

Following Bergson's Footsteps

Time in Heidegger's Early Works

1. The Question of Time

Many readers of *Being and Time* have noticed that when Heidegger distinguishes between temporality and what philosophers call "time," he evokes Bergson's name along with Aristotle's. Yet the importance of Bergson's role in *Being and Time* is rarely acknowledged. It is tempting to conclude from the way Heidegger dismisses Bergson in a footnote near the end of division two that he was only interested in preventing his readers from confusing his view of time with Bergson's. The evidence from Heidegger's early works suggests otherwise. A survey of his treatments of time prior to the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927 reveals a sustained engagement with Bergson's thinking. With reference to the lecture courses and essays from this period, I aim to show, first, that not only did Heidegger consider Bergson a pivotal thinker with respect to time, but he also followed Bergson's footsteps in thinking about time in several crucial ways; and second, that his treatment of Bergson displays an ambivalence stemming from concerns about Bergson's understanding of life. Because Heidegger never lectured or wrote at length about Bergson, my case depends on evidence gathered from a variety of sources, some in which Bergson is mentioned by name and others in which he is not. By surveying the path leading to Heidegger's dismissal of Bergson, I hope to shed more light on Bergson's appearances in *Being and Time* and the role he plays in that work and in the early development of Heidegger's thinking about temporality.

Heidegger's initial remarks in *Being and Time* about Bergson are brief but provocative. In the prologue, Heidegger sets his sights on "the interpretation of *time* [*Zeit*] as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of being" (BT xxix/1). He fleshes this out somewhat in the introduction,

announcing, “The meaning of being of that being we call Dasein will prove to be *temporality* [*Zeitlichkeit*],” and assigning himself the task of showing that “*time* is that from which Dasein tacitly understands and interprets something like being at all” (BT 17/17). We understand being in a temporal way, he aims to show, because our being is grounded in *temporality* and has a distinctive temporal structure that is not immediately apparent from the way time is ordinarily understood. With regard to how philosophers have traditionally thought about time, Heidegger writes:

This task as a whole requires that the concept of time thus gained be distinguished from the common understanding of it. The latter has become explicit in an interpretation of time which reflects the traditional concept that has persisted since Aristotle and beyond Bergson. (BT 17/18)

Heidegger soon explains why he credits Aristotle with the formulation of this “traditional concept” of time: in *Physics* IV, chapters 10–14, Aristotle explores the nature and existence of time in a way that becomes definitive for philosophy.¹ Later in the introduction, Heidegger writes, “Aristotle’s treatise on time is the first detailed interpretation of this phenomenon that has come down to us. It essentially determined all the subsequent interpretations of time, including that of Bergson” (BT 25/26). The obvious question is, *why Bergson?* What is it about Bergson’s interpretation of time that causes Heidegger to point in his direction, rather than Husserl’s, whose lectures on time-consciousness would soon be published under his supervision? Why not Hegel, whose interpretation of time—not Bergson’s—is the subject of the penultimate chapter of *Being and Time*? For that matter, why not Dilthey, whose thinking is the focus of some of Heidegger’s most important early investigations into time?²

It is not until a footnote near the end of *Being and Time* that Heidegger offers any reasons for singling out Bergson’s interpretation of time. In his discussion of the relationship between time and spirit for Hegel, Heidegger offers a brief sketch of why he considers Bergson a contemporary heir to the concept of time formulated by Aristotle.³ The initial focus of the footnote is how Hegel’s concept of time appears to be “drawn *directly* from Aristotle’s *Physics*” (BT 410n/432n). Turning to Bergson, Heidegger levels the same criticism:

Despite all differences in justification, Bergson’s conception agrees with Hegel’s thesis that space “is” time. Bergson just turns it around: Time (*temps*) is space. Bergson’s interpretation of time,

too, obviously grew out of an interpretation of Aristotle's treatise on time. It is not just a matter of an external literary connection that simultaneously with Bergson's *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, where the problem of *temps* and *durée* is expounded, a treatise of Bergson's appeared with the title: *Quid Aristoteles de loco senserit*.⁴ With regard to the Aristotelian definition of time as ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως [*arithmos kineseos*], Bergson analyzes *number* before analyzing time. Time as space (cf. *Essai*, p. 69) is *quantitative* succession. Duration is described on the basis of a counter-orientation toward *this* concept of time as *qualitative* succession. (BT 410n/432–3n)

What makes Bergson's concept of time traditional, according to Heidegger, is its dependence on Aristotle's way of thinking about time. Bergson famously distinguishes between time and *duration* by showing that the way time is commonly represented in both thought and language is fundamentally different from the way time is *lived*. The main difference is that duration flows unceasingly and its moments permeate one another, while what we call "time" is a homogeneous medium akin to space, and its moments are juxtaposed like points or numbers. Heidegger claims that this distinction amounts to a mere reversal of Aristotle's concept of time as *arithmos kineseos*, a number related to motion, which is demonstrated by Bergson's definition of time as "quantitative succession." If time is understood as something quantitative, or something that can be counted, Bergson thinks, then it is being confused with space. This is because counting requires that whatever is counted must be numerically distinct, and such distinctness implies externality and juxtaposition, which are spatial properties. Bergson concludes that "time, understood in the sense of a medium in which we distinguish and count, is nothing but space" (TFW 91/68). The fact that Bergson developed this distinction between time and duration while he was also writing a thesis on Aristotle's concept of place is no coincidence, according to Heidegger. The signs all point back to Aristotle.

