

**The Given and a Proximity to Art:
 Heidegger's Early Dialectical Conception of Phenomenology**

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In the summer semester of 1919/20 Heidegger repeatedly invokes various senses of ‘dialectics,’ writing off some, yet incorporating others into his understanding of phenomenology.¹ The signals he sends about the dialectical aspects of his phenomenology are not mixed, but they are highly differentiated, identifying negative and positive senses of the term (‘dialectic’). More importantly, his discussion of phenomenology’s dialectical dimension helps him identify what he takes to be an acceptable conception of the given as well as a fundamental problem confronting phenomenology. In the course of elaborating the nature of phenomenological understanding (“dialectics as diahermeneutics”) as a response to the problem, he also notes how phenomenology, in giving shape to what is seen, enters into “close relationship” to art (GA 58: 255). The aim of the following remarks is to demonstrate Heidegger’s dialectical conception of phenomenology, primarily as it bears on his early views on the concept of the given and the artistic dimension of phenomenology. The remarks are divided into three parts. In the first part, I review his identification of what is given in phenomenology, in contrast to a prevalent sort of dialectical thinking that is blind to the given. In the second part, I address “the problem of dialectic,” as he dubs it, namely, the problem of expression that surfaces as part of the challenge of understanding experience phenomenologically. In the third part, after reviewing Heidegger’s dialectical conception of philosophical concepts and the steps of his phenomenological method, I suggest a way of understanding his claim that the final step of the phenomenological method places it in close proximity to art.

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie (1919/1920)*, Gesamtausgabe Band 58, ed. Hans-Helmuth Gander (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1993) (hereafter: ‘GA 58’), 133, 138, 148, 161, 184, 225f, 233, 240f, 255, 262f.

I. Dialectical Confusion and the Phenomenological Given

The topic of dialectic surfaces prominently in Heidegger's critical discussion of the problem of givenness in the thought of Natorp and Rickert.² Although they are the standard-bearers of two distinct directions of Neo-Kantianism (the Marburg School and the Southwest School, respectively), the thinking in both traditions has undergone a transformation that can be characterized, Heidegger remarks, as a return to Hegel (GA 58: 8).³

In the 1919/20 lectures, he sets the stage for his discussion of Neo-Kantian approaches to givenness by differentiating what is seen, given, and expressed in phenomenology. What phenomenology sees is something normally unseen and implicit (a point iterated at the outset of *Sein und Zeit*).⁴ What is "phenomenologically given" is, accordingly, not what is first found (*Vorgefunden*) but what phenomenology brings into view and sets into relief (GA 58: 218).

In an earlier lecture, Heidegger cited the lectern in the lecture hall as something he encountered. It is presumably an example of something first found, as is the lived experience of it (walking towards it, placing his notes on it, standing next to it, and so on). By no means does it first arise by being expressed. Phenomenology brings what it finds (e.g., implicit meanings, that of the lectern and the experience of it) to relief by singling it out, displaying it, writing it down, and the like. In other words, phenomenology takes what it finds and makes it

² "The paths of modern epistemology diverge," Heidegger observes, "not only from one another but also from phenomenology over the problem of givenness." The paths of modern epistemology here correspond to the two versions of Neo-Kantianism, elaborated in Marburg (Cohen, Natorp) and Freiburg (Rickert) (GA 58: 131-35).

³ Heidegger had already called a certain use of the concept of givenness into question in his very first post-war lectures (1919); see Martin Heidegger, *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, Gesamtausgabe Band 56/57, ed. Bernd Heimbüchel (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1999²), (hereafter: 'GA 56/57'), 85, 88f, 98, 111f, but perhaps especially, 89: "Hence, 'givenness' is already very much a theoretical form," signifying "the first objectifying encroachment on the surrounding world."

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1967) (hereafter 'SZ'), 35: "Was ist das, was die Phänomenologie »sehen lassen« soll? ... Offenbar solches, was sich zunächst und zumeist gerade nicht zeigt, was gegenüber dem, was sich zunächst und zumeist zeigt, verborgen ist, aber zugleich etwas ist, was wesentlich zu dem, was sich zunächst und zumeist zeigt, gehört, so zwar, daß es seinen Sinn und Grund ausmacht."

explicit by expressing it, albeit with the important proviso that what is expressed is not in its specific context invariably the correlate of knowing.

