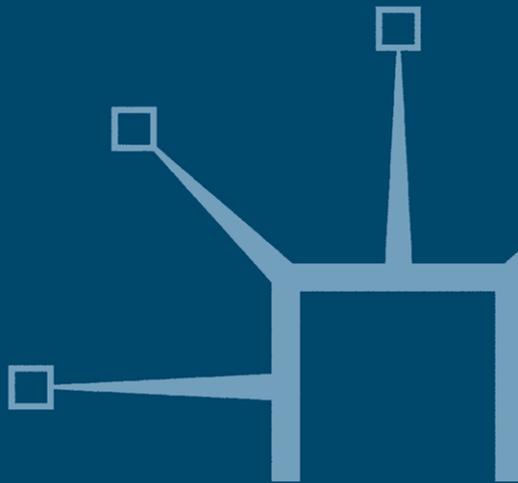


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Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant

Categories, Imagination and Temporality

Martin Weatherston



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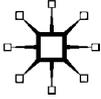
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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2002 978-0-333-99400-9

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First published 2002 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010

Companies and representatives throughout the world

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ISBN 978-1-349-43224-0 ISBN 978-0-230-59734-1 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9780230597341

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Weatherston, Martin, 1956–

Heidegger's interpretation of Kant: categories, imagination, and temporality / Martin Weatherston.

p. cm. – (Renewing philosophy)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-349-43224-0

1. Heidegger, Martin, 1889–1976. 2. Kant, Immanuel, 1724–1804 – Influence. I. Title. II. Series.

B3279.H49 W43 2002

193–dc21

2002072312

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02

To Graeme Nicholson

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Series Editor's Preface

Renewing Philosophy is intended as a forum for new and innovative philosophical investigations that make a substantial contribution not just to scholarship but also to philosophical investigation. Hence it is with some pleasure that I can introduce Martin Weatherston's stimulating investigation into Heidegger's interpretation of Kant. Heidegger's interpretation of Kant was for many years known to English-language readers only via the so-called *Kantbuch*, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. In recent years, however, the lecture course Heidegger gave on the First Critique has become available under the title *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, a work that considerably adds to the outline of an account Heidegger presented in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Whereas the book Heidegger published leaves many matters of his interpretation of Kant unclear, the lecture course fills in the gaps of his interpretation and may well succeed in making its detail and outline more compelling.

In view of these additions to the understanding of Heidegger's interpretation of Kant a clear evaluation of this interpretation is necessary for a fuller comprehension of the relationship between these philosophers. Martin Weatherston provides precisely this. More than a commentary on Heidegger's account of Kant, this book is not restricted to merely providing a defence of Kant against Heidegger. The scope of the work is provided by the nature of thinking an encounter between such important philosophers as Heidegger and Kant. While Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* has perhaps, more than any other single work, constituted the horizon of philosophical modernity, it is also the case that the author of *Being and Time* must be one of the foremost philosophers of the last century. An encounter between such thinkers therefore takes the form of an *Auseinandersetzung* of profound significance.

It is to the credit of Martin Weatherston that he is able to embrace such a horizon of philosophical contestation without ever giving the impression that the task of thinking the nature of our philosophical situation is ever lost for him in the details of the interpretative situation. While profoundly attentive to each crucial point in the interpretation Heidegger provides and the resources Kant has to resist Heidegger's interpretation, the horizon which is opened by this encounter is constantly held in view. This achievement of simultane-

ously presenting a thorough scholarly account and yet not losing the philosophical horizon of assessing the encounter between these thinkers renders the scope of this work impressive.

It is my hope that readers of this work will be led, beyond the importance of each point as revealed by Weatherston, to a living sense of the achievement of engaging with such a seminal philosophical encounter. Within the scope of a grasp of this encounter philosophy itself is certainly *renewed*.

