

## HOW PRESENCING (*ANWESEN*) BECAME HEIDEGGER'S CONCEPT OF BEING \*

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### ABSTRACT

It is commonly held that even though, in the period of *Being and Time*, Heidegger was critical of the Greek conception of being as presence (*Anwesenheit, Praesenz*), he came to embrace the conception of being as presencing (*Anwesen*) in his later work. In the paper I argue that this view, even if true from a general viewpoint, requires major specification. I claim that the notion of *Anwesen* only came to express Heidegger's own positive conception of being around the mid-forties and after a complex and relatively long process correlative, on the one hand, to the evolution of his use of the term '*Wesen*,' and to his reappropriation of the Presocratics, on the other. I present the details of this process and suggest that Heidegger's relatively late decision to employ the term '*Anwesen*' to express his own conception of being can be seen as part of his effort to reach a balance between several aspects of said conception.

*Key words:* Heidegger, presence, essence, Presocratics, being

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\* This work was written as part of my doctoral research in the University of Warwick (2008-2011). I am thankful to my supervisor, prof. Miguel de Beistegui, for his thoughtful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

\*\* Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. RECIBIDO: 30.08.11 APROBADO: 23.10.11

## **CÓMO EL ESTAR PRESENTE (*ANWESEN*) SE CONVIRTIÓ EN EL CONCEPTO DE SER EN HEIDEGGER**

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### **RESUMEN**

Con mucha frecuencia se sostiene la tesis de que, aunque en el período de *Ser y tiempo* Heidegger era crítico de la concepción griega del ser como presencia (*Anwesenheit*, *Praesenz*), él adoptó a nombre propio la concepción de ser como presenciar (*Anwesen*) en su período tardío. En este artículo arguyo que aunque esta tesis es verdadera desde un punto de vista general, requiere ser especificada en gran medida. Sostengo que la noción de *Anwesen* sólo llegó a expresar el pensamiento propio de Heidegger hacia la mitad de los años 40 y tras un proceso complejo y relativamente largo que es correlativo, por una parte, a la evolución de su uso del término '*Wesen*', y por otra, a su reapropiación de los presocráticos. En el texto presento los detalles de este proceso y sugiero que el hecho de que Heidegger se decidiera relativamente tarde a emplear el término '*Anwesen*' como expresión de su propia concepción de ser, puede ser visto como parte de su esfuerzo por alcanzar un punto de equilibrio entre distintos aspectos de dicha concepción.

*Palabras clave:* Heidegger, presencia, esencia, presocráticos, ser

## Introduction

SOME YEARS AGO AN INTERESTING debate unfolded between Frederick A. Olafson (1987, 1994) and Taylor Carman (1994) focused on the role of the notion of presence in Heidegger's work. For Olafson, 'presence' (*Anwesenheit*, *Anwesen*, *Praesenz*) expresses Heidegger's own concept of being throughout his work, while for Carman, on the contrary, this term denotes the main and constant target of Heidegger's philosophy as a whole. In terms of the reception of this debate, the disagreement between both commentators seems to have been settled in favour of a mixed position:<sup>1</sup> Olafson is right only as he regards the later work, whereas Carman's view is correct as regards the early period. Around the time of *Being and Time*, Heidegger was critical of the notion of presence, originally attributed to the Greeks, but came to embrace the notion in the later work.

Little has been said about this issue since the debate between Olafson and Carman, but this does not mean that our understanding of the problem cannot be perfected. In my opinion, the accepted outcome of the debate is right from a general point of view, but requires major qualification. To begin with, such view is not sensitive to the nuanced evolution of Heidegger's philosophy, especially after the period of *Being and Time*. In this paper I focus on the work Heidegger produced between 1930 and 1964, and show that at least in this period, the questions of what is Heidegger's own concept of being and of what is the terminology associated to it are more complex and nuanced than the interpretation at hand suggests. In a related way, this view fails to distinguish between three aspects of the problem: 1) what one may call Heidegger's own positive conception of being, 2) what one may call the *notion* of presencing, and 3) the *terms* '*Anwesenheit*,' '*Anwesen*' and derivatives. This distinction is important because, as I intend to show, these three items only came to coincide at a particular point in Heidegger's later work and in virtue of a complex process.

In particular, I will make the following claims: 1) The term '*Anwesenheit*,' or more exactly, the term '*Anwesen*' ('presencing'), only came to express Heidegger's own conception of being around the mid-forties, and as a result of a slow process initiated soon after the publication of *Being and Time*. This

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance Blattner (1999: 256, 289); Young (2002: 10-12; and Malpas (2008: 10-11).

process is correlative, on the one hand, to the evolution of Heidegger's use of the German idiom '*Wesen*,' and to his reappropriation of the Presocratics, on the other. 2) This conception is precisely that of being as *presencing*. 3) Heidegger's relatively late decision to employ the term '*Anwesen*' to express his own conception of being can be seen as part of his effort to reach a balance between several aspects of said conception.

I start, in section one, by providing a brief characterization of the role of the terms '*Wesen*' and '*Anwesenheit*' in the period of *Being and Time*. In the next section, I present Heidegger's etymological exposition of the terms '*Wesen*' and '*Anwesen*.' This exposition will help us frame the evolution of these terms within Heidegger's thinking, from the thirties onwards. Section three focuses on the use of the term '*Wesen*' throughout the later period, whereas section four is devoted to the development of the term '*Anwesen*' during the thirties. I show that in this period this idiom is still very much associated to the critique of the Greek conception of being, even though there are important exceptions that prefigure the later appropriation. In section five I show in detail how, from the mid-forties onwards, starting at least with "Anaximander's Saying," the role of the term '*Anwesen*' changes so as to express both a Presocratic fundamental insight, and Heidegger's own fundamental conception of *being as presencing*. Finally, section six 1) spells out what features of Heidegger's conception of being are articulated by means of this term, 2) proposes an explanation of the relation between, on the one hand, the equivalence of being and *Wesen*, operative during the thirties, and the later equivalence of being as *Anwesen*, on the other; and 3) suggests to what extent this conception of being as presencing was already at work in Heidegger's previous work.