Heidegger thus portrays Bergson's understanding of time—as he also portrays Hegel's and Kant's—as fundamentally Aristotelian.⁵ While it may appear to some that Bergson rethinks time radically, Heidegger contends, his reversal of Aristotle reveals that his thought remains traditional. The footnote on Hegel and Bergson continues:

This is not the place for a critical discussion of Bergson's concept of time and other present-day interpretations of time. To

the extent that anything essential has been gained at all beyond Aristotle and Kant, the concern is more with grasping time and “time consciousness.” (BT 410n/433n)

A couple of things are interesting about this caveat: first is the way Heidegger’s reference to “time consciousness” (*Zeitbewußtsein*) evokes Husserl’s phenomenological analyses of time, and second is the notion that a “critical discussion” or “decisive confrontation” (*Auseinandersetzung*) with Bergson is called for. Heidegger’s use of these particular terms raises more questions: Does Husserl’s conception of time fall under the “other present-day interpretations” that Heidegger intends to criticize? Is a confrontation with Bergson over his interpretation of time really necessary, and if so, why? In the first edition of *Being and Time*, in a remark omitted from later editions, Heidegger’s dismissal of Bergson concludes: “We shall come back to this in the first and third divisions of Part Two” (BT 410n/433n), referring to the critical interpretations of Kant and Aristotle he had originally planned for the “phenomenological destruction of the history of ontology” (BT 39–40/39–40). Although the second part of *Being and Time* was never published as such, Heidegger renews his attack on Bergson in his lecture courses immediately following its publication, reiterating and complicating the critique outlined above.⁶

In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, a lecture course delivered in the summer of 1927, Heidegger recapitulates his argument that Bergson does not overcome Aristotle’s concept of time. However, he goes further by accusing Bergson not only of formulating duration as a “counter-concept” to Aristotle’s concept of time, but also of misinterpreting Aristotle. According to Heidegger, Bergson “does not succeed by means of this concept [of duration] in working his way through to the true phenomenon of time,” yet Bergson’s inquiries “are valuable because they manifest a philosophical effort to surpass the traditional concept of time” (BPP 232/329). Heidegger attacks Bergson several times in the course of an extensive discussion of Aristotle, claiming that “the Aristotelian concept of time was misunderstood in the modern period, especially by Bergson,” (BPP 242/343) and that because of overly narrow interpretations of some of Aristotle’s terms, “the Aristotelian definition of time remains unintelligible. Or else defective interpretations occur, for example that of Bergson, who says that time as Aristotle understands it is space” (BPP 244/345). These remarks, while not exactly fulfilling Heidegger’s promise to return to Bergson in part two of *Being and Time*, still demonstrate his commitment to coming to terms with Bergson’s philosophy of time.⁷ Indeed, prior to criticizing Bergson,

Heidegger had provided his students with a compendium of philosophical investigations of time, remarking, "From the most recent period we may cite Bergson's investigations of the time phenomenon. They are by far the most independent" (BPP 231/328).

The same tension reappears the following year in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, a course delivered in the summer of 1928. There, he explains:

Recently Bergson tried to conceive the concept of time more originally. He made it more clear than any previous philosopher that time is interwoven with consciousness. But the essential thing remained unresolved in Bergson, without even becoming a problem. (MFL 149/189)

Later in the course, Heidegger adds:

Bergson first worked out the connection between a derived and an original time. But he did so in a way that went too far and said that time, once emerged, is space. . . . Bergson's analyses nonetheless belong to the most intense analyses of time that we possess." (MFL 203/262)

Although we could receive the impression from *Being and Time* alone that Bergson is more or less inconsequential for Heidegger, these lectures shortly following its publication paint a different picture. Here, Heidegger portrays Bergson's philosophy of time as comprising the most "independent" and "intense" investigations of the contemporary age. This deserves our attention, if for no other reason than because Heidegger reserves such praise for Bergson rather than for his teacher and mentor Husserl.

Heidegger presents Bergson in these lecture courses following *Being and Time* as having achieved important insights about time, yet having been unable to see what is essential. Contrary to what Heidegger's dismissal of Bergson in the margins of *Being and Time* suggests, he did not completely reject Bergson's way of thinking about time. It may appear as if Heidegger viewed Bergson merely as a cautionary example of a contemporary philosopher who attempted to rethink time but could not do so radically enough because of his dependence on Aristotle. However, a close look at Heidegger's early works shows that from his student days through the period in which he produced the earliest drafts of *Being and Time*, he already displayed both the recognition of Bergson's importance and the ambivalence about

his philosophy of time that are evident in the lecture courses following *Being and Time*.

Heidegger's early encounters with Bergson help to illuminate why Bergson makes several prominent appearances in *Being and Time* only to be dismissed in a footnote near the end. Following Heidegger's path in thinking about time from his earliest writings to *Being and Time*, we can see the development of his strategy of distinguishing between "primordial time" (*ursprünglich Zeit*), or temporality, and time as we commonly understand it. Recognizing that Bergson also seeks to radically rethink time, Heidegger uses Bergson as a touchstone, returning to his thought over and over again. However, he disagrees with Bergson's account of duration as primordial time on many points. More precisely, Heidegger *comes to disagree* with Bergson on many points over the course of an engagement with his thinking that lasts more than a decade.