GARY BANHAM

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the kindly critical attention of the following: Gary Banham, Gordon Nagel, Rolf George and Tom Eshelman. I would also like to thank my wife and family for their forbearance. I would like to thank the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* and *International Studies in Philosophy* for permission to reprise some arguments from papers I published with them, and Klostermann Verlag and SUNY Press for permission to quote from their translations. Quotations from *Being and Time* are reprinted from *Being and Time: a Translation of Sein und Zeit* by Martin Heidegger, translated by Joan Stambaugh, by permission of the State University of New York Press ©1996, State University of New York. All rights reserved. But most of all I would like to thank Graeme Nicholson for constantly challenging me to exceed my previous limitations in developing this book.

Introduction: Categories and the Question of Being

Heidegger's interpretation of Kant has long been seen as problematic. As an interpretation, it is far from mainstream, and this unusualness has led to harsh criticism. A central feature of the objections is the claim that Heidegger has wilfully forced Kant into seeming to be a mere precursor of Heidegger. This criticism was initiated most notably by Ernst Cassirer in his review of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*: 'Here Heidegger speaks no longer as a commentator, but as a usurper, who as it were enters with force of arms into the Kantian system in order to subjugate it and to make it serve his own problematic.'¹

Cassirer's criticism has been taken up by other writers. Among those who have complained that Heidegger has remade Kant in his own image is Marjorie Grene:

For despite his genuine insight into the structure of Kant's greatest work, it must be admitted that the 'time' and the 'creative imagination' Heidegger finds in the *Critique of Pure Reason* are in large part grafts from his own thought ... Of the smoothly flowing, scientific time of the critical philosophy he has made an inward, existential temporality; and the productive imagination, which is limited by Kant to a purely theoretical task, he identifies, in a most unjustifiable way, with the whole of human spontaneity: with the will of the Practical Reason itself. This is at odds, as I hope we shall see shortly, with the whole purpose and scope of Kant's philosophy.²

Grene complains that Heidegger has transformed the basic Kantian conceptions into something contrary to their nature. Grene is not

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alone in this complaint; Karl Löwith also accuses Heidegger of distorting Kant:

The self-interpretation in the text of another is explicitly accomplished in Heidegger's interpretation of Kant's ground-laying of metaphysics. This is indeed supposed to help itself to its own 'more original possibility', but rather in fact Heidegger helps himself to the questioning of *Being and Time* in order to confirm historically what Kant perhaps had wanted to say, and to shove aside all previous understanding of Kant as not original.³

Löwith accuses Heidegger of 'self-interpretation in the text of another'. His complaint is typical in that he is suggesting that there is too little of Kant in Heidegger's interpretation of him.

These criticisms are not entirely unjustified. Heidegger does try to show that Kant is working along the same lines as he is himself. Kant's system is indeed interpreted and criticized according to the standards of the Heideggerian project of fundamental ontology. Under these conditions, it becomes too easy to conclude that Heidegger's interpretation of Kant is no more than an attempt to show that Kant could have discovered Heideggerian philosophy if he had been smart enough.

However, we cannot dismiss Heidegger's interpretation of Kant simply because it contradicts received wisdom. In particular, before we condemn it on the basis that it offends the best standards of exact philology, we should ask whether Heidegger was in fact attempting an historical analysis of 'what Kant really thought'. Indeed Heidegger was not aiming at a reproduction of Kant's thinking. Heidegger holds that description of what is in the text is no guarantee of a *philosophical* understanding of the work.⁴ Taking his cue from Kant's remark that one can understand a philosopher better than he understood himself,⁵ Heidegger attempts this with Kant. To achieve this better understanding, Heidegger has to uncover the original ground of the Kantian problematic, and thus reach Kant's own deepest intentions:⁶ 'Thus the fundamental intention of the present interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was to make visible the decisive content of this work and thereby to bring out what Kant "had wanted to say".⁷

Heidegger holds that one should not simply attempt to reproduce what a thinker held, but one should attempt to uncover the grounds of his philosophic insights. Thus the interpreter should not merely give a clearer picture of what the thinker told us, but should also be prepared

to carry through where the original thinker faltered, so that he arrives at a truer conception of the philosophical issue.