### **1. *Wesen* and *Anwesenheit* in *Being and Time***

IN SOME OF THEIR MORE COMMON uses the German terms '*Wesen*' and '*Anwesenheit*' are customarily translatable into English as 'essence' and 'presence' respectively. As regards Heidegger's writings from the period of *Being and Time*, such translation is usually not particularly problematic, provided one keeps at bay certain traditional metaphysical connotations, as we will see. Since the early thirties, however, Heidegger's employment of both terms became more idiosyncratic, to the point that the conventional translations became highly misleading. In view of the importance of attending to the way Heidegger exploits the etymological features of

these terms, which are impossible to retain in translation, and given that deciding on the meaning of these terms should be a result and not a presupposition of this investigation, I will leave these and other related terms untranslated during the first stages of this work. Even later, when the favoured translations are fully justified, I will often have to keep referring to the German words.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger frequently uses the term '*Wesen*' as an equivalent of the Latin '*essentia*,' one of the targets of his critique of the metaphysical tradition. However, Heidegger also uses this term to articulate his own conceptual apparatus. This is manifest in expressions such as '*das Wesen des Daseins*,' '*Wesenstruktur*' or '*Wesenscharacter*,' which are meant to be free of metaphysical connotations. Although the meaning that '*Wesen*' takes on through this use remains mostly implicit in the text, it seems to involve at least two features: 1) it is mainly applied in relation to *Dasein* and not to other kinds of entities. 2) It seems to refer to what is fundamental and most proper to *Dasein*, particularly in the sense of "the definite kind of being that *Dasein* possesses" (1967/1962: 152/117).<sup>2</sup> This second feature seems to bring this meaning of '*Wesen*' near to the metaphysical '*essentia*,' and perhaps this is what allows Heidegger to deliver his famous line: "*The essence [Wesen] of Dasein lies in its existence*" (1967/1962: 67/42).<sup>3</sup> However, Heidegger clarifies that the essential characteristics of *Dasein* "are not 'properties' present-at-hand of some entity which 'looks' so and so and is itself present-at-hand, they are in each case possible ways for it to be" (1967/1962: 67/42). Thus, although '*Wesen*' can be used to designate what is most proper to *Dasein*, that which is most proper to *Dasein* is possibility or potentiality, which according to Heidegger cannot be adequately understood with the categorical apparatus that the metaphysical '*essentia*' brings along, and that applies exclusively to the conception of beings or entities as primordially present-at-hand (*Vorhandene*).

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<sup>2</sup> In what follows I refer first to the English translation, when available, and then to the German original. For the textual references, I will follow the English translations with some exceptions that I will duly note. As mentioned, I will often keep the original German terms '*wesen*,' '*anwesen*' and derivatives untranslated.

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger takes several precautions when using such metaphysically-loaded formulas to express his own doctrine, from the use of scare quotes and transliterations from Latin ('*Essenz*'), to explicit qualifications.

For its part, during the period of *Being and Time* ‘*Anwesen*’ and ‘*Anwesenheit*’ are related to the Greek interpretation of being that inaugurates the Western metaphysical tradition. According to this interpretation, beings “are conceived as presence [*Anwesenheit*] (οὐσία)” (1967/1962: 48/26). In *Being and Time* Heidegger criticizes this interpretation on the basis that it is developed “without any explicit knowledge of the clues which function here, without any acquaintance with the fundamental ontological function of time or even any understanding of it, and without any insight into the reason why this function is possible” (48/26). More particularly, and as it is well known, Heidegger’s complaint is that in this form of understanding, beings “are understood with regard to a definite mode of time—the ‘*Present* [*Gegenwart*]” (47/25). This is not to say, however, that the Greek interpretation is simply wrong, for Heidegger suggests that it is based on the “primordial experiences” (44/22) and “primordial ‘sources’” (43/21) that fundamental ontology seeks to gain access to and unveil—particularly as regards the task of historical destruction of ontology. This acknowledgement plays a crucial role in the later work, as we will see shortly.

## 2. The etymology of ‘*Wesen*’ and ‘*Anwesen*’

FROM THE THIRTIES ONWARDS, Heidegger’s use of the terms ‘*Wesen*’ and ‘*Anwesen*’ undergoes a remarkable transformation. Before getting into the details of this process, however, it is useful to review Heidegger’s etymological analysis of these terms. This analysis grounds the new lexical uses to a large extent, and thereby provides a good framework for understanding the mentioned process as a whole.

Although a good part of the texts I will turn to in order to spell out Heidegger’s etymological analysis dates from the forties, fifties and sixties, it will become apparent in the course of this paper that in many respects the interpretation that the analysis makes explicit is already at work since the thirties.

Let us start, once again, with ‘*Wesen*.’ On Heidegger’s account, this term has a verbal origin that derives from the high German word ‘*wesan*,’ which “is the same word as *währen* [to last], and means *bleiben* [to remain, to linger, to abide]”, or even more specifically ‘*bleibendes*

*Weilen* ('lingering whiling') (1968/2002d: 239-40).<sup>4</sup> *Wesan* is related to the Greek *εἶναι*, 'to be,' and to the German verb *sein*, although this last relation is only preserved in the forms *gewesen*, 'was' and *war*. The use of the term *Wesen* to translate the Latin *essentia* is derivative, although, as we will see, it continues to play a role in Heidegger's use of the term.

For its part, *Anwesen* is derivative on *Wesen*. In Heidegger's use, the prefix *an* introduces a quasi-spatial sense that usually conflates both a static, and a more dynamic and directional character. The first character becomes apparent, for instance, when Heidegger equates *anwesen* with the term *anliegen*, which literally means 'to lie next to', and is ordinarily used in the sense of 'to be in contact with' or 'to abut' (1968/2002d: 144/149). The second character is plain in several passages in which Heidegger explicitly identifies *anwesen* with *ankommen*, which means 'to arrive' (1968/2002d: 118/122; 1969/2006a: 31/95, 64/132); and with *angehen*, which means 'to concern,' as well as 'to approach.' This last signification is closer to the etymologically literal sense, often made explicit through hyphenation: 'to go next to,' or 'to get at,' in the sense of finding access or reaching (1972/2007: 16; 1968/2002d: 202/204; 1969/2006a: 31/95). Moreover, Heidegger highlights this last dynamic element when he characterizes *Anwesenheit* as a *reichende Erreichen*, i.e., 'extending reaching' (1972/2007: 12-3/17). In this way, *Anwesen* literally means something like 'lingering (or lasting) next to (or that gets at).'

That towards which the lingering is directed is invariably the human being, which makes the meaning of *anwesen* as *angehen*, 'to concern', particularly important. All these aspects of Heidegger's understanding of *Anwesen* or *Anwesenheit* are clearly laid out in one late characterization: "*Anwesenheit* means: the constant lingering that concerns man, reaching him, being extended to him" (1972/2007: 12/17; translation modified).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A very similar rendition is already offered in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, from 1935 (2000/1983: 75/75)

<sup>5</sup> "Anwesenheit besagt: das stete, den Menschen angehende, ihn erreichende, ihm gereichte Verweilen".