Heidegger adds, however, that, just as we need to avoid re-interpreting as a phenomenological given what phenomenology first finds (or, as he soon puts it, what the phenomenologist has before her, the *Vorhabe*), so, too, we need to refrain from conflating – at least in a certain sense – phenomenological givens with the expressions of them.

- P1 Phenomenological givennesses that we set into relief should *not* be *re-interpreted* into expressions, as though they would have first arisen by virtue of the fact that someone expresses them. (GA 58: 219)

What is first found is not to be confused with the product or result of a phenomenological attitude, what is given and expressed in that attitude.⁵ As he puts it earlier in his lectures (with perhaps a superfluous air of paradox), phenomenology's givennesses are "never and nowhere" given (GA 58: 26f). So, too, the actual domain of objects of philosophy (as phenomenology) is not given in advance (GA 58: 29).

Against the backdrop of this gloss on phenomenological givenness, differentiated from what is first found *and* from what is expressed, Heidegger turns to the discussion of the problem of givenness in Natorp and Rickert. He begins by citing the lack of clarity that dominates their approaches to givenness. Rehearsing his earlier objection, he first notes that in life we can be directed at something without it standing opposite us with the character of givenness (again, consider the example of the lectern). Indeed, things are not immediately given in a factual sense at all. And we would never come to have the basic experience that we respectively have of our worlds, an experience of meaningfulness, through the idea of the experience of a thing, as the Neo-Kantians suppose (GA 58: 223-24). This contention echoes an earlier observation about the limitations of the Marburg School's understanding of existence:

- P2 The factual experience of life is absorbed in contexts of meaningfulness. Existence without meaningfulness has no possibility of motivating at all. Existence as what is "fully determined," in which "nothing is undetermined" (i.e., existence in the sense of the existential judgment, such as the *Marburg School* understands it) can never surface in factual life. (GA 58: 217)

⁵ Elsewhere Heidegger criticizes the very notion of a phenomenological attitude; but here, again indicating the fluidity of his thinking in these early lectures, he adopts the notion.

The contexts of meaningfulness described here presumably coincide with what is first found or found from the outset (*Vorgefundenes*), not something that is, strictly speaking, “given” and certainly not phenomenologically given (until it is singled out).⁶

Turning to givenness as it surfaces in Natorp’s works, he stresses that for Natorp and the Marburg school, the genuine sense of consciousness is located in theoretical thinking, understood as positing an object.⁷ Anything given is, accordingly, only given as determined by thinking, i.e., as known, and there is nothing pre-given. Since knowing is an endless process, the object is never wholly given but only an idea of it is. To be sure, he adds, the Marburg School recognizes that, insofar as thinking determines something, there is something given in advance to it, namely, sensations. But Cohen and Natorp also insist that sensations are only given, attained, and determined as such in thinking. In short, “the resolution of everything given into pure determinations is the task of thinking” (GA 58: 225).⁸

Following this gloss, Heidegger observes that the task Natorp thus sets for thinking exhibits an “inclination to dialectics,” reminiscent of Hegel’s construal of the “absolute power of thinking” (GA 58: 225). He then issues a scathing criticism of dialectics (at least of a certain sort), albeit by way of invoking givenness in the positive, presumably phenomenological sense:

P3 The dialectic is blind to the givenness. The idea of the dialectic is fundamentally perverse. It rests upon a confusion between grasping an object and expression, between *intuition* and *expression*. If the problem of the relationship of intuition and expression is seen and the evidence of intuition is seen, then the dialectic is

⁶ As suggested above, what is first found, *das Vorgefundene*, appears to coincide with what the interpreter has to start with, *eine Vorhabe* (SZ 150) and, in Husserl’s phenomenology, with the pre-given, *das Vorgegebene*; see Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und Phänomenologischen Philosophie*, Erstes Buch, ed. Karl Schuhmann, Husserliana III/1 (Hague: Nijhoff, 1976), §78, S. 166.

