

## Response to Gregory Floyd's "Where Does Hermeneutics Lead?"

Brad Elliott Stone, Loyola Marymount University

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In his paper, Floyd offers a comparative presentation of hermeneutics as found in Heidegger and Lonergan. There are three sections to the essay. I will state my agreement with the first two sections and express concerns about the third.

In the first section, "Reorienting Phenomenology: A Hermeneutics of Factual Appropriation," Floyd highlights the significance of factual life in both Heidegger and Lonergan's respective accounts of hermeneutics. Since *Da-sein* is a kind of entity that plans a future and creates a past to attest to such future plans, the role of interpretation is not scientific, cold, and objective. Rather, it is dialectic, interpretive, transcendental, and existential. Interpretation, not intuition, is the hub of the philosophical enterprise, placing hermeneutics at the metaphysical center of human being. Thus, contrary to the current approaches to hermeneutics—either as epistemology or as a secondary feature of metaphysics--Floyd offers an alternative view.

Heidegger is clear about hermeneutics in Section 7 of *Being and Time*. There, hermeneutics just is the phenomenology of *Dasein*, the kind of beings that will have ontic-ontological priority due to its relationship to the question of the meaning of being. Since *Dasein* is temporal this phenomenology examines and evaluates the heritage from which *Dasein*'s having-been has been thrown and the destiny that *Dasein* plans for its to-come. Hence intuition is always too late and too early; or, as Derrida reminds us from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "time is out of joint." Philosophy has failed to account for the historicity of *Dasein*, relegating thought to some variety of Spinoza's *sub specie aeternitatis* that divides understanding from what is understood, and knowing from what is known.

The second section, "Questioning Subjectivity," presents Heidegger and Lonergan as both attempting to bring historicism into their subject matter. Once again, against the viewpoint of eternity traditionally found in philosophy—especially Catholic philosophy, of which both Heidegger and Lonergan (both of whom were Jesuit) partook—both thinkers present factual life in its historical fullness. Turning to Lonergan, Floyd highlights one key shift in Lonergan's thought

between *Insight* and *Method in Theology*: the role of decision. Deciding joins the three conscious operations presented in *Insight*: experiencing, understanding, and judging. Floyd states it wonderfully, so I will simply repeat his words here: “Where *Insight* focuses on the nature of human consciousness, the formal unrestrictedness of its inquiry, and its development and aberrations, *Method* articulates the inverse direction of development wherein communities, cultures, and traditions make possible and condition that individual development.” These two directions, of course, mirror Heidegger’s notion of thrownness and projection. Of great note here is a footnote Floyd adds connecting Heidegger’s notion of authenticity and Lonergan’s concept of conversion (my favorite theme in Lonergan, as Liz Murray can attest).

Decision is indeed a key element in Heidegger. It is the self-attestation that brokers between Dasein’s having-been (resoluteness, brought to Dasein through the call of conscience) and Dasein’s to-come (anticipation, brought to Dasein through its being-towards-death). Anticipatory resoluteness is the recognition of oneself as a self in time and therefore responsible (response-able) not only for one’s own actions but also to one’s heritage and destiny (be it individual or collective—more on this in a little bit). Both Heidegger and Lonergan break through the Enlightenment’s “prejudice against prejudice” and instead own up to what conditions their thinking, be it personal, social, or historical.

The third section of Floyd’s essay, “Ethics and Evaluative Hermeneutics,” turns to Lonergan’s distinction between intellectual and evaluative hermeneutics. Evaluative hermeneutics serves as the foundation for ethics insofar as it discerns feelings, affectivity, and value. Floyd wishes to claim that Heidegger lacks this ethical dimension due to Heidegger’s lack of appreciation for others and communities.

This section is where I find disagreement with Floyd’s reading of Heidegger. Although it is indeed true that Heidegger did not provide an ethics (i.e., a normative determination of conduct, value, and human flourishing), Heidegger does not fail to present the conditions under which ethics is possible (which Floyd grants). *Being and Time* is an existential analytic of Dasein meant to explore the transcendental structures of the kind of entities that human beings are. From an existential point of view, particular moral systems (*Sittlichkeiten*) would be an

existentiell affair, differing by tradition. Heidegger accepts that different cultures might have different rules and customs. However, lest one think that Heidegger is a moral relativist, Heidegger does unite all moral systems through the existentials of being-guilty, wanting-to-have-a-conscience, and self-attestation as resoluteness. Heidegger, in keeping with the goal of *Being and Time*, offers a *metaphysics of morals* in the spirit of Kant. Heidegger is not trying to tell us what an ethical person does and does not do; he outlines the transcendental state of human beings such that ethics is a possibility at all.