### 3. *Wesen* in the later work

IN “ON THE ESSENCE OF GROUND”, from 1929, Heidegger uses the term ‘*Wesen*’ in the aforementioned sense of ‘what is fundamental of’ but now not only in reference to *Dasein* but also in connection with other fundamental ontological concepts such as ‘ground,’ ‘truth,’ ‘transcendence’ (1998a/1996: 106/135) and even ‘being’ (133/171). A more significant transformation in Heidegger’s use of the term occurs just a year later in “On the Essence of Truth,” where ‘*Wesen*’ takes on, first, the verbal sense mentioned above and, second, the complex dual structure that characterizes Heidegger’s concept of truth as ἀλήθεια. These two points are related to the well-known shift that this essay performs through the claim that we are to consider “whether the question of the *Wesen* of truth must not be, at the same time and even first of all, the question concerning the truth of *Wesen*” (1998b/1996: 153/200). Since truth is understood in the Greek sense of ἀλήθεια, i.e., as unconcealing (*Entbergen*) that is constitutively related to concealment (*Verborgenheit*) (148/193), ascribing truth to *Wesen* amounts to endowing the latter with the dual and dynamic character of the former: *Wesen* is to be thought in terms of the ontologically fundamental operation of unconcealment/concealment. For this reason Heidegger exploits the verbal potential of ‘*Wesen*’<sup>6</sup> and explicitly emphasizes it in the note added to the fourth edition of the essay in 1961 (153/201).

The verbal concept of *wesen* is fully at work in “On the Origin of the Work of Art” (1935-1936), where it is connected to a large group of notions such as ‘art’ (2002c/1977: 2/2), ‘the work’ (38/51, 42/57), ‘the work-being of the work’ (*das Werksein des Werkes*) (20/27), ‘language’ (46/61), ‘beauty’ (31/43), ‘the in-stalling’ (*Ein-richten*), ‘open space’ (*offene Stelle*), ‘repose’ (*Ruhe*) (33/45), ‘earth’ (21/28), ‘truth’ (31/41, 42/57) and, crucially, also ‘being’ (33/45). What is fundamental about Heidegger’s use of the verb ‘*wesen*’ here is that it is systematically attached to concepts that in the context of the text do not denote entities but rather refer to ontologically fundamental modes of being or structures of being itself.

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<sup>6</sup> “[T]ruth is unconcealing of what-is through which an openness *wesit*” (1998b/1996: 146/190). “The rare and the simple decisions of history arise from the way the originary *Wesen* of truth *wesit*” (1998b/1996: 146/191).



This tendency is fully realized in *Contributions to Philosophy*, composed between 1936 and 1938. In this text Heidegger coins the term '*Wesung*,' that makes unequivocal a verbal sense, and explicitly states that '*Wesen*' is to be understood as '*Wesung*' (1999a/1994b: 202-3/287-9). Furthermore, Heidegger not only applies the verb to being<sup>7</sup> but actually states the exclusivity of this application.<sup>8</sup> Decisively, he claims:

*Wesung* should not name something that yet again lies beyond being but rather what brings its innermost to word: *Ereignis* [the Event, or event of appropriation], that counter-resonance of being and *Da-sein* in which both are not present-at-hand poles but pure and deep resonance itself (1999a/1994b: 201/285-287; translation modified).

Given that according to the later Heidegger *Ereignis* is the fundamental and unitary ontological structure, then we can say that by the time of the *Contributions* Heidegger was entertaining the possibility of equating '*Wesung*' and '*Ereignis*,' and consequently '*Wesung*' and '*Sein*' in its most fundamental signification. This use of the term '*Wesung*' remains stable during the last years of the thirties,<sup>9</sup> but becomes rarer afterwards.<sup>10</sup> However, the terms '*wesen*' and its nominalization '*Wesen*' retained all their significance up until Heidegger's last writings.

What is then the function of the concept of *wesen*? Generally speaking, it performs at least three closely related tasks:

1. It allows Heidegger to talk about being and related fundamental aspects of being without using the verb 'to be' as a copula. This is desirable because, for Heidegger, such use is properly referred to entities —to the ontic. In this way, '*wesen*' frequently introduces the predicates that give

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<sup>7</sup> "[B]eyng *west*, a being is" (1999a/1994b: 183/259-60). I use 'beyng' to translate '*Seyn*', the archaic form of '*Sein*', with which Heidegger denotes being in its most fundamental and therefore non-metaphysical sense.

<sup>8</sup> "*Wesung* does not belong to all beings but basically only to being and what belongs to being itself: truth" (1999a/1994b: 203/289).

<sup>9</sup> See for instance *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, from 1937-38, (1994a/1984b: 172/200-1, 183/217-8) and *Mindfulness*, from 1938-39 (2006b/1997a: 12, 17, 25, 46, 95, 123).

<sup>10</sup> Perhaps one of its latest appearances takes place in "*Ein Gespräch selbsttritt auf einem Feldweg*" composed between 1944 and 1945 (1995: 144).

content to the notion of being, particularly in the distinctive formulas 'being (or *Ereignis*, truth, etc.) *west* as...', or 'being *west* in... (*Ereignis*, the clearing, etc.)'.

2. *Wesen* also serves Heidegger's purpose of thinking being neither as an entity, nor as a property or state, and to conceive it, instead, as having the character of a happening or occurrence (*Geschehnis*) (1999a/1994b: 201-2/286-8). This aspect of the term brings it to a close relation to the notion of *Ereignis* (Event), but also serves to express the historical character of being. If '*Wesen*' denotes the fundamental fact that being *happens*, *occurs*, or *unfolds* rather than *is*, the way this occurrence (*Geschehnis*) unfolds constitutes the history (*Geschichte*) of being.

3. Finally, '*Wesen*' retains the connotation of 'what is most proper to,' which is smoothly superimposed on the other functions of the term when referred to being or modes of being's *wesen* (e.g. the *Wesen* of technology). The way being *west* (occurs, unfolds) is *essential* to being.<sup>11</sup>

For the previous reasons the term '*wesen*' has been translated as 'to unfold', 'to emerge', 'to happen essentially' and 'to sway essentially.'<sup>12</sup> In order to give some expression to these features, which require liberating the word for verbal use, I will translate '*Wesen*' as '*essencing*.' This translation also keeps visible the linkage of this term with '*Anwesen*,' which I will have as 'presencing,' for reasons that will become apparent below.

#### 4. '*Anwesen*' during the thirties

THE EVOLUTION OF THE TERM '*Anwesen*' follows a related but distinctive path after the period of *Being and Time*. Broadly speaking, it is possible to distinguish two different periods in this process. The first period, which is the object of the present section, covers the thirties and perhaps some part

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<sup>11</sup> For an analysis of this aspect of the notion see Wrathall (2005: 27ff). For a critique that focuses on this aspect of the notion of *Wesen* in order to raise the question of Heidegger's metaphysical "essentialism," see Caputo, 1993, chapter 6.