In what follows, I show that Heidegger appropriates certain key elements of Bergson's thinking as early as his 1915 *Habilitation* lecture "The Concept of Time in the Science of History," which contrasts the concept of time employed by natural science, particularly physics, with the concept of time needed for the study of history. Heidegger's descriptions of this contrast echo Bergson's distinction in *Time and Free Will* between the concept of time as a homogeneous medium, which he also associates with physics, and the experience of pure duration. However, Heidegger soon expresses concerns about Bergson's philosophy of life, especially with regard to the question of the appropriate method for understanding it. In an essay written in 1920, "Comments on Karl Jaspers' *Psychology of Worldviews*," and two contemporaneous lecture courses, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (WS 1919–20) and *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression* (SS 1920), Heidegger takes issue with the view, which he attributes to Bergson, that life is a phenomenon that cannot be conceptually comprehended. Later, in his 1924 lecture *The Concept of Time*, Heidegger echoes Bergson again in the way he distinguishes time as it is measured by physicists and read off the clock from a more primordial experience of time. Heidegger thus plants the seeds for his interpretation of temporality in *Being and Time* by contrasting both the scientific concept of time and our ordinary understanding of time with a more "authentic" temporality of historical existence. In *History of the Concept of Time* (SS 1925), Heidegger announces a plan to make Bergson's thought the point of departure for a phenomenological destruction of the traditional concept of time that will trace it through Kant and Newton to Aristotle. In the introduction to this course, Heidegger credits Bergson with attempting to overcome the traditional concept of time by going back

to a more original one, but he claims that Bergson presupposes Aristotle's concept. Finally, in *Logic: The Question of Truth* (WS 1925–6), Heidegger shows in more detail why Bergson's philosophy of time is no exception to the rule that all philosophical reflection on time in the Western tradition has been dominated by Aristotle's thought. In this course, Heidegger argues that Bergson's thinking is shaped by its "constant opposition to Aristotle's concept of time" (LQT 207/250), which becomes the theme for Heidegger's interpretation of Bergson in *Being and Time*. By showing how Heidegger deals with time at each of these stages, I hope to reveal not only how he follows in Bergson's footsteps, but also how he diverges from Bergson's path to blaze his own trail to originary temporality.

2. The Structure of the Concept of Time

The earliest trace of Heidegger's engagement with Bergson appears more than a decade before the publication of *Being and Time* in his 1915 lecture "The Concept of Time in the Science of History."⁸ Heidegger's goal in this lecture is to illuminate certain structural differences between the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) and the "historical sciences" (*Geisteswissenschaften*) by means of an examination of one of their basic concepts: the concept of time.⁹ His strategy is to analyze the structure of the concept of time by first examining its function in physics and then contrasting it with "the historical concept of time." He argues that because time serves a different function for historians than it does for physicists, the concept of time needed for the study of history has a fundamentally different structure than that of the one employed in attempts to determine the laws of nature. With an understanding of the difference between these two concepts of time, he proposes, "it should be possible to determine something general about the logical structure of history as a science" (S 51/418). Heidegger's project is thus to clarify the difference between the natural sciences and the historical sciences on the basis of their concepts of time.¹⁰

The influence of Dilthey, Husserl, and Rickert is apparent in this early piece, even though Heidegger mentions none of them by name. Somewhat less apparent is the influence of Bergson, whom he had studied in 1913 with Rickert in a course titled "Seminar on Metaphysics in Conjunction with the Writings of H. Bergson."¹¹ Although Heidegger also never mentions him by name, we can hear echoes of Bergson's *Time and Free Will* in Heidegger's analysis of the concept of time in the natural sciences and his descriptions of how the concept of time in history differs from it.¹² Heidegger's basic

contrast between two kinds of time corresponds in several ways to Bergson's distinction in *Time and Free Will* between time as a homogeneous medium and pure duration. Indeed, Bergson's influence on Heidegger at this stage is apparent in how he characterizes both concepts of time, the natural and the historical.

The first way that Heidegger's analysis of the concept of time resembles Bergson's is in his characterization of the function of time in physics. As already mentioned, Bergson distinguishes time (*temps*)—or, more precisely, what we usually call “time”—from the duration (*durée*) of conscious life, which he considers to be fundamentally different from space. With regard to the former, Bergson writes, “time enters into the formulas of mechanics, into the calculations of the astronomer, and even of the physicist, under the form of a quantity. We measure the velocity of a movement, implying that time itself is a magnitude” (TFW 107/72). As such, the way physicists and astronomers understand time is determined by the need to measure motion. For their purposes, time is conceived as a physical quantity that can be used, most basically, to determine the speed of moving objects ($v = d/t$). Similarly, Heidegger argues that the concept of time in physics is formed according to its function in measurement:

Motions run their course in time. What exactly does this mean? “In” time has a spatial meaning; however, time is obviously nothing spatial. . . . In the relation between motion and time, what is clearly at issue is *measurement* of motion by means of time. (S 53/421–2)

From Galileo to Einstein, as far as physics is concerned, Heidegger claims, “*It is the function of time to make measurement possible*” (S 53/422). The structure of the concept of time employed in physics can thus be described in terms of its quantitative function.