⁷ Heidegger prefaces his explicit criticism of Natorp and Rickert by echoing Husserl’s insights into the necessity of making two sorts of distinction: (1) the distinction between what is given in person (*leibhaft*), what is itself given but not in person, and what is given only symbolically; and (2) the distinction between what I give myself and what is given to me in advance, i.e., what is pre-given to me (from without).

⁸ Heidegger finds Rickert guilty of the same sort of confusion, “transposing the entire problematic into a sphere concocted in thought [*erdachte Sphäre*]” and construing “a *concept of pure experience* that belongs to a sphere completely different from factual experience of the surrounding world.” Like the Marburg School, Rickert has shut himself off from experience by making up a concept of pure consciousness that is “pure construction”; indeed, in both cases a “logically empty construction” (GA 58: 135).

struck at its core. (This is an indication of the necessary critical engagement of phenomenology with *Neo-Hegelianism*). (GA 58: 225-26)

According to this passage in the Becker transcript, dialectical thinking is blind to what is (in a positive sense) given, i.e., not things, but basic experiences of our worlds and the senses of those experiences. This blindness is based upon a confusion. The same point can be found in Heidegger's own notes, as he distinguishes between two areas of problems: that of grasping what stands before us (*Gegenstand*, not *Objekt*!) and that of giving expression (and thereby logical determinateness) to what is grasped. Overlooking this distinction and constructing a theory of consciousness accordingly, he notes, are the source of the "basic mistake of all absolutizing of the dialectic" (GA 58: 133). In this note, as in the Becker transcript, Heidegger targets, not Hegel's dialectic directly, but the dialectic of the Marburg School that Heidegger regards as morphing into a Neo-Hegelianism.

In the passages cited, Heidegger is highly critical of a certain form of dialectical thinking, calling it blind, perverse, and confused. But in the same passages he also associates it with genuine problems, suggesting a benign or, better, legitimate sense of 'dialectic.'

II. The "Problem of Dialectic"

Heidegger invokes this more positive sense of 'dialectic' in the course of reflecting upon the nature and role of pure understanding in relation to the intuition and science of experiences. Experiences [*Erlebnisse*], he insists, are not things, but rather "forms of expression [*Ausdrucksgestalten*] of tendencies of concrete situations of life" (GA 58: 233). A science of these experiences takes its start from the intuition of the context of the experience – the situations – from which the experiences arise. Aping Husserl, Heidegger adds that they are not just any intuitions, but instead intuitions that afford the contexts of experience in an originary way. These intuitions are explicated in "pure understanding," in the form of interpretations of contexts of meaning.⁹

⁹ GA 58: 233: "Wissenschaft von Erlebnissen ist die originär gebende Anschauung des Erlebniszusammenhangs, der Situationen, aus denen Erlebnisse entspringen.– Wie kann sich die Anschauung von Lebenssituationen explizieren? Im reinen *Verstehen*, das sich ausformt in der Interpretation von Sinnzusammenhängen." This description of intuition in relation to understanding is a patent appropriation of Husserl's notion of categorial intuition. In 1919 Heidegger dubs it a "hermeneutic intuition" or, alternatively, "an intuition by way of

Yet, the understanding in question here takes shape [*sich ausformt*], as already noted, in the interpretation of contexts of meaning. In the final stage of this process, a specific connection presents itself, namely, the connection between the understanding and the construction of what ultimately dominates the situations of life. Constantly in play at this juncture is “the problem of the dialectic,” namely, the question of whether grasping or expression or even something else is in play.

P4 In addition, [there is] the problem of the *dialectic* constantly playing into this: is it a form of the grasping or of the expression or ...? (GA 58: 233)

In a similar vein, after once again acknowledging the phenomenologist’s need to undo “objectifications” by asserting what the phenomenon is not, Heidegger notes the dialectical character of this process – what appears as a move from intuition to “discursive thinking” – and the problem involved with it. In order to secure a foothold in the life experience under consideration, it is incumbent on the phenomenologist to “go along” with the experience, looking in advance, not primarily to things or objects, but to the situation of the experience, its motivations and tendencies, and the expressions of them (GA 58: 254-59).