<sup>12</sup> This latter choice is the one made by the translators of *Contributions*. They discuss their decision in the foreword (Heidegger, 1999a: xxiv). For a useful discussion of the different translations see Polt (2006: 63ff).

of the forties; the second runs from the mid-forties up until Heidegger's last works, as we will see in section five.

The initial period combines two trends. On the one hand, Heidegger very much continues to associate the term '*Anwesen*,' '*Anwesenheit*,' and related idioms, to the Greek understanding of being, and to regard such understanding as relatively inadequate insofar as it relates being primordially to the present. On the other hand, however, Heidegger starts to appreciate and exploit in a positive manner some of the semantic potential of the notion. In this sense, this period can be considered a transition stage, in which both the early negative use and a more positive experimental one coexist. As we will see in the next section this tension is finally resolved in favour of the latter tendency.<sup>13</sup>

In order to fully appreciate this dual tendency it is useful to start by considering Heidegger's lectures from the summer of 1930, entitled *The Essence of Human Freedom*. This work is significant for at least two reasons. First, as Olafson has noted (1995), because *initially*, Heidegger recognizes in the Greeks what one may call a *broad conception of being*, one that is not restricted to the privilege of the present (what I shall call the *limited conception of being*). The Greek name for this conception is 'οὐσία,' which Heidegger frequently translates as '*Anwesenheit*.' But just as importantly, the text subsequently effects a reductive decision to disregard this broad conception. In *The Essence of Human Freedom* Heidegger turns to the Greeks to start the examination of the metaphysical interpretation of being. The discussion of the Greek expression 'τό ὄν' (either 'being' as participle or the noun 'a being') takes him immediately to the notion of οὐσία, which means "that by which a being is determined as such" (2002b/1982b: 33/46-7), i.e. 'beingness' (*Seiendheit*) (35/49-50). In line with *Being and Time*'s rendition, Heidegger states that οὐσία means "*constant presence*" (*ständige Anwesenheit*) (36/50-52). However, after considering Aristotle's discussion of movement, Heidegger concludes:

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<sup>13</sup> From a broader point of view, the process I am describing can be considered one of many streams in the general transition that Heidegger's thinking undergoes during the thirties. Of course, there is no need to suppose that all the streams that presumably constitute this wide-ranging transition coincide in time. My periodization concerns only the evolution of the notion of *Anwesen*.

Initially there are two linguistic forms of the familiar word οὐσία. These forms bring to expression two possible meanings of οὐσία: ab-sence (*Ab-wesenheit*) and pre-sence (*An-wesenheit*). They clearly indicate that *the concept of οὐσία involves absence and presence*. At the same time, however, one can also say that if ἀποουσία-παρουσία means absence-presence, then οὐσία just means essencehood [*Wesenheit*], i.e., something which hovers over both without being either. So what we have maintained is not the case, i.e., οὐσία does not mean *presence* [*Anwesenheit*] at all. The Greeks express presence by παρουσία (2002b/1982b: 42/59-61).

Remarkably, here Heidegger stumbles upon an understanding of being that encompasses both presence and absence, and that therefore impugns his assertion that for the Greeks the fundamental concept of being—as beingness—is merely constant presence (*ständige Anwesenheit*). As stated, however, this notable discovery is soon and somewhat violently accommodated in favour of Heidegger's usual and less favourable interpretation of the Greek conception of being:

Παρά means 'next to,' 'being adjacent' in a series, being immediately present [...] So we are forced to the thesis that οὐσία always means—whether or not this is made explicit—παρουσία, and that only for this reason can ἀποουσία express deprivation, i.e. lack of presence. In absence it is not essence [*Wesen*] but presence [*Anwesenheit*] which is lacking; thus 'essence-hood', οὐσία, at bottom means *presence*. The Greeks understood *beingness in the sense of constant presence* (2002b/1982b: 43/61-2).

In this way, Heidegger concludes that the acknowledged understanding of οὐσία as involving with equal priority both presence and absence, did not play an important role in the metaphysical reflection: "the attempt to clarify the what-being of beings [...] is oriented to παρουσία," and, for this reason, "the traditional conception of οὐσία as substance likewise involves the primordial meaning of οὐσία *qua* παρουσία." (2002b/1982b: 46/65-7). Thus, Heidegger reiterates his (relatively) unfavourable interpretation of the Greeks in this respect, and upholds the association of the term '*Anwesenheit*' to the limited conception of being.

Several important texts from the early thirties confirm this approach.<sup>14</sup> Although inscribed in this tendency for the most part, *Contributions to philosophy* offers good examples of new uses of the term. An important innovation is the use of the wording ‘*Anwesung*,’ which parallels the transformation of ‘*Wesen*’ into ‘*Wesung*.’ It is in order to retain this verbal character that I follow the translation some have adopted of ‘*Anwesen*’ into ‘presencing’ (e.g. Polt, 2008).<sup>15</sup> Heidegger makes very clear, however, that *Anwesung* remains a secondary phenomenon insofar as it is a manifestation of *Wesung*,<sup>16</sup> still related to the limited understanding of being in terms of the present.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, when Heidegger claims that in the first beginning, “without being grasped as such, *Wesung* is *Anwesung*” (e.g. Polt, 2008), he is underscoring the limitations of such understanding. During the second half of the thirties this connection of *Anwesen* —or *Anwesung*— to the present is repeatedly highlighted with the association of the term to the notion of constancy (*Beständigkeit*)<sup>18</sup> and to a lesser extent to that of duration (*Dauern*).<sup>19</sup> An additional feature of this originary, if limited, Greek understanding of being as *Anwesen*, is the unequivocal opposition

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<sup>14</sup> See for instance “On the Essence of Truth,” from 1930 (1998b/1996: 145/189) and *Introduction to Metaphysics* composed in 1935 (2000/1983: 64-5/65-6, 96/98, 121-2/122-3, 192/189).

<sup>15</sup> I won’t have to distinguish ‘*Anwesung*’ from ‘*Anwesen*’ in this paper.

<sup>16</sup> “The first beginning thinks being as *Anwesenheit* out of the *Anwesung* that first manifest the flashing of *the one Wesung* of being” (1998b/1996: 22/31; translation modified).

<sup>17</sup> “[One needs to show] that in the first beginning “time” as *Anwesung* as well as constancy [*Beständigkeit*] (in a double and entangled sense of “present” [*Gegenwart*]) makes up the one, from which what-is as what-is (being) have their truth. Conforming to the greatness of the beginning is that “time” itself and time as the truth of being are never deemed worthy of questioning and experiencing. And just as little did anyone ask why, for the truth of being, time comes into play as the present and not as past and future. What is left unasked shelters and conceals itself as such and allows for inceptual thinking only the uncanniness of rising —of constant presencing [*ständigen Anwesung*] in the openness (*αλήθεια*) of what-is as such— to make up the *Wesung*. Without being grasped as such, *Wesung* is *Anwesung*” (1998b/1996: 132/188-9; translation modified).