This procedure of going beyond the printed word to what a thinker 'wanted to say' will violate the more careful canons of philology. To wrest away the accretions of misunderstandings that have collected upon a work, as well as to uncover and correct the misunderstandings that limit the work, the interpreter must use a kind of interpretative violence:

in order to wring from what the words say, what it is they want to say, every interpretation (*Interpretation*) must necessarily use violence. Such violence, however, cannot be roving arbitrariness. The power of an idea which shines forth must drive and guide the laying-out (*Auslegung*). Only in the power of this idea can an interpretation risk what is always audacious, namely, entrusting itself to the concealed inner passion of a work in order to be able, through this, to place itself within the unsaid and force it into speech.⁸

For Heidegger, every interpretation must use 'violence' on the text if it is to comprehend the phenomena. This is not, however, an arbitrary bending of the work to the will of the interpreter. On the contrary, one must try to be guided by the idea that shapes the work. In trying to understand the work better than its author, one is not trying to surpass it, but rather one is affirming its worth by recovering what is valuable in it.⁹ The interpreter must struggle with the text and the phenomena themselves in order to see behind the printed word.

Heidegger sees this endeavour to interpret *Critique of Pure Reason* while investigating the phenomena independently as coming to grips with Kant, or, better, entering into a 'dialogue' (*Auseinandersetzung*) with Kant. In attempting to understand Kant better than he understood himself, and uncover what he wanted to say, one is as it were discussing the philosophical issues with Kant:

A philosophy truly has 'validity' when its own power is released and the possibility is provided for it to deliver a shock and to make a difference. This happens only when the philosophy in question enters the possibility of saying what that philosophy wanted to say. To let Kant speak in this manner then just means precisely to come to grips with him. 'Understanding better' expresses the necessity of the philosophical struggle that goes on within every real interpretation.¹⁰

Heidegger sees his interpretation of Kant as a dialogue. In this discussion, Kant helps Heidegger to see the phenomena more closely, while Heidegger is able to free Kant from the errors that have crept around the interpretation of his work, as well as the errors that Kant himself made.

This philosophical discussion is then to serve as the basis of a 'retrieval' or 'repetition' (*Wiederholung*) of the authentic philosophical problematic that lies in Kant's work. A retrieval attempts to secure in a new context what has been gained from a dialogue:

By the retrieval of a basic problem, we understand the opening-up of its original, long-concealed possibilities, through the working-out of which it is transformed. In this way it first comes to be preserved in its capacity as a problem. To preserve a problem, however, means to free and keep watch over those inner forces which make it possible, on the basis of its essence, as a problem.¹¹

Heidegger intends to use his dialogue with Kant as a basis of a retrieval of the philosophical core of a work. Once he has completed his interpretation of Kant, he believes that he should secure its outcome within his own philosophy. He does in fact attempt this in the fourth section of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Thomas Langan explains well the relationship of Heidegger's dialogue with Kant to his own philosophy:

Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics is, then, a collision of the vision of *Sein und Zeit* with the vision of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the latter a vision without which *Sein und Zeit* would not have been possible, but one which *Sein und Zeit* had to transcend, giving the *Critique* in that very act its ultimate sense.¹²

In his dialogue with Kant, Heidegger wrestles with the phenomena treated by Kant under Kant's guidance. As a result of this dialogue, Heidegger believes he has gone beyond Kant, and the results of this are reflected in the final section of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, which relates the dialogue to *Being and Time*. Because of his early attention to Kant, Heidegger's thinking in *Being and Time* has become deeper.