The second resemblance between Heidegger's analysis and Bergson's involves the way time is structured to serve this function. Bergson argues that operations of counting and measuring require the representation of time as a “homogeneous medium” in which terms can be separated and juxtaposed. In some respects, therefore, what physicists call “time” is closer in structure to the manifold of empty space than it is to conscious duration. According to Bergson, the lived experience of duration involves a “pure heterogeneity” of sensations, feelings, memories, thoughts, and other conscious states. Duration is thus “a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another . . . without any affiliation with num-

ber" (TFW 104/70). However, this is not at all the way time is understood when it serves the function of measuring motion. Whereas every moment of conscious experience is a different blend of elements, for the purpose of measurement we must be able to represent time as a sequence whose moments are the same, as a sequence of points distinguished only by their position. For Bergson, in contrast to the heterogeneity of duration, "the time which the astronomer introduces into his formulae, the time which our clocks divide into equal portions . . . must be a measurable and therefore homogeneous magnitude" (TFW 107/72). Bergson's account of time as *homogeneous* is then closely echoed in Heidegger's description of the structure of time as determined by the function of making measurement possible:

Time presents a series with a single direction in which each point of time differs only through its place as measured by the initial point. Because one point of time differs from the preceding one only in that it follows after it, it is possible to measure time and thereby motion. As soon as time is measured—and only as time that is measurable and to be measured does it have a meaningful function in physics—we determine a "so many." The registering of the "so many" gathers into one the points of time that have until then flowed by. We as it were make a cut in the time scale, thereby destroying authentic time in its flow and allowing it to harden. The flow freezes, becomes a flat surface, and only as a flat surface can it be measured. Time becomes a homogeneous arrangement of places, a scale, a parameter. (S 54–55/424)

Although Heidegger does not employ the term "duration," his description of time as homogeneous suggests that he may be appropriating the Bergsonian distinction between *durée* and *temps* for the sake of his own contrast between historical time and the time of nature.

Not only is Heidegger's use of the term "homogeneous" suggestive here, but so is his analysis of how the concept of time in physics is derived by "destroying authentic time in its flow." According to Bergson, "science cannot deal with time and motion except on condition of first eliminating the essential and qualitative element—of time, duration, and of motion, mobility" (TFW 115/77). This challenges a deeply held assumption that time is essentially quantitative, that which is measured by the clock. If we reflect on the flow of conscious experience, Bergson argues, the moments of life are not immediately given as a "discrete" or "quantitative multiplicity," like a series of numbers or points on a line. Rather, we experience

“a duration whose heterogeneous moments permeate one another” (TFW 128/85), blending together in a “qualitative multiplicity” whose elements “undergo a deep alteration as soon as we separate them from one another” (TFW 125/83). Contrary to his subsequent attack on Bergson, at this stage Heidegger also uses the categories of quantity and quality to distinguish between the concepts of time employed by physicists and historians. He explains, “The object of the science of history is human beings—not just as biological objects but rather to the extent that their achievements in the realms of mind and body actualize the idea of culture (S 56/426). Because the cultural achievements and historical events that define our present situation are in the past, Heidegger argues, the concept of time must function in such a way as to provide access to them and make it possible to interpret their meaning. That is, the concept of time must be structured so that historical facts can be established and put into context. Historians must conceive of time as divided into ages, each distinguished by its own characteristics and tendencies. Thus, Heidegger claims, “the essential element in the historical concept of time” is that “*Historical times differ qualitatively*” (S 59/431). With respect to historical dates, it may appear as if historians also deal in quantities of time, but Heidegger argues, “If I ask about the ‘when’ of a *historical* event, then I am asking about its place in a *qualitative historical* context, not about a ‘how many’” (S 59/431).

In the historical sciences, time is understood in terms of the hermeneutical task of interpreting events rather than the theoretical one of formulating laws. Thus, with his characterization of historical time, which owes more to Dilthey than to any other thinker, Heidegger nevertheless also incorporates Bergson’s views about the difference between time and duration. Like Bergson, Heidegger maintains that the time we measure and divide into discrete units, the time of the natural sciences, is fundamentally different from the qualitative, heterogeneous time of human life. This difference highlights the need for further inquiry into the time of lived experience, an inquiry that gradually points Heidegger in the direction of originary temporality.

3. Life as a Primordial Phenomenon

Although Heidegger’s 1915 *Habilitation* lecture displays his earliest engagement with Bergson, his first actual references to Bergson occur in an essay and several lecture courses from 1919 to 1920, where his focus is on phenomenology as a method and life as its proper object. The works in question immediately follow the groundbreaking “The Idea of Philosophy

and the Problem of Worldview" (KNS 1919), in which Heidegger presents phenomenology as a "pre-theoretical primordial science." Heidegger's aim is to show how it is possible for phenomenology to understand life philosophically without objectifying and thus distorting it. From this period until the publication of *Being and Time*, the phenomenon at the center of Heidegger's attention goes by many names, including "the primal something, life in and for itself, factic life, the historical I, the situated I, factic life experience, facticity, Dasein, being."¹³ The question, for Heidegger, is how to grasp this primordial phenomenon of life without obscuring its distinctive character.