<sup>18</sup> “The reason the Greeks understand essence as whatness is that they in general understand the Being of beings (*ousia*) as what is constant and in its constancy is always present [*ständig Anwesende*], and as present [*Anwesendes*] shows itself, and as self-showing offers its look” (1994b/1984b, pp. 61/68). *Basic Questions of Philosophy* repeats this kind of formula several times. For similar examples in other texts of the period, see 2000/1983 (132/134); 1999a/1994b (132/188, 134/191, 222/316); 2006b/1997a (26, 83).

<sup>19</sup> 1999a/1994b (134/192)

of *Anwesenheit* (presence) to *Abwesenheit* (absence), the latter of which is taken to refer to a *limited* understanding of what is ontologically negative.<sup>20</sup>

It is important to note, however, that there is at least one instance in *Contributions* in which Heidegger seems to suggest there is a way of understanding ‘*Anwesung*’ that encompasses both what is present and what is absent:

As staying away of ground, the abyss should be the essencing [*Wesung*] of truth (of the clearing sheltering). Staying away of ground —is that not the absence [*Abwesenheit*] of truth? But hesitating self-refusal is exactly clearing for the concealedness and thus presencing [*Anwesung*] of truth. Certainly, “presencing” [*Anwesung*,] but not in the manner in which what is extant is present but rather the essencing [*Wesung*] of that which above all grounds presence and absence [*An- und Abwesenheit*] of a being—and not only that (1999a/1994b: 266/381; trans. modified).<sup>21</sup>

“The Origin of the Work of Art,” written almost at the same time (1935-1936), extends the exploration of new uses of the term ‘*Anwesen*.’ First, the term is used in its verbal form in such a broad manner as to express both the mode of being of equipment (10/13) and of the god in the Greek temple (2002c/1977: 20/27, 20/29, 22/30). Second, it designates the primordial phenomenon the investigation on the work of art aims at, i.e., “the presencing [*Anwesen*] of the thing” (7/10), or one of its fundamental features (10/14). In both cases, the term is not exhausted in a reference to the Greek understanding of being. Third, Heidegger relies on what he takes to be a Greek equivalence, and largely talks of beings or what-is (*das Seiende*) as ‘*das Anwesende*,’ which we can translate as ‘what presences’ (35/46-47, 36-7/49, 53/71). Correspondingly, he deploys the term ‘*Anwesen*’ in a formula that, as we will see, prefigures the later incorporation of the term into his own ontology: “the presencing of everything that presences” (*alles Anwesen des Anwesendes*) (25/33). Furthermore, Heidegger once

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<sup>20</sup> “Being, as the constant, [...] opposed to everything absent and all mere dissolution [“*das Anwesende gegen alles Abwesende und allen Schwund*”] (1994b/1984b: 113/130). See also 2000/1983 (110/112, 121-2/122-3); 1994b/1984b (179/211).

<sup>21</sup> For an even earlier although somewhat different attempt at exploiting the broader sense of *Anwesenheit*, see *What is a Thing?* composed between 1934 and 1935 (1967b/1984a: 44/42).

again alludes to the broader conception of being, when he says: “[e]ach being which we encounter and which encounters us maintains this strange opposition of presencing in that at the same time it always holds itself back in a concealment” (2002c/1977: 30/40).

It is noteworthy that the text from this period that deploys more freely the term ‘*Anwesen*’ in relation with the broad conception of being is *Hölderlins Hymnen “Germanien” und “Der Rhein,”* from the lecture course of the winter semester of 1934-1935 (1999b). Remarkably, this text is slightly prior to both *Contributions* and “The Origin of the Work of Art,” which are more conservative in the use of the term. In his interpretation of Hölderlin’s poems, Heidegger uses the *broad notion of Anwesen* to convey the manner of being of certain figures like “the gods” or Dionysus. The gods are those who have passed by, and thereby are characterized by their lack of constant, immediate presence, and by their fugacity and elusiveness. However, even if they are not present in the restricted sense, they enjoy certain form of presencing.<sup>22</sup> For its part, Dionysus’s way of being makes even more urgent the use of the broader notion of *Anwesen*, as the following fragment makes clear:

[Dionysus] is, insofar as at the same time, it is not; and insofar as it is not, it is. Being means for the Greeks “Presence” —παρουσία. By presencing, this demigod absences, and by absencing he presences. The mask is the symbol of the presencing absent one, and of the absencing present one (189; my translation).<sup>23</sup>

So it is here, at the beginning of what is probably Heidegger’s most experimental period, and in one of his earliest discussions of Hölderlin’s poetry, that we register one of the first uses of the term ‘*Anwesen*’ to convey the paradoxical interdependence of presencing and absencing that will be

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<sup>22</sup> “Vergehen heißt hier nicht: zugrundegehen, sondern: vorbeigehen, nicht bleiben, nicht ständig anwesend dastehen, d. h. der Sache nach: wesend als Gewesendes, anwesend in einem kommenden Andrang... [D]as Vorbeigehen ist die Art der Anwesenheit der Götter, die Flüchtigkeit” (111). See also 232.

<sup>23</sup> “[Dionysos] ist, indem er ist, zugleich nicht; indem er nicht ist, ist er. Sein aber heißt für die Griechen ‘Anwesenheit’— παρουσία. Anwesend west dieser Halbgott ab, und abwesend west er an. Das Sinnbild des anwesenden Abwesenden und des abwesenden Anwesenden ist die Maske.”

reiterated frequently after the forties. And yet, the exceptional occurrences of this type of use, its coexistence with the early limited meaning of the term, and the fact that Heidegger avoids employing the term to express his own positive thinking—in texts like *Contributions*— indicate that in this period the *broader notion of Anwesen* has not been completely appropriated.

### 5. *Anwesen* after “Anaximander’s Saying”: The basic concept of being

THE BROAD NOTION OF *Anwesen* comes to be fully exploited and explicitly embraced only by the mid-forties. The appropriation is complete in “Anaximander’s Saying,” from 1945. This text is inscribed in the long process of re-assessment of the early thinkers that started soon after *Being and Time*<sup>24</sup> and that by the time of *Contributions* had evolved into the claim that the possibility of thinking being in an essential way depended on some form of reappropriation of the early experience of being, the so-called “first beginning.”<sup>25</sup> This effort of reappropriation pervades Heidegger’s ensuing work and becomes particularly prominent since the forties. Thus, in the four years prior to the composition of “Anaximander’s Saying” Heidegger devoted one whole lecture course to Parmenides (Winter 1942-1943; 1992a/1992b) and another to Heraclitus (Summer 1943; 1987). Thereafter the Presocratics continued to play a fundamental role in his ontological reflection.

