grounding of being to take place, should *Sein* so ground them. There is no guarantee that experience will not simply repeat the history of *Sein*'s abandonment. This is why this preparation is a risk or 'leap' into the abyss.²¹

For Heidegger, of course, the possible benefits of the risk far outweigh the actual costs, because he holds it as be our essential task "to restore beings from within the truth of *Sein*" (8/11). If beings must be saved from technology and can only be so saved by being grounded again in their *Sein*, the preparation for this is, indeed, "the one and only and thus singular goal of our history" (13/17), i.e., "not to eliminate [...] distress/need but rather [to] persevere in it [and] make it the ground of man's history" (32/45, tr. modified). While this leap may give the rest of us "the impression of being most reckless" (161/228), Heidegger holds that it is in fact the necessary task of our experience because "all beings are only [emphasis added] for the sake of *Sein*" (163/230).

It is precisely on this point, I contend, that the *Beiträge*'s path must be abandoned. Heidegger is certainly correct to draw our attention to the constrictive and destructive aspects of the technological worldview, and in particular to emphasize its grounding in an unquestionable and univocal interpretation of all beings. His call to overcome this interpretation, however, sacrifices all beings to the equally unquestionable (because by definition self-concealing and unknown) and univocal interpretation of beings through *Sein*. In other words, Heidegger presents us with two equally univocal alternatives: the all-pervasive machination of the technological worldview or the leap into the abyss of *Sein*'s essential grounding of all beings. Neither, however, reflects the nature of our experience of beings as Heidegger himself explicates it. Experience, as we have seen, is a relation to beings that is essentially unsatisfied with any single interpretation or experience. Experience, in other words, is the essential drive for new and varied relations to beings.

Heidegger is certainly correct to argue that this drive cannot be satisfied with the complete and univocal domination of technology and *Erlebnis*, which will, therefore, ultimately lead to our own destruction. But, he is nonetheless wrong to assume that it must, or even can, solely ground itself in the interpretation of beings in terms of their *Sein*. Experience, as Heidegger himself has shown, is the self-developing transgression of our interpretations of and relations to beings. We cannot simply 'leap' in the hopes of finding 'the' genuine relation to beings, for the essential truth of experience is that no single relation with or interpretation of beings can be taken as final or authentic. Experi-

ence is just that which pushes beyond its own boundaries to new experiences and interpretations, and it is *within* experience that we must seek salvation from the destructive subsumption of beings under *any* univocal interpretation. If we are to avoid the potentially disastrous consequences of our monolithic technological worldview, we must steer equally clear of the temptations of any and all promises of an authentic, final grounding of experience in any one interpretation. In other words, we must embrace experience as that which seeks, creates and transgresses its own interpretive frameworks in and as its incessant explorations of beings; we must also strive to preserve the varied interpretations of beings that develop through our experience. Beings can only be saved from technological destruction if we forsake *all univocal* interpretations of beings, affirming the multiplicity of both beings and interpretive frameworks already present, and, yet, ruinously ignored, within experience.²²

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¹ Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, *Gesamtausgabe* (GA), Vol. 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989); *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, tr. P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). Hereafter cited by English translation, followed by the German in the form (4/5).

² Compare Alfons Grieder, “Essential Thinking: Reflections on Heidegger’s *Beiträge zur Philosophie*” in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 23 (1992), 240–251; “even if by whatever chance Essential Thinking did happen among us we would, at this stage, not be able to open ourselves for its truth, as we are not yet humans of the required rank” (246). In the second part I detail the *Beiträge*’s path for attaining this rank.

³ Heidegger’s classic discussions of technological modernity are contained in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, tr. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), esp. “The Question Concerning Technology” and “The Age of the World Picture”.

⁴ Compare to the account of inaugural experience in G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. A.V. Miller (New York: Oxford, 1977), §90–1.

⁵ While it is difficult to find an English analogue that would reflect this difference, it is regrettable that Emad and Maly fail to note this added hyphen in their translation.

⁶ Compare with “The Origin of the Work of Art” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 17–87, where Heidegger claims that the determinations that characterize “the basic Greek experience [*die griechische Grunderfahrung*] of the Being of beings in the sense of presence” (23) give way necessarily to the “long familiar mode of thought [that] preconceives [*greift ... vor*] all immediate experience of beings” (31).

⁷ See Martin Heidegger, *What is a Thing*, tr. W.B. Barton and Vera Deutsch (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1967), 65–76, for a discussion of the mathematical scientific worldview as the “fundamental position we take toward things [in] which we take up things as already given to us, and as they should be given” (75).

⁸ The “cause-effect relationship is the most ordinary, most crude, and most immediate [method] employed by all human calculation [...] in order to explain something, i.e., to push it into the clarity of the ordinary and familiar” (77/110).

⁹ Now, “for the first time everything is experienced live [*erlebt*] and every undertaking and performance drips with ‘lived-experiences’ [*Erlebnisse*]” (86/123–4).

¹⁰ One of Heidegger’s examples of this is the then relatively new experience of going to the movies (§71), which provides a fairly clear (if benign) example of how the progressive demand for *Erlebnisse* works. A kind of chemical process that makes movie film is developed and it allows us to place everyday experience (trains arriving, people walking, etc.) in a non-everyday experiential form (celluloid projections). While initially one runs from trains hurling at the screen, soon enough, we tire of the blurry, relatively static images, and demand higher quality film (controlled speed, talkies, color), more exciting film techniques (moving cameras, special effects, 3-D), and content (drama, eroticism, horror), etc. Each new development enralls audiences as an *Erlebnis* that is fresh and surprising, which then becomes ordinary, then boring, reinvigorating the demand for ‘estranging’ cinematic experiences.