P5 This [process] can only be implemented in the manner of an *argumentation*, to a certain extent, *dialectically*. We hit here upon the problem of the relationship of intuition, pure understanding, and the dialectical expression in concepts. (GA 58: 255)

In these passages (P₄ and in P₅) H uses the term ‘dialectic’ in a way that, while not unrelated to the use in P₃, is unmistakably different from it. In the latter passage, he casts aspersions on one sort of dialectical thinking outright as a confusion; by contrast, in P₄ and in P₅, ‘dialectic’ stands for part of the process of phenomenological description, more specifically, the problem of giving it expression without conflating the expression with the intuition or understanding. The confusion flagged in P₃ arises from taking the expression – or, better, the concept

understanding” (GA 56/57: 65, 117). But the echoes of Bergson’s concept of intuition are unmistakable, too. Compare GA 56/57: 110: “Es [das Prinzip der Prinzipien] ist die Urintention des wahren Lebens überhaupt, die Urhaltung des Erlebens und Lebens als solchen, die absolute, mit dem Erleben selbst identische *Lebenssympathie*” and Henri Bergson, “Introduction à la métaphysique” in *Oeuvres* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959), 1395: “Nous appelons ici intuition la *sympathie* par laquelle on se transporte à l’intérieur d’un objet pour coïncider avec ce qu’il a d’unique et par conséquent d’inexprimable.”

expressed – for the intuition, presumably full stop, as it were.¹⁰ The problem arises presumably from the fact that differentiating the intuition – particularly a “hermeneutic intuition” or “intuition that is part of understanding” (GA 56/57: 117, 219) – from the expression is obviously not transparent without further ado.

Up to this point, the present section has been a gloss on passages in Becker’s transcript. These passages suggest a distinction – at least functionally – between intuition and understanding (P₄) and between intuition, pure understanding, and “dialectical” expression (P₅). In Heidegger’s notes, we find a slightly different conception. There he treats the intuition of experience and the grasp of it as the same, adding that the grasp of the experiences themselves, in their situational fullness, is the work of pure understanding. Yet here, too, he speaks of the dialectical in a positive if underdetermined sense.

P6 The relation of the understanding – of relations of interpretation and construction in themselves and to one another; the [relation] to and through one another and not-without-one-another as dialectical in its relation to pure understanding; originality and non-originality of the dialectical; *the dialectical [dimension] of possible pure understanding (form of grasp) or simply form of expression*, the originary and the ultimate [character] precisely of this relation of expression. (GA 58: 138)

Given the lack of complete sentences in this passage, interpreting its meaning is fraught. Nevertheless, certain aspects of his understanding of dialectics and the “dialectical” in a positive sense are clear. It stands in close relation to the pure understanding of experiences, the very activity of the phenomenologist, consisting in both interpretation and – perhaps most notably – *construction*. It operates, moreover, both on the level of understanding and its expression.¹¹

¹⁰ Consider, for example, the difference between ‘a triangle has three sides’ and ‘In English, “a triangle has three sides.”’

¹¹ In a footnote attached to the phrase “genealogically primordial historical connections of expression,” Heidegger pairs “*expression* of the intuition” with “dialectic,” following the phrase: “understanding of the basic stance of philosophical formation [*Ausformung*]” (GA 58: 161 n. 21). See, too, his talk of “phenomenological intuition and dialectic” in terms of the question of mediated immediacy or immediate mediatedness (GA 58: 184).

III. The promise of Dialectics: Appropriating Hegel

Heidegger's criticisms of Hegelian dialectics, albeit in the form of the Marburg School's alleged "Neo-Hegelianism," present only part of the story of the relationship of his early thinking to Hegel's philosophical approach. In the course of wrestling with Hegel, he also draws explicit attention to how the phenomenology that he is hammering out in the early 1920s appropriates basic moves of Hegel's dialectic.¹²

III.1. Destruction and "The Basic Sense of the Hegelian Dialectical Method"

Life, Heidegger stresses in these lectures, is not an object. Insofar as concepts are means of classifying objects, putting them in some sort of order (*Ordnungsbegriffe*, like "sortal concepts" in contemporary jargon), employed for the purpose of establishing universally valid propositions, they fail to be appropriate concepts of life. To conceive life in terms of these sorts of concepts is to distort it in a quite specific manner (*eine bestimmte Deformation*). By contrast, an understanding of life must pay heed to the expressions of it. This understanding, operating with concepts of expression (*Ausdrucksbegriffe*), does not lay claim to universally valid propositions.