“Anaximander’s Saying” makes a number of contributions to this endeavour of reappropriation. The significance of this text for our subject matter is, as mentioned, that it marks a new attitude towards the term ‘*Anwesen*’ and what is taken to be its basic meaning. This attitude coalesces in virtue of three operations: 1) Heidegger uses the expression ‘*anwesen*’ and derivatives to translate the Greek word for ‘being’ and derivatives; 2) he explicitly incorporates this conception of being as *Anwesen* into his own positive philosophy; and 3) he extensively exploits the broad semantic potential of the term ‘*Anwesen*’ in order to elaborate on this conception of being.

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<sup>24</sup> Heidegger devoted a lecture course to Anaximander and Parmenides during the summer of 1932, which is due to appear as the volume 35 of the *Gesamtausgabe*.

<sup>25</sup> In this regard it is surprising that the Presocratics are not included in *Contributions* in Heidegger’s plan of future studies on the history of philosophy (Emad, 1999: 56).



In this section I will explain the first two points above; the third will be the subject of the next section. Before starting, it is important to note that in what follows I do not intend to face the problem of the correctness of Heidegger's interpretation of the early understanding of being, and therefore neither that of his translation. For all that matters he can be wrong in both respects.<sup>26</sup> What is important is to show what Heidegger's interpretation of the early Greeks is, and what relation of this *interpretation* with his own thinking is.

Heidegger is clear from the outset that Anaximander's famous fragment talks about "the matter of thought" (*die Sache des Denkens*) (2002a/1977:243/323), that which "as the still unspoken —unspoken in thinking— addresses all thought" (264/351). The matter of thought is what the fragment names 'τὰ ὄντα' ('what-is' or 'a being': *das Seiende*) and its variations, most importantly 'τὰ ὄν' ('being': *seiend*) and 'εἶναι' ('to be': *sein*; or in its nominal form 'being': *Sein*) (258/343ff.). The fragment speaks thus of the being of beings (*das Sein des Seienden*) (250/332). Decisively, having discussed the problem of translation and a passage from the *Iliad* that uses the archaic form 'τὰ ἔόντα' (260/345-346), Heidegger claims that this and the later 'τὰ ὄντα' mean 'Anwesende' (260/345-346), that is, 'what presences,' and consequently, that εἶναι means 'anwesen' (263/349), 'to presence.' Under this interpretation, he asserts, "our use of 'being' [*seiend*] to translate ὄν is no longer obtuse; 'to be' [*sein*] as the translation of 'εἶναι,' and the Greek word itself are no longer hastily employed codewords for arbitrary and vague representations of indeterminate generality" (*ibid.*). Accordingly, 'εἶναι' in its nominal form is understood as *Anwesen*, 'presencing,' and equated to 'being' (*Sein*).<sup>27</sup> Note that now 'Anwesen' has been detached from the metaphysically-laden 'οὐσία',<sup>28</sup> and is instead

<sup>26</sup> In fact, Heidegger anticipates the objection that his interpretation is extremely underdetermined by the textual evidence. In reply he places the correctness of his interpretation not only on philological considerations but also on paying heed to the "matter" the Greek texts in question talk about (2002a/1977: 243/322). This means that his translation relies on Heidegger's own claims about the said "matter," that is to say, on his ontology.

<sup>27</sup> "Being (the word now thoughtfully spoken), εἶναι as presencing [*Anwesen*]" (2002a/1977: 263/322).

<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that ever since the early work Heidegger asserts that the primordial pre-philosophical signification of 'οὐσία' is related to the household, and particularly means properties and goods (2002b/1982b: 108/153). This is not a metaphysically-laden meaning, although it gives rise to the metaphysical conceptions that Heidegger finds inadequate (109/153).

employed to *directly* translate the most basic group of ontological concepts, those related to ‘εἶναι,’ *Sein*:

[T]hrough Parmenides... ἔόν (*anwesend*), and εἶναι (*anwesen*) expressly become the fundamental words of Western thinking... In any case, Parmenides’ ἔστιν does not mean the “is” of the copula of the sentence. It names ἔόν, the *Anwesen* of the *Anwesenden* [“the presencing of what presences”]. The ἔστιν corresponds to the pure claim of being before the division into the first and second οὐσία, into *existentia* and *essentia* (2002a/1977: 265/351-2; my italics).

Let us now turn to the second point. Several passages make clear that this experience of “being as *Anwesen*” is the fundamental phenomenon that concerns the ontological reflection. The passage just quoted continues:

But in this way ἔόν is thought out of the concealed and hidden richness of the unconcealment of the ἔόντα, which was familiar to the early Greeks, without it being possible for them to experience this essential richness in all its aspects (2002a/1977: 265/352; my italics).

The early experience of being as *Anwesen* points at *what is essential to being*. The flaw of this view does not amount to a mistake or a distortion but just to certain limitation in scope or depth. The implication is that the ontological reflection is to start from this experience and try to elaborate it “in all its aspects.” It comes as no surprise, then, that Heidegger absorbs this conception of being as *Anwesen* into his own ontology. This is manifest in at least two ways. First, Heidegger *defines* this conception in terms of his most characteristic ontological claims: “Being as the *Anwesen* of the *Anwesenden* is in itself the truth, provided that we think the essencing [*Wesen*] of truth as the clearing-sheltering gathering [*lichtend-bergende Versammlung*]” (2002a/1977: 263/322). Second, Heidegger uses the term ‘*Anwesen*’ to *paraphrase* some of these claims. Thus, the necessity to pay heed to the ontological difference—central to Heidegger’s philosophy since the early period—is formulated in terms of the necessity to fully grasp the understanding of being as *Anwesen* (275/364-365).

As we can see, by the time of “Anaximander’s Saying” Heidegger has decided to articulate his own positive thinking in terms of the Presocratic understanding of being, rendered through the notion of *Anwesen* or

presencing. This term names the fundamental ontological phenomenon. The first and long-forgotten experience of such phenomenon is attributed to the early Greeks, and the basic features of their understanding, which remained undeveloped throughout the history of Western metaphysics, constitute the starting-point of Heidegger's own ontological inquiry. This situation is confirmed by very important texts from the ensuing years. The very conclusion of the lecture course *What is Called Thinking?* (1951-1952), which consists in a long meditation on the matter of thought (*die Sache des Denkens*), is unequivocal:

[W]e have learned to see that the essence/essencing [*Wesen*] of thinking is determined by what there is to be thought about: the presencing of what presences, the being of what-is [*aus dem Anwesen des Anwesendes, aus dem Sein des Seiendes*]. Thinking is thinking only when it *recalls* the *ἔόν*, that which this word indicates properly and truly, that is, unspoken, tacitly. And that is the duality of being and what-is (1968/2002d: 244/247; translation modified).