¹¹ Paul Livingston, “Thinking and Being: Heidegger and Wittgenstein on Machination and Lived-experience” in *Inquiry* 46 (2003), 324–45, provides an excellent account of the essential interconnections between the two, although he fails to ground them in *erfahren*, thus conflating some aspects of the two kinds of ‘experience’.

¹² Compare with *Hölderlin’s Hymnen ‘Germanien’ und ‘Der Rhein’* (GA 39), where Heidegger argues that that the everyday representation of poetry as the “expression of lived-experiences [*Ausdruck von Erlebnissen*]” (26) cannot be overcome simply by positing a new, more essential definition of poetry. Rather, the positive essence of poetry “must first be experienced [*erfahren*]” (29).

¹³ As Heidegger puts it elsewhere, “[t]o be sure, men are at all times and in all places exceedingly oppressed by dangers and exigencies. But the danger, namely, Being itself endangering itself in the truth of its coming to presence, remains veiled and disguised. This disguising is what is most dangerous in the danger” (*The Question Concerning Technology*, 37). We shall shortly turn to the saving power that grows within this danger.

¹⁴ Emad and Maly consistently translate *Not* as ‘distress,’ which fits its sense of emergency and conveys something of its sense of poverty, but its cognates (e.g., *Notwendigkeit*, *nötig*, etc.) and proverbial uses (e.g., ‘*Die Not macht erfinderisch*’, ‘Necessity is the mother of invention’) testify to its primary sense of ‘necessity’, ‘need’, etc. Thus, when it appears in his text, we should understand it in terms of all of its connotations: distress, impoverishment, need, necessity, crisis.

¹⁵ Compare with the following response from the 1966 *Der Spiegel* interview, “‘Only a God Can Save Us’” in *The Heidegger Controversy*, ed. Richard Wolin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 91–116; “it is my conviction that a reversal can be prepared only in the same place in the world where the modern technological world originated, and that it cannot happen because of any takeover by Zen Buddhism or any other Eastern experiences of the world” (113).

¹⁶ In Heidegger’s more famous formulation, “Where the danger is as the danger, there the saving power is thriving also. [...] The selfsame danger is, when it is *as* the danger, the saving power” (*The Question Concerning Technology*, 42).

¹⁷ This is undoubtedly why anyone seeking this other beginning “ought not to expect any understanding—as immediately urgent as that might be—from those of today. Rather, he ought to *expect* resistance” (37/52).

¹⁸ “Only a God Can Save Us”, 107. While there is clearly no room here even to speculate on the relationship of this realization to the so-called ‘Heidegger affair,’ the technological domination/excess that is required for overturning our worldview may help us make better sense of this enigmatic statement from the same interview: “I do not see the situation of man in the world of global technology as a fate which cannot be escaped or unraveled. On the contrary, I see the task of thought to consist in helping man in general [...] to achieve an adequate relationship to the essence of technology. National Socialism, to be sure, moved in this direction. But those people were far too limited in their thinking to acquire an explicit relationship to what is really happening today and has been underway for three centuries” (111).

¹⁹ John Sallis, “Grounders of the Abyss” in *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. Charles E. Scott *et al.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 181–97, while acknowledging that “[c]rossing to another beginning would bring [...] a leap beyond the first beginning and everything possible within its orbit” (184), argues that it is primarily artistic and poetic creation that “lets the truth of being [*Sein*] happen” (194). This truth “would otherwise go unbequeathed but which the poet [or, one presumes, artist] can receive and hand down to the people” (189). While this is certainly reflective of some of Heidegger’s account, it does not explain how such artworks can thrust our worldview (rather than individual artists or spectators) into an other beginning, or how they allow us to grasp the distress/need of technology as distress/need, etc. Those who seek *Sein* (e.g., poets, artists, etc.) are, no doubt, necessary to project open the clearing, but they are certainly not sufficient. While it is true to say that art may give us an intimation of *Sein*, the overcoming of the metaphysical worldview would seem to require a work so grand and unpredictable that it would hardly be recognizable as art, and whose creation would be indistinguishable from destruction.

²⁰ Compare George Kovacs, “The leap for Being in Heidegger’s *Beiträge zur Philosophie*” in *Man and World* 25 (1992), 39–59; “‘destruction,’ then, is not an act of mere disruption; it is an activity of purging (*Reinigung*), of clearing the way for grasping the relationship of Being to beings ‘entirely otherwise’” (47). Despite recognizing this need for complete purging and renewal,

Kovacs still limits this destruction to phenomenological thinking, and not to the world of experience.

²¹ On the leap, see 161–71/227–42.

²² Here, I side, at least in part, with Keith Ansell-Pearson, “The An-Economy of Time’s Giving: Contributions to the Event of Heidegger” in *Journal for the British Society for Phenomenology* 26 (1995), 268–78, although I am less convinced, given its limitations, than he is that the “event of [Heidegger’s] thinking must be construed as one which always lies ahead-of-us” (277).