Floyd misreads Heidegger's account of *Mit-Dasein* and *das Man*. Floyd claims that "even if we want to grant Heidegger a generous reading, it remains the case that ethics is something of a solitary affair." The reading that produces this claim is not generous at all and fails to grant Heidegger's account of being with others its proper weight. Floyd pits authenticity against being with others, which is an erroneous reading. The error comes from an unfortunate English error of translation. Floyd seems to take "das Man" to mean "other people," which is not what the terms means. "Das Man" (one N, not two—he writes "Mann" which is a different German word) is the impersonal pronoun in German. For example, given the bilingualism of California, businesses will sometimes post a sign that says "Se habla español" to announce that "Spanish is spoken here." In Spanish, the reflexive used with nonreflexive verbs denotes an impersonal passive statement. Similarly, the German equivalent to "German is spoken here" would be "Hier spricht man Deutsch." Unfortunately, English's impersonal pronoun, "one," is so underused and already philosophically appropriated by Plotinus that translating "das Man" into "the one" would confuse readers. Thus the early Heidegger translators chose the phrase "the They" for "das Man" in the sense of "They say that . . ." Stambaugh prefers the phrase "the They-self."

"Das Man" is the inauthentic or otherwise average everyday way that *Dasein* is with others. "Das Man" is the deficient mode of *Dasein*'s *Mit-Dasein*. At the heart of *Mit-Dasein* is a *Fürsorge*, a caring for other *Daseins* that includes *leaping-in* and *leaping-ahead*. Leaping-in is the way that we meddle in other people's affairs and "live through" others (parents, for example, do this with their children, so it is not always gossipy and nosy). Leaping-ahead is the way that we join others in their pursuits. *Dasein* is always with others. Heidegger even argues that the hermit who leaves society is still with others. Being alone is also a form of

being with others, namely through the absence of others. Being with others even extends to dead people (although they are no longer with us, we are still with them). To this extent, Dasein is never “solitary” in the way Floyd wishes to present authentic Dasein. Heidegger’s distinction in *Being and Time* is not between self and other but between personal and impersonal. “Das Man” uses the word “we” in an impersonal way, a way that ignores that “we” are a collection of “I”s. Authentic Dasein, unlike das Man, can pick out themselves from the anonymous “They.” A good example would be the African American spiritual “Standing in the Need of Prayer:” “Not my mother not my father but it’s me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer; not my brother not my sister but it’s me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.” This song of confession does not ignore others, but discloses a self that cannot say “not me” to the call of conscience. Heidegger presents resoluteness as authentic self-disclosing *versus* the “das Man” interpretation of the self in the form of “the They.” Heidegger writes that authentic Dasein just is the “existentiell modification of ‘the They.’” The foundation of ethics, for Heidegger, is that at the end of the day, as it were, is the ability to take up responsibility, even more than others, as Levinas would say.

Floyd’s account of otherness in Lonergan would not be refuted by Heidegger. For example, Heidegger would agree that the discernment of good and evil is collaborative. Heidegger is not a moral egoist, or any kind of egoist. Heidegger would agree that communities have to share certain values in common. Heidegger also agrees that encounter is a great way to test one’s own self-understanding and horizon. Heidegger would agree that “we must decide what to do with the time we are given.” Heidegger would also grant that there is “the ‘we’ prior to the ‘I.’” Heidegger agrees that transcendence involves “situating my actions—individually and collectively—in a history of development.” Heidegger also accepts the “demands that I give an account of why they (other people) are part of a story of development rather than decline.” Heidegger allows for the witness of others. Outside of terminology, Floyd presents nothing about Lonergan in this section that isn’t also accounted for in Heidegger’s philosophy.

At the end of the essay, Floyd writes “