A brief but significant criticism of Bergson appears in Heidegger's 1920 essay (unpublished until 1973) "Comments on Karl Jaspers' *Psychology of Worldviews*. In this review, Heidegger presents a critical discussion of Jaspers's method and conceptual framework for understanding "psychical life" (S 76/7ff).¹⁴ His aim, as he states early in the essay, is to "free up the real tendencies of Jaspers' work" by showing "to what extent Jaspers' approach to his tasks, his choice of methods, and his way of employing these methodological means to carry out his tasks are really in keeping with the underlying tendencies of his inquiry" (S 72/2). Heidegger thus undertakes the task of a phenomenological destruction, to draw out the "foreconceptions" (*Vorbegriffen*), or pre-theoretical notions, guiding Jaspers's philosophy. In particular, he is concerned about Jaspers's foreconception of life as a whole, as an encompassing region to be clarified from the standpoint of certain "limit-situations" or "situations of antinomy" (S 78–80/10–12).

To situate Jaspers's project with respect to other thinkers working toward a philosophy of life, Heidegger distinguishes between two meanings of "life" that tend to be conflated: "Either life is approached as the fundamental reality, and all phenomena are seen to lead back to it, so that everything and anything is understood as an objectification and manifestation 'of life,' or life is seen as the formation of culture, and this formation is thought to be carried out with reference to normative principles and values" (S 81/15). In the latter direction, life is viewed as objectifying (*Objektivieren*), "going out of itself" creatively, expressing itself through culture; and in the former direction, life is viewed as experiencing (*Erleben*), gathering in, appropriating its surroundings.¹⁵ Heidegger applauds Jaspers for calling attention to "the problem of existence" but raises concerns about his foreconception of life as an "infinite process" that is "thought of as a thing-like object . . . *something given* in the objective medium of psychical being . . . a flowing 'stream' that bears all movements within itself" (S 84/18). If life as a whole is regarded as an unceasing flux of lived experi-

ence, would it not resist theoretical objectification? But how can a phenomenon be understood if it cannot be grasped as an object?

When Heidegger elaborates on the difficulties arising from Jaspers's foreconception of life, Bergson makes a brief appearance. It seems as if life as a whole must somehow be grasped as a theoretical object, but as Jaspers defines it, life is a process that resists objectification: "Every attempt to understand life is forced to turn the surge and flux of the aforementioned process into a static concept and thereby *destroy* the essence of life, i.e., the restlessness and movement . . . that characterize life's actualization of its ownmost qualities" (S 84/18). From this standpoint, life is a phenomenon that cannot be objectified, a process rather than a thing, and an endless process at that. We may be capable of intuiting it directly, Jaspers suggests, but we are poorly equipped to understand it intellectually. Heidegger responds:

This characteristically Bergsonian line of argumentation suffers from a certain paralysis in a twofold sense. Apart from the fact that problems concerning meaning, concepts, and language are approached only from a very narrow perspective focusing on objective, reifying concepts, these problems are allowed to remain on the level of a very crude and vague treatment that contributes nothing to that type of treatment in which one would attempt to define the fundamental sense of life and lived experience as a whole. And instead of using this "glut on the market" to provide oneself with an air of profound philosophy (such talk of ineffability easily gives the impression that one has actually gazed upon ineffable realms), it is high time that we found genuine problems to deal with. (S 84–5/19)

It is not immediately clear what Heidegger is trying to say about Bergson here, but the remark about "objective, reifying concepts" is significant. It suggests an association of Bergson with the view, which Heidegger attributes elsewhere to Paul Natorp, that because our concepts are designed to grasp objects, they fall short when we use them to theorize about subjectivity or lived experience.¹⁶ From this "very narrow perspective," concepts are static and therefore inadequate for grasping the dynamic constitution of life. Heidegger, on the contrary, believes that what is necessary is to develop the right kind of concepts, beginning with a more appropriate foreconception of life as a phenomenon that "is 'there' in various types of understanding and conceptual expression" (S 98/38). In other words, life needs to be regarded as a phenomenon that *objectifies itself* in a historical manner—through cul-

ture, art, religion, philosophy, and even science—and therefore lends itself to hermeneutic conceptualization.

Heidegger criticizes this “characteristically Bergsonian line of argument” in greater detail in *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression: Theory of Philosophical Concept Formation* (SS 1920). Although Heidegger deals more extensively with Natorp and Dilthey, he mentions Bergson several times in connection with their philosophical approaches to life. Anticipating the two meanings of “life” distinguished in the Jaspers essay, Heidegger writes:

The problematic of contemporary philosophy is centered around life as *primal phenomenon* [*Urphänomen*]: It is either that life in general is posited as the primal phenomenon and all questions are directed back to this, that is, that every objecthood is comprehended as objectivation and manifestation of life—for example the philosophies of life as they, mainly in biological fundamental orientation, are connected to the names James and Bergson, in the fundamental orientation of the human sciences to the name of Dilthey and in one that also unifies both motive groups as well as the one that is to be mentioned in what follows, to the name of Simmel. Or life is seen as culture, as manifestation, but now with a view to the fact that this culture formation and life enacts itself and is supposed to enact itself in a bond to norm-giving principles and values. The goal of such consideration of life is then a universal a priori systematics of reason as it is strived for by the Marburg school, by Rickert and in the most recent development of his ideas by Husserl. (PIE 10/15)

For his teachers Husserl and Rickert, as well as all “philosophy of culture” (*Kulturphilosophie*), the main problem is how absolutely valid claims are possible in philosophy, religion, morality, and the arts, which are historically contingent expressions of the human spirit. For Bergson, James, Natorp, and Dilthey, representing “philosophy of life” (*Lebensphilosophie*), the main problem is how lived experience can be grasped by theoretical reflection without being distorted. Taken together, what Heidegger designates as “the problem of a priori validity” and “the problem of the irrational” (PIE 20/28) comprise the “problem situation” of contemporary philosophy. In defense of phenomenology, and in an attempt to radicalize it, Heidegger argues that both sides of the contemporary problematic are out of touch with the primordial phenomenon of life.