Although the application of normal scholarly criteria to Heidegger's interpretation of Kant has produced some unfair criticism, Heidegger is not to be held free from blame if his readers misunderstand his inter-

pretative aims. The real purpose of Heidegger's interpretation of Kant has been obscured in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* through its excessively condensed writing style. Heidegger's writing in this work is so compact that it is difficult to see how or why he has said something. Even Charles Sherover, one of the staunchest defenders of this book, attributes the negative reaction it has received to faults in Heidegger's style:

Perhaps this response arises from the work's inherent difficulty – due to a combination of an abstruse vocabulary, a running assumption that the reader is conversant with minutiae of the Kantian text, and its composition almost as a sketch of an argument with detailed discussion of important connecting stages noticeable by their absence.¹³

Heidegger has placed great demands on his reader by his assumption that the reader knows the Kantian text thoroughly. In reading the *Kantbuch*, one is called upon to think through the often sketchy presentations of the argument. Even so, one is frequently left in the dark about why a certain conclusion was reached, and why another seemingly more obvious conclusion was not accepted. This obscurity is partly due to Heidegger's reluctance to give his project much initial justification; rather, he seems to be content to show the validity of his analysis by its end result.¹⁴ Heidegger demands that the reader should not expect complete proofs at every stage of the argument, but should suspend judgement until the entire argument has been set out. However, even taking this procedure into consideration, there is much that remains that seems unjustified and unjustifiable.

Faced with these extraordinary demands, it is difficult for a reader to gain much sympathy with Heidegger. Even the most diligent reader will miss much of Heidegger's meaning, for Heidegger left essential background information in mere allusions, or left it out entirely. Until recently, there was no remedy for this. However, much clarification has been achieved with the publication of Heidegger's lecture courses in the *Gesamtausgabe*. In these texts, we not only have a much fuller presentation of the arguments, but also have a more exact notion of the context from which Heidegger's study of Kant arose. These courses present substantially the same interpretation of Kant; what small differences there are in doctrine are never of crucial significance. They are thus extremely helpful as guides to the thinking that went into the *Kantbuch*.

For a discussion of Heidegger's interpretation of Kant, as he held it in the 1920s, there are several lecture courses that provide a great deal of illumination. *Logic: the Question of Truth*, the text of a course from the winter semester of 1925–26, deals with the same issues as *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, and gives a similar preponderance of attention to the schematism in its attempt to prove the centrality of time in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

However, the most important text for our purposes is *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. This book is the text of a lecture course held in the winter semester of 1927–28. It covers much of the same ground as *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, but in far greater detail than either that work or the earlier lecture course provides. Claude Piché has compared these latter lectures favourably to *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*: 'the discussion is conducted in a way that is more clear, more nuanced and thereby more convincing than in the book, where Heidegger often is compelled to proceed by theses, restricting the argumentation to a strict minimum'.¹⁵

The *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* is thus an invaluable guide to the obscure argumentation of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. The chief point of difference of these latter lectures from the earlier lecture and the book is that in proving the main argument, namely, the centrality of time in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, it relies far less on the schematism, and far more on the Transcendental Deduction. Moreover, Heidegger had not yet imposed on his interpretation the structure that he devised for *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Rather than analysing the *Critique* by 'stages', it follows the order of the Kantian text quite closely. With this expansion of the arguments and difference of approach, these latter lectures provide an invaluable supplement to the *Kantbuch*. Because of this fuller presentation of the main arguments, the *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* will be given priority over the other texts as a main guide.

Other lecture courses from the 1920s give important clues as to the development of Heidegger's thinking, and also help to explain that which remains obscure even in the Kant lectures. Many of these deal with other issues in Kant, in particular the issues that Kant treated in the Transcendental Dialectic. As interesting as these discussions are in themselves, perhaps more light is shed on the issues discussed in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* by the greater insight these texts give us into the central issues of Heidegger's own philosophy. Aspects of

Heidegger's thought that are by no means obvious in his interpretation of Kant can yet be shown to be highly relevant to it.