But perhaps the most telling work in this regard is the late conference "Time and Being" (from 1964).

An attempt to think upon the abundance of being's transformations secures its first foothold—which also shows the way—when we think being in the sense of presencing [*Anwesen*] (1972/2007: 6/10).

But what gives us the right to characterize being as presencing? This question comes too late. For this character of being has long since been decided without our contribution, let alone our merit. Thus we are bound to the characterization of being as presencing... Ever since the beginning of Western thinking with the Greeks, all saying of "being" and "is" is held in remembrance of the determination of being as presencing which is binding for thinking (1972/2007: 6-7/10-1; translation modified).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Carman (1995) reads this passage as proof that presencing is not Heidegger's concept of being, but rather the concept that inaugurates the long series of misunderstandings and distortions in which the history of philosophy consists, and of which we cannot escape—hence its binding character. I hope I have provided enough evidence to show that Heidegger in fact endorses the concept. It is also worth noting that there is no conflict in saying that a given conception inaugurates a series of misunderstandings or partial conceptions and at the same time that there is something deeply insightful and right about it.

## 6. *Anwesen* as the basic concept of being

WHY DOES HEIDEGGER FIND the broad notion of *Anwesen* adequate to express what he takes to be a primordial understanding of being? In order to answer this question we have to attend to three claims Heidegger makes about being, and explain how the notion in question is well-suited to express them:

1. The first claim is concisely developed in “Anaximander’s Saying,” and regards a complex conception of temporality. This conception can be analysed in two basic claims, both of which are easily recognizable as an elaboration on the broad meaning we saw was anticipated in *The Essence of Human Freedom*:

a) Heidegger asserts that even though there is a forceful tendency to think τὰ ἔόντα as *exclusively* related to the present, this is a mistake, for this expression “embraces, too, what is past and what is future. Both constitute a kind of what presences [*Anwesende*], namely, of what presences as non-present [*ungegenwärtig Anwesende*]” (2002a/1977: 261/346). Heidegger thus asserts that τὰ ἔόντα is ambiguous (*zweideutig*), or more exactly, has two meanings: On the one hand, it means what presences as present (*gegenwärtig Anwesende*); on the other, it means *both* what presences as present *and* what presences as non-present (*ungegenwärtig Anwesende*) (2002a/1977:261/347).<sup>30</sup>

b) Heidegger also suggests that there is a constitutive correlation between absencing and presencing (or between the presencing of what is non-present and the presencing of what is present): “[W]hat presences as present [*gegenwärtig Anwesende*], presences out of absence” (2002a/1977: 264/350); and “it is precisely what presences as present [*gegenwärtig Anwesende*] and the unconcealment that prevails in it, which pervades the essencing [*Wesen*] of what absences [*Abwesenden*] as what presences qua non-present [*ungegenwärtig Anwesenden*]” (2002a/1977: 261/347). Since absencing regards what is past and what is future, the resulting claim is that *there is a constitutive relation between the three dimensions of time.*

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<sup>30</sup> Heidegger is exploiting the fact that in German ‘*Anwesenheit*’ (presence) is not etymologically connected to the words that designate the present (*Gegenwart*, *Praesens*).

We cannot provide here an interpretation of these difficult claims; but they are certainly not new to Heidegger's thinking. Not only are they closely related to one of *Being and Time*'s basic insights; namely, that each mode of time is a function of a temporal horizon that encompasses all three dimensions of time simultaneously, but they are virtually the same Heidegger develops in *Contributions* (1999a/1994b: 134/192, 166/234, 268/384ff.)—where, as seen, the notion of *Anwesen* was still limited. The claims will be reiterated in “Time and Being,” with the broad notion of *Anwesen* fully at play (1972/2007: 13-4/18).

2. The second claim that is related to the notion of presencing concerns the ontological difference. In order to make it explicit, let us turn to Heidegger's exposition of a second sense in which the Greek term ‘ $\tau\acute{\alpha} \ddot{\omicron}\nu$ ’ has a double meaning. Both in “Anaximander's Saying” and in *What is Called Thinking?*, Heidegger asserts that insofar as  $\tau\acute{\alpha} \ddot{\omicron}\nu$  is a participle it can be used either as a *noun* that refers to a *Seiende*, i.e., a particular being (or even, what-is in general, one may add), or as a *verb* that refers to the *act* of being as such (*seiend*). Thus, one thing is to refer to a particular being, and a very different one to refer to the *act of being* that constitutes that particular, or any particular for that matter. The *Seinsfrage* is hence the question about the *act of being*, that is to say, the basic act that constitutes what-is. In the formulation ‘the question of being’ we need to hear the verbal sense of the term ‘being’ (be-*ing*), rather than an ossified noun.<sup>31</sup>

In *What is Called Thinking?* it is precisely in the context of this reflections that Heidegger proposes to translate  $\tau\acute{\alpha} \acute{\epsilon}\ddot{\omicron}\nu$  (the archaic form of  $\tau\acute{\alpha} \ddot{\omicron}\nu$ ) as ‘*Anwesende*’ (what presences) and  $\acute{\epsilon}\iota\upsilon\alpha\iota$  as ‘*anwesen*’ (to presence) (1968/2002d: 233/237). The question of being becomes thus the question of the *presencing of what presences* (*das Anwesen des Anwesendes*). Paraphrasing Heidegger's words regarding being's relation to human being, one can say that the formula ‘the presencing of what presences’ “speaks at once more clearly” than “the being of beings (or what-is)” insofar as the subject of the former is unmistakably verbal<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Obviously, being, as an act, cannot be separated from beings or what-is (1968/2002d: 227/230).

<sup>32</sup> Remember that Heidegger is expressly nominalising his neologism ‘*anwesen*,’ which is a verb, rather than merely using the abstract noun ‘*Anwesenheit*’ (presence), in which the verbal character does not ring.

and therefore more effective in bringing one's attention to the fact that the matter of the *Seinsfrage* is the *act* that constitutes what is referred to in the predicate. In contrast with the somewhat ossified noun 'being' (*Sein*), it is easy not to mistake 'presencing' (*Anwesen*) with either particular entities in general, a specific (privileged) particular (a Being), or a property or relation between beings. Being is identical with the act of *presencing* as such that constitutes what-is at the most basic level.

It is worth noting that the idea that being is not a type of being, a simple property of beings, or anything transcendent to beings, but is always the being of beings or what-is was already explicit in *Being and Time*. In my view, however, it is difficult to find sufficient support to think that at that time Heidegger was already thinking being as a pure act. Yet, we have seen that at least since the early thirties the verbal character comes to the fore through the use of the term '*Wesen*.'