Heidegger notes how factual life constantly affords itself in this specifically distorted manner, limiting it to object-like formations (*objektartige Ausformungen*). Because phenomenological descriptions must undo this process, they are replete with negations ("it is *not* this," "it is *not* that"). This reliance upon negation replicates, Heidegger observes, a basic move and motivation of Hegelian dialectics.

P7 Factual life affords itself in a specific *deformation*. This refashioning of it into configurations of objects [*Objektsgebilde*] must be reversed. As a result, one is

¹² In Heidegger's early lectures, the influence of Hegel is much in evidence. He cites Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* positively, for example, to illustrate the idea of phenomenology as a science of the origin (GA 58: 5, 12). At times, his characterization of phenomenology sounds as though it were lifted directly from Hegel's texts. For example, he describes "the idea of phenomenology as [an] absolute science of the origin of spirit" (GA 58: 19). However, he also plainly distances himself from Hegel and, more often, from the Neo-Hegelianism that he regards as rampant among the schools of his contemporaries, housed mostly in Marburg and Freiburg, for reasons explained below. For a recent defense of "the claim that there is a Hegelian motive at the very heart of the early Heidegger's thinking," see Thomas Schwarz Wentzer, "Heidegger and Hegel: Exploring the Hidden Hegelianism of *Being and Time*" in *Hermeneutical Heidegger*, ed. Michael Bowler and Ingo Farin (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2016), 142-172.

constantly saying ‘not’ in the course of [giving] phenomenological descriptions. – This is the basic sense of the Hegelian method of *dialectic* (thesis, antithesis, synthesis). – By this means, negation acquires a creative force that is the driving force of *concepts of expression* in contrast to ordering concepts. (GA 58: 240)

He then observes that all understanding is carried out in intuition. The observation serves notice, not only of the descriptive character of phenomenological work, but of the need to pay heed to what is supposed to be described and how. If description is construed as a description of an object (Natorp’s penchant) and then applied to experiences, they are reduced to objects (*Objekte*). For this reason, “the description must be constantly guided by the aim of the understanding” (GA 58: 240).¹³

Heidegger exemplifies the distinctiveness of his phenomenology by applying its initially destructive character to contemporary psychology and the latter’s objective attitude. By way of introduction to this segment, he notes that this application is to be understood “in the sense of the ‘dialectical’ method of negation, for which the first step is *destructive*” (GA 58: 241). Thus, as in P₄, Heidegger characterizes his phenomenological method as dialectical in certain respects. It is dialectical insofar as its first move is to rely upon a negation, i.e., the negation of the distorting objectification that is part and parcel of life. In his notes Heidegger observes that this negative character – “*the productivity of the not*” – is the “sense of the Hegelian dialectic” (GA 58: 148). But Heidegger’s phenomenological method is also dialectical insofar as its negation of classificatory concepts of objects aims at insuring that phenomenology’s concepts are concepts of expressions, expressions of meaning.

III.2. *Understanding Human life Historically: “The Deeper Sense of Hegel’s Philosophy”*

The key to understanding human life is the history of the human spirit (*Geist*). Efforts in this direction are evident in history but they typically slide off course into objectifications. For this reason, Heidegger advises, the history of philosophy in particular needs to be re-thought. Instead of construing it as the genesis of objectifying sciences, the task is to investigate where it succeeds in expressing something original and where it then devolves into something objectifying. This sort of history of the human spirit is “the true organon for

¹³ For similar reasons, he cautions against equating phenomenological knowledge with eidetic or essential knowledge and equating phenomenological evidence with mathematical evidence (GA 58: 241).

understanding human life,” and herein lies, he adds, “the deeper sense of Hegel’s philosophy” (GA 58: 246). Although Heidegger does not elaborate this point further at this juncture in Becker’s transcript, the remark demonstrates Heidegger’s appreciation of the affinity of his approach to Hegel’s. By insisting on the inherent connection between history and the problem of the origin of life, and, by consequently taking history as “the true ‘leading thread’” for phenomenological investigations, Heidegger is quite self-consciously and openly following in Hegel’s footsteps.¹⁴