Now that these lecture courses are published, we have better guides to Heidegger's thought than we had before, and we are in a better position to assess his interpretation of Kant on its own terms, rather than imposing some alien philological ideal of textual exactitude upon it. However, we cannot take this position to extremes. If Heidegger's interpretation of Kant is a 'dialogue' with Kant, Kant himself must be allowed to have his say. Although Heidegger is not primarily attempting a scholarly reconstruction of Kant's thought, he cannot be excused entirely from the standards of such scholarship. Charles Sherover does indeed make the claim that Heidegger's project is exempt from the usual textual criticisms:

It is thus irrelevant to object that Kant is being approached from a new context, subjected to possibly strange criteria or that novel implications are seen in what he had worked out. The task of a retrieval is not to chronicle the past but to wrest out of it a deeper comprehension of our present situation and the possibilities for development it yet offers. The real question is whether significant philosophic insights emerge, or new directions for philosophic development are brought forth, from such an encounter between two thinkers.¹⁶

Sherover denies the validity of an independent assessment of Kant in judging Heidegger's interpretation of Kant. This is similar to Heidegger's own position, as set out in the foreword to the second edition of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Heidegger believed that the laws that govern a dialogue between thinkers were different from those of historical philology. Yet he recognized that the laws of dialogue are more fragile than the others, leading to greater errors. By the time he wrote this foreword (1950), he believed that the book was full of such errors.¹⁷

Because of this possibility of error (and indeed, Heidegger's own recognition of error), we cannot reject as irrelevant the scholarly, historical approach of attempting to discover what Kant meant by what he said, rather than attempting to learn what he 'wanted to say'. When one considers that Heidegger's interpretation of Kant comes out of his attempt to elucidate and dismantle the history of Being,¹⁸ it becomes clear that Heidegger did intend that this history should not be mere fantasy or caprice, but should in fact be to some degree 'correct'. If

Heidegger merely meant to demonstrate what Kant 'should have said', he would not have tried to prove his views through direct appeals to the Kantian texts. These appeals must be examined for their adequacy. We must see whether we agree with Ernst Cassirer's claim that in trying to examine the same philosophical problems with which Kant was concerned, Heidegger made 'an unjustified use' of 'a maxim of explanation which is in itself justified'.¹⁹ We must see if Heidegger is representing Kant's solutions to the philosophical problems adequately, and then, if there is a difference, see whether Kant's own solution avoids the problems that Heidegger attempts to solve by 'going beyond' Kant.

Heidegger aims to go beyond a mere commentary on Kant to produce, with Kant's help, an original treatment of the basic philosophical issues with which Kant is concerned. Yet Heidegger also claimed that some of his own discoveries were shared by Kant, at least implicitly, and cites the Kantian texts in support of this assertion. If we are to follow Heidegger in his analysis, we cannot take as authoritative Heidegger's views on what Kant wanted to say or did say. While it is important to consider Heidegger's treatment of Kant as an attempt at an original philosophy, the examination of Kant's intentions through an independent assessment of what he wrote must also remain pertinent.

Such an independent assessment is made even more pressing by Heidegger's expressed reservations about his early interpretation of Kant. Heidegger made it clear in the preface to the fourth edition of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* that by the time of writing of his *Contributions to Philosophy* in the mid-1930s, he already had reservations about *Being and Time* and the works immediately following it.²⁰ In that treatise we can find evidence of what Heidegger regretted in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* by looking at his remarks on *Being and Time*. We find that because of these perceived shortcomings, after the publication of *Being and Time* Heidegger placed ever-increasing stress on the problems of *truth* and *freedom*.²¹ Indeed, the connection between truth and freedom is an important aspect of his early interpretation of Kant. However, Heidegger later came to believe that in his attempt to dismantle the history of Being, he became entangled in the very nets of metaphysics that he was trying to unravel. Because he had not freed himself sufficiently from metaphysics, he was unable to clarify the essence of truth.²² We must look for evidence of such entanglement.