The way Heidegger situates Bergson with respect to *Lebensphilosophie* helps to illuminate his complaints about Bergson's "narrow perspective" on concepts. Bergson belongs to the second problem group, which interprets the primal phenomenon of life in terms of *lived experience* (*Erlebnis*). For the thinkers associated with this group, philosophy itself is called into question, along with the sciences that purport to study human life: "provided that philosophy . . . should somehow be rational *knowledge*, the question arises for it whether a consideration of living experience [*Erlebens*] that does not immediately and necessarily theoretically disfigure it is possible at all" (PIE 18/25). As Heidegger explains, this concern arises in part from Kant's epistemology:

Everything known is categorically formed material. . . . The categorically unformed, theoretically unaffected is the merely passively experienced and experience-able [*Erlebte und Erlebbare*]. Nothing can be stated about it, unless in theoretical forming, meaning at the same time, however, the demolition of the immediacy in the mediation through the intellect. Living experience is first defined as the flow [*Ablauf*] of this logically unaffected, the arising and going-along of the "I" within this flowing. . . . A knowledge as forming of this living experience qua living experience means a theoretical shaping, a logical, formally guided mediation of the unmediated immediate, respectively a rationalization of the irrational, a demolition or immobilization [*Stillstellung*] of life in the schema of concepts. (PIE 18–19/25–26)

With the foreconception of life as passively intuited, immediately given, and ineffable, the question arises of whether it is comprehensible to the intellect. If lived experience is a pure flow of conscious content without logical order, and if the function of concepts is to stabilize or immobilize the stream of experience, then how could life be grasped conceptually? For philosophers who identify life with experience unmediated by the categories of knowledge, the outcome is a kind of irrationalism.¹⁷

While the foregoing description of the problem of knowledge in the context of *Lebensphilosophie* faithfully articulates Bergson's motivation for pursuing a method of "philosophical intuition,"¹⁸ Heidegger only mentions Bergson by name when he turns from the question of intuition, or access to lived experience, to that of expression:

A second motive which Bergson particularly strongly emphasized in his "An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness" (1889)

is taken from language. Knowing communicates itself in language, in words. Language is, it is said, tailored to the spatial external world and its practical, rationally technical control. Both the meanings of words and the concepts relate to space; all logic is logic of space. . . . all theoretically conceptual apprehension of living experience, of consciousness or of the spirit is a spatialization and therefore a fundamental disfiguration. (PIE 19/26–27)

It is clear from the opening lines of *Time and Free Will* that the predominance of spatiality in human language and thought is indeed a central theme of Bergson's:

We necessarily express ourselves by means of words and we usually think in terms of space. In other words, language demands that we establish between our ideas the same sharp and precise distinctions, the same discontinuity, as between material objects. This assimilation is useful in practical life and necessary in most of the sciences. But we may ask whether the insurmountable difficulties that certain philosophical problems raise do not come from our insistence on juxtaposing in space phenomena that do not occupy space, and whether, by setting aside the crude images around which the battle is waged, we might put an end to it. (TFW xix/vii)

We have already glimpsed how this plays out in Bergson's distinction between time, which is commonly represented as a homogeneous medium analogous to space, and duration, which cannot be understood adequately in terms of space. In fact, Bergson's concern about spatial representations motivates his strategy of showing how the problem of free will can be resolved if we think in terms of duration rather than space. The difficulty of doing so leads Bergson to prioritize the problem of method, seeking a way to think that does not treat all phenomena as if they were external objects.

Heidegger's own efforts to refine the phenomenological method run through the 1920 Jaspers essay and *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression*, as well as his earlier courses *Phenomenology and Transcendental Philosophy of Value* (SS 1919) and *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (WS 1919–20). Heidegger's interest in Bergson and desire to come to terms with his thought are already evident in these lectures, which represent some of his first efforts at developing the idea of phenomenology as a "primordial science" of life. In the former, while the only reference to Bergson appears in a discussion of Rickert's influence on phenomenology (TDP 136/179), Heidegger's analysis

of lived experience and “the primacy of the theoretical” directly engages the concerns about grasping life as such that he calls “Bergsonian” in his Jaspers essay. He argues that the way Natorp understands the problem—and employs it in criticizing phenomenology—is that reflection turns whatever it grasps into an object, including experiences that are fundamentally subjective. Heidegger speaks of the “de-vivification” (*Entlebnis*) of lived experience (*Erlebnis*) from the theoretical standpoint: “We set the experiences *out* before us *out* of immediate experience; we intrude so to speak into the flowing stream of experiences and pull one or more of them out, we ‘still the stream’ as Natorp says” (TDP 78/101). While Heidegger agrees that philosophy should be concerned about theoretical objectification in its attempts to grasp life as such, he denies that Natorp, Bergson, or others in the problem group surrounding lived experience have solved the problem or even posed it correctly. He attacks the notion of experience as something “immediately given,” arguing that such a thing is not pre-theoretical, but represents an “initial objectifying infringement of the environment” (TDP 69/89). The turn from objects to a pure stream of experience fails to leave the theoretical attitude for a more originary stance, according to Heidegger, but remains a de-vivification of lived experience, which is always “worldly.”¹⁹