3. In order to clarify the third claim, recall the etymology of the term '*Anwesen*.' In virtue of the prefix '*an*,' the component 'lingering' or 'lasting' (relative to the archaic '*wesen*') takes on a spatial character. As a result, *Anwesen* is to be understood as 'to linger next to' or 'to linger going next to.' As noted, that to which the lingering is directed is invariably human being. This aspect is highlighted by the recourse to the structurally analogue term '*an-gehen*' as a means to define '*anwesen*.' As mentioned, '*angehen*' means literally 'to go next to,' and ordinarily also 'to concern,' and Heidegger seems interested in retaining both meanings at the same time. Ultimately, Heidegger's thesis here is that *being and human being are constitutively interrelated*. "Anaximander's Saying" is not explicit in the exposition of this feature of the understanding of being as *Anwesen*.<sup>33</sup> (2002a/1977: 260/345-346), but various texts from the ensuing years are unequivocal. Having reiterated in *What is Called Thinking?* the translation of 'τῷ ἔόντι' and related terms to '*anwesen*,' Heidegger explains:

What has been gained? We merely replace the accustomed words "being" and "to be" with the less accustomed ones—'what-presences' [*Anwesendes*] and 'to presence' [*anwesen*.] Yet we must admit that the word 'to be' always dissipates like a vapour, into every conceivable

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<sup>33</sup> There is an allusion in 2002a/1977: 260/345-346.

vague signification, while the word 'to presence' [*anwesen*] speaks at once more clearly: what-presences [*Anwesende*], that is, present to us [*uns Gegenwärtiges*]. (1968/2002d: 233-4/237).

It is in relation to this last claim that we can understand the relation between Heidegger's understanding of being as *Wesen* —or *Wesung*— predominant during the mid-thirties, and the later understanding of being as *Anwesen*. Take the following passage from *Identity and Difference*, composed between 1956 and 1957:

Being essences [*west*] and lasts [*währt*] only as it concerns [or 'gets at': *an-gehen*] through the claim [*Anspruch*] he makes on man. Man, insofar as he is open to being, lets being arrive [*ankommen*] as presencing [*Anwesen*] (1969/2006a: 31/95; translation modified).<sup>34</sup>

The decisive difference between the notions of *Wesen* and *Anwesen* (or *Wesung* and *Anwesung*) that was predominant in *Contributions* is replaced by a claim that specifies a relation between them: being *west* as *Anwesen*; being essences (or happens, occurs) as presencing. This is what allows Heidegger to state in *What is Called Thinking?* that the expression "*das Sein des Seiendes*", ("the being of what-is"), is equivalent to "*das Anwesen des Anwesendes*" ("the presencing of what presences") (1968/2002d: 244/247). '*Anwesen*' equals '*Sein*,' but by giving it content or highlighting one structural feature of being:

We always say too little of "being itself" when, in saying "being," we omit its *An-wesen* towards the human *Wesen*, and thereby fail to see that this *Wesen* itself is part of "being" (308/407).

The idea that being is constitutively related to human being was clearly the point of departure of *Being and Time*'s transcendental project. During the thirties such kind of approach was put into question, and Heidegger seemed more interested in thinking the other side of the coin: human being's correlative *dependence* on being. However, the first claim was never withdrawn. Even *Contributions*, which seems to mark the peak

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<sup>34</sup> See also, 1969/2006a: 33/96: "for only with us can being *wesen* as being, that is, *an-wesen*." Note the constant recourse to words involving the prefix 'an.'

of Heidegger's efforts to avoid the subjectivist connotations of *Being and Time*'s project, retains the claim in question, although in the phrasing "being needs man" (e.g. 1967/1962: 177/251).

In this sense, one can see the evolution that goes from identifying being with *Wesen* or *Wesung* to the equation of being and *Anwesen* along the following lines. To some extent we can think being as such in a way that does not make immediately apparent its constitutive relation to human being and that emphasizes the latter's dependence on being instead. Heidegger's work during the thirties, at least up to *Contributions*, can be seen, to an important extent, as an attempt to elaborate this aspect of the ontological problem, an aspect that did not have enough weight in the early period, when Heidegger rehearsed a Dasein-centred transcendental approach to the problem of being. The notion of '*Wesen*'—and its most radical variation, '*Wesung*'—serves that approach. But the later prominence of the notion of *Anwesen* shows that, for Heidegger, a thorough ontological reflection must keep at the centre of its concerns the fact that being—as *Wesen* or *Wesung*—constitutively stands in a relation to human being, and therefore is to be understood as *An-wesen*.

## Conclusions

I HAVE ARGUED THAT HEIDEGGER'S appropriation of the conception of being as *Anwesen* or presencing is the result of a complex and relatively long process that starts soon after the publication of *Being and Time*. During the thirties and at least until the early forties, Heidegger, for the most part, continues the tendency of the early period and uses the term '*Anwesenheit*' and related words as a translation of the Greek 'οὐσία,' and thereby in relation to the Greek understanding of being. This use is critical to an important extent insofar as Heidegger ascribes to the Greeks a *limited* conception of being that privileges the present. In this sense, Heidegger tends to maintain a distinction between '*Anwesen*' and '*Wesen*' ('essencing'), according to which only the later can be taken as an expression of his own way of thinking being. At the same time, however, Heidegger starts to explore new uses of the term '*Anwesen*' that express a *broader* understanding of being, one that encompasses all modalities of time. This duality is finally resolved by the mid-forties in favour of the last trend, and as part of Heidegger's process of reappropriation of the Presocratics. In "Anaximander's Saying," Heidegger uses the term '*Anwesen*' to translate the Greek 'εἶναι' ('being'), attributes a



*broad* conception of being to the early Greeks, and uses the term '*Anwesen*' to articulate his own thinking about being. I have also argued that the notion of *Anwesen* is well-suited to express three fundamental Heideggerian claims about being: 1) that it encompasses all three modalities of time, and therefore both what presences in the present and what presences (absences) in the past and the future; 2) that *being* is the *act* that constitutes beings or what-is, rather than a type of being, a relation between beings or a property of beings; that is to say, being is the pure presencing of what-is, or of what presences; and 3) that being is constitutively related to human being, it is that which presences to the human, what reaches human being and is of concern to him or her. I have suggested that some but not all the features of the notion of being as presencing were already at play in the thirties and even earlier, that is to say, before the appropriation of the term '*Anwesen*' and of the Presocratic insight about being. One could say that something very close to the notion of presencing was part of Heidegger's philosophy ever since the period of *Being and Time*, even if the German words that came to be associated later with this notion were employed in the early period in a very different way. I have not intended to provide an interpretation of the notion of being as presencing, and thereby the precedent reflections remain very formal in character, although they should constitute a contribution to the elucidation of Heidegger's later philosophy.

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