III.3. Dialectics as Diahermeneutics and the Proximity to Art

On the final pages of Becker’s transcript, as Heidegger discusses “the concepts of philosophy,” he echoes the foregoing positive remarks about dialectic. Philosophical concepts, he observes, are not right or wrong in some objective sense but rather more or less remote from the origin. He iterates a point that is by now quite familiar, namely, that philosophical concepts are not concepts of objects; they are not sortals, designed to identify and classify things.¹⁵ Although all concepts have the formal function of determining, “determining through expression” is not the same as determining according to some scheme of classification. And Heidegger understands determining through expression as a dialectic, though not the sort of dialectic found in Hegel’s logic.

p8 The *dialectic* in philosophy, as the form of the expression, is not a dialectic in the sense of the synthetic counter-positioning of concepts. A philosophical dialectic is instead a *diahermeneutics*.

Via processes of upsetting [*Umkippungen*] understanding and intuiting (application of negation?) the phenomena come to be expressed. (GA 58: 263)

The adequacy of expression, Heidegger adds, has nothing to do with mere iteration or reproduction, an idea borrowed from the sphere of objects (*Objektsphäre*); instead it is determined by the originary character of the motives that are alive in the presentation.¹⁶

In these passages Heidegger is plainly differentiating his conception of dialectic from the sort of dialectical thinking exemplified by Hegel’s logic and systematic philosophy (the

¹⁴ GA 58: 5, 246f.

¹⁵ GA 58: 262: “Die *Begriffe* der Philosophie haben eine andere Struktur als die Objekts- und Ordnungsbegriffe.”

¹⁶ These passages underscore that he employs ‘dialectic’ in a positive sense to designate the fraught process of bringing what is phenomenologically seen and grasped to expression.

Hegelian dialectic resurfacing in the Marburg School, as noted in P₃). At the same time, however, Heidegger's hermeneutical method incorporates, in his view, fundamental features of Hegel's dialectical approach, namely, negating received views as well as the binaries entailed by them and doing so as part of a concern with finding the right expression. Although Heidegger does not elaborate what he means by 'diahermeneutics,' the foregoing discussion strongly suggests that it is meant to include both the generative force of the negative in Hegel's dialectic and the pursuit of the right expression for the phenomenon (the experience) of living. The wording 'dialectics as diahermeneutics' signals, in other words, a procedure of warding off (negating) objectifications of life and doing so *through* (διά) determining-and-conveying (ἐμνηνεία) life's meanings in its expressions. To be sure, in this very regard, we run up against the dialectical problem – flagged from P₁ through P₆ above – of negotiating the relationship between seeing, understanding, and articulating (expressing!) these expressions, with the aim of capturing what's at stake in them. Or, to put the issue in a more abbreviated form, the hermeneutical phenomenologist is faced with the issue of giving expression to the expressions of life, without merely iterating them, cataloguing them, or constructing a biography out of them.¹⁷ A hermeneutical phenomenology remains a philosophical scientific enterprise, bent on determining what is essential and, to borrow once more from Hegel, concretely universal.¹⁸

In this respect the artistic character of the phenomenology becomes apparent, if 'artistic' signals giving genuine expression to life in an innovative, creative, and constructive way – or, better, giving innovative, creative, and constructive expression to life because it is only then that the expression is genuine. Throughout Heidegger's early lectures, it bears noting, he regards art in a cognate way, namely, as a present or past pre-eminent expression of life, an "organ of understanding life."¹⁹ To be sure, in these lectures Heidegger stresses that the "rigor

¹⁷ Obviously, the phenomenologist's own life and expression of it are both deeply and self-consciously complicit here.

¹⁸ In his first lecture, Heidegger argues for the sort of formality of his phenomenological pretensions, inserting himself between Husserl's conception of the possibility of formalization (in contrast to a regional ontological generalization) and Natorp's blindness to the conception but appreciation of the difficulties of giving non-objectifying expression to experiences; see GA 56/57: 114f.