Heidegger resumes his attempt to turn phenomenology into a primordial science of life in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (WS 1919–20, not to be confused with the SS 1927 course of the same name), in which we find several significant references to Bergson.²⁰ As in the later *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression*, Heidegger associates Bergson with James, Dilthey, and especially Simmel, whose latest work he characterizes as “strongly and essentially determined by Bergson” and “searching . . . for a basic intuition [*Grundanschauung*], which coincides essentially with Bergson” (BPPa 7–8/9–10; see also PIE 53/69). Anticipating a discussion of Bergson’s thought that does not come to fruition in this course, Heidegger attacks the rationalistic tendency to trivialize his “partly ingenious intuition,” but hastens to add, “To be sure, here I am not talking about the necessarily high estimation of Bergson made by the trendsetters, but that Bergson whom they do not know or understand in the least, but who, because of his importance, must be reckoned with in detail—through positive critical research” (BPPa 8/10, translation modified). As we will see, this is the first of several postponements of a more direct confrontation with Bergson’s thought.²¹

After alluding to this important but misunderstood Bergson, Heidegger nevertheless attacks a quite familiar Bergson, the one known primarily on the basis of *Creative Evolution*.²² His most significant remarks about Bergson occur near the beginning and the end of the course, helping to

illuminate how he thinks the phenomenon of life should be conceived for it to be both accessible and expressible. For phenomenology to be a primordial science, Heidegger explains, it cannot stand outside of life and observe it, but must develop a form of research in which life itself “finds its way back into the original sources,” a radical “enactment” or “actualization” (*Vollzug*) of life (BPPa 16–17/22–23). Phenomenology must therefore oppose both rationalism and irrationalism, he argues, and this requires “directing one’s attitude into the vital motivations and tendencies of spirit—of the *élan vital* [vital impetus], but in a sense that is different from the mystically confused sense of Bergson” (BPPa 17/24). Heidegger thus identifies the topic of phenomenological research—the pre-theoretical, primordial phenomenon—with Bergson’s *élan vital*. However, he clearly has concerns about how Bergson characterizes life, which he shares near the end of the course. There, he attacks Bergson for failing to acknowledge that life is not only dynamic and restless, but also intrinsically meaningful, “that life does not mutely flow along like a current (the way *Bergson* describes it, as a result of working through biological concepts). Rather, it is intelligible” (BPPa 174–5/231, translation modified). While Heidegger contends that philosophy should investigate “life in itself,” and he recognizes how difficult it is to do so without “de-vivifying” it, or distorting its distinctive character, he rejects the notion that life is ineffable and ungraspable. Life is indeed in unceasing flux, he admits, but he denies that it is therefore beyond our grasp. Rather, life has an intentional structure, “a basic directedness in each case and always into a world” (BPPa 25/30), in terms of which it can be understood. The theoretical standpoint that objectifies life is itself an outgrowth of worldly experience, which always takes place within an already meaningful context. Heidegger insists that the primordial phenomenon of life is by no means an inarticulate, unintelligible flux, as Bergson seems to suggest, but is directed toward the world, others, and itself in definite ways that can be grasped phenomenologically.

Notwithstanding this criticism of Bergson’s view of life, near the end of *Basic Problems*, Heidegger makes a comment in a very different tone about Bergson’s philosophy of time. The context for his remark, which does not appear in Heidegger’s notes but comes to us by way of a student transcript, is a discussion of the problem of “having oneself” (*Sich-selbst-Haben*). In the first section of the course, Heidegger distinguishes between three ways that the intentionality of “factual life” manifests itself: in an “enviroming-world” (*Umwelt*), a “with-world” (*Mitwelt*), and a “self-world” (*Selbstwelt*). Following this distinction, much of the course focuses on the self-world as the region to be explored by phenomenology as a primordial science

of life. In opposition to the tendency to objectify the self, Heidegger says, “One should not be disappointed at not finding an ‘I’ in the brightness of consciousness, but rather only finding the rhythm of experience itself.—The self is present to us in the expression of the *situation*” (BPPa 195/259). The challenge for him is to understand the situation as a concrete, meaningful, “temporally particular” (*jeweilig*) expression of the self. As such, Heidegger says: “The *problem of time* is bound up with that of the situation. One can thank Bergson for the decisive accomplishment of separating the ‘*durée concret*’ [concrete duration] from the objective ‘cosmic’ time’—We cannot go into that any further” (BPPa 195/259).²³ Heidegger’s shift back to stressing Bergson’s importance with respect to time, specifically the importance of his distinction between duration and time, contrasts sharply with his previous remarks concerning the deficiencies of Bergson’s concept of life.²⁴

Taking all these works from 1919–20 into view, it appears that Heidegger’s worries about Bergson stem from methodological considerations surrounding the philosophy of life, specifically from the view that life is something that is ceaselessly in flux and that cannot be grasped conceptually. In the problematic of *Lebensphilosophie* as Heidegger describes it, Bergson is on the side of lived experience, tending toward irrationalism by conceiving of life as an ineffable, immediately given flux. The issue of time is not in the foreground here, yet Heidegger is advancing toward a conception of factual life as not only worldly, but also having its own distinctive temporality. He praises Bergson for distinguishing between time and duration, but criticizes him (along with Jaspers) for his view of life as an endless process that cannot be grasped theoretically. Interestingly, though, Heidegger’s own concerns about the primacy of the theoretical echo some of Bergson’s (and Natorp’s) worries about whether life can be understood philosophically without being immobilized, objectified, or spatialized. Even so, in thinking about life as a “primordial phenomenon,” Heidegger distances himself from the view that any attempt to grasp life necessarily distorts it because of the static character of concepts and the spatializing tendencies of language and thought. Nevertheless, when Heidegger returns to the question of time in 1924–5, he again distinguishes, as Bergson does, between the quantitative, homogeneous time of the natural sciences and the qualitative, heterogeneous time of history and historical beings.

4. To Understand Time in Terms of Time

In his earliest investigation into time, Heidegger had argued that understanding history requires a concept of time that differs fundamentally from the

one employed in the natural sciences, which immobilizes what we experience as a continuous flow. However, through his efforts to bring phenomenology into its own as a primordial science of life, he had come to believe that the notion of time as a flowing stream is also determined by the theoretical attitude. Even the stream of lived experience is an objectification of a peculiar sort, contrary to what champions of life such as Jaspers, Natorp, James, and Bergson seem to think. Because they regard life as psychological or biological, their access to the phenomenon of *factual* life is limited, in Heidegger's view. Life is essentially historical, he maintains, insofar as it happens in a temporally particular situation, embedded in a world and a tradition. Having argued that phenomenology needs to confront life and *Lebensphilosophie* in order to be more radical, Heidegger returns to the question of time. Now, though, it is no longer a matter of clarifying the difference between the natural and historical concepts of time, but rather of showing how both are rooted in the kind of *being* that belongs to history as well as nature.

In the now famous 1924 lecture "The Concept of Time," delivered to the Marburg Theological Society, Heidegger distinguishes all scientific understanding of time from our everyday, pre-theoretical experience of it, and then he describes a less common but more "authentic" temporality in which he thinks both originate. Following the lead of Aristotle and Augustine, he seeks to show how time can be, on the one hand, "that within which events take place" (CT 3/109), something encountered along with change or motion, something that can be measured, and on the other hand, something that depends on the mind or spirit, a "disposition" of the being that measures it. Rather than attempting to define time, however, he inquires about the presuppositions of the concept of time employed by the natural sciences and the ordinary understanding of time as a measurable quantity. The brief analysis that Heidegger presents in this lecture is, in many ways, a sketch of the phenomenological interpretation of time that eventually appears in division two of *Being and Time*, where he attempts to show how both the time of nature and the time of history are grounded in the temporality of Dasein.²⁵ The influences of Bergson, Husserl, and Dilthey are all evident in this lecture, even though Heidegger mentions none of them by name. We can see more clearly how he follows Bergson in the way that his analysis proceeds from how physicists conceive of time to how we experience it in the anticipation of death.

Heidegger begins with the straightforward, traditional question "What is time?" and explains why he must resist the temptation to take eternity as a starting point, as he thinks a theologian might. "If the philosopher asks about time," he says, "then he has resolved *to understand time in terms of*

time" (CT 1/107). He confesses, however, that his treatment of time will not be strictly philosophical either, because he aims not to offer a universal definition of time, but to clarify how it shows up in everyday life, prior to scientific and philosophical investigation. His primary concern is to shed light on the experiences of time presupposed by current scientific understanding. In at least one respect, Heidegger argues, Einstein's theory of relativity is not fundamentally different from Aristotle's physics: for both, time is "that within which events take place" (CT 3/109), "that within which things change" (CT 4/109), and ultimately that within which duration can be measured. Understood in this way, time is a medium in which natural events occur and can be quantified. But is this really the most fundamental phenomenon of time? Returning to the topic of his 1915 essay on time, Heidegger asks: "How does the physicist encounter time?" (CT 4/109). For the phenomenologist, this question signals a shift from asking about *what* time is to asking about it *how* it is approached, apprehended, and determined.

Heidegger's answer, that physicists encounter time first and foremost by *measuring* it, leads to a phenomenological analysis of the way time is measured with clocks. He explains:

A clock shows the time. A clock is a physical system in which an identical temporal sequence is constantly repeated, with the provision that this physical system is not subject to change through any external influence. The repetition is cyclical. Each period has an identical temporal duration. . . . The clock measures time in so far as the stretch of the duration of an occurrence is compared with identical sequences on the clock and can thereby be numerically determined. (CT 4/110)²⁶

Because the length of each unit of measurement may be arbitrary as long as it remains constant and recurring, it does not matter when an event whose duration is to be measured begins or ends. What matters is that the event's beginning and ending can each be assigned a position, or "now-point," and the distance between them quantified. Understood as such, each point of time is earlier than some and later than others, and each point is indifferent to the events taking place. What do the indifference of the point and the arbitrariness of the unit reveal about time? Heidegger echoes Bergson again: "This time is thoroughly uniform, homogeneous. Only in so far as time is homogeneous is it measurable" (CT 4-5/110).

Heidegger goes on to highlight the difference between how time shows itself when measured and how we encounter it prior to measurement. He