¹⁹ GA 58: 34f, 49, 55, 58f, 83ff, 170; see, too, *ibid.*, 205: "An original context of expression of the world of the self consists in *art*. In scientific biography, the artistic dimension plays along with it in a distinctive and necessary manner." Whereas art is an *Organ des Lebensverständnisses* (GA 58: 58), the "deeper sense" of Hegel's philosophy lies in the history

of philosophical expression” (“concentrated,” as it is, “on the genuineness of life-relations in concrete living itself”) has its own standard of measure, distinct from that of art (GA 18: 231). Nonetheless, he observes the proximity of his phenomenological method to art. The observation comes as he identifies five steps of the phenomenological method: (1) referring to specific sphere of factual life; (2) participating in the experience (i.e., *Mitmachen*, not standing apart from it); (3) preemptively looking for the horizons, tendencies, and motives of the experience;²⁰ (4) selectively articulating what is seen; (5) interpreting the phenomena. He then cites the sixth step as follows:

- P9 (6) Finally, what follows is actually *giving shape* to what has been seen phenomenologically, the re-joining of the *articuli* [parts, segments] that have been torn apart. Here phenomenology enters into close relationship to art. (GA 18: 255)

The point that Heidegger is making in this passage is as undeniable as it is fraught (raising, as it does, a raft of issues concerning legitimacy and criteria). Hermeneutical phenomenology is the art of giving shape to what has been analyzed, so that it becomes alive with the meaning that was hidden but operative in the lived experience itself. But precisely because it has been hidden and because its disclosure rides on the experience of interpreting it,²¹ creativity, innovation, and construction become indispensable. The construction is not unconstrained, to be sure; the repeated appeals in *Sein und Zeit* to ontic and existentiell dimensions as means of corroborating the existential analysis illustrate self-imposed constraints in Heidegger’s phenomenology. But those constraints, while necessary, are not sufficient to dictate the expression. Precisely as expressions of the phenomenological method, the terminology, the conceptual framework, the organization of the presentation – all these features and more of the existential analysis of *Sein und Zeit* – have been constructed.

of the human spirit as *das wahre Organon des Verstehens des menschlichen Lebens* (GA 58: 246; see note 14 above); see, too, a similar comment regarding history (GA 58: 256).

²⁰ Heidegger speaks of this step of leaping ahead (*Vorausspringen*) as “unlearnable” but “decisive for productive seeing” (GA 58: 254f). Probably not coincidentally, in SZ he speaks similarly of Plato’s and Aristotle’s “productive logic” that “leaps as it were ahead [*vorspringt*] into a specific domain of being [and] discloses it for the first time in the constitution of its being” (SZ 10).

²¹ The experience of interpreting includes, too, the experiences that the interpreter brings to bear on the interpretation, that is to say, experiences that are co-extensive with the way she has made and continues to make history herself.

In lectures given seven years after the lectures that have been the focus of this paper (and a year after the completion of *Sein und Zeit*), Heidegger notes the lack of the sort of access to being that we have to beings. As a result, he advises, “being must be brought each time into view in a free projection,” i.e., a projection of beings onto their being and structures, and he identifies this projection as a “phenomenological construction” (GA 24: 29f). Notably, just as he pairs the process of shaping what has been seen with the dialectical negation of objectifying concepts in the semester of 1919/20, so he pairs phenomenological construction with destruction in the semester of 1927.²²

IV. Conclusion

The problem of dialectic is precisely that of negotiating interpretation and construction, understanding and expression. Far from dismissing the problem, Heidegger acknowledges its continual presence as a fundamental dimension of hermeneutical phenomenology, the operative, constructive dimension where phenomenology enters into a “close relationship” to art. If the foregoing exposition is on target, it may require some adjustment to how we read Heidegger’s phenomenological analyses in *Sein und Zeit* and elsewhere. But more important is the challenge that this understanding of phenomenology in proximity to art presents to us: can we interpret our lives and our worlds artfully, constructively, productively?

²² GA 24: 31: “Diese drei Grundstücke der phänomenologischen Methode: Reduktion, Konstruktion, Destruktion, gehören inhaltlich zusammen und müssen in ihrer Zusammengehörigkeit begründet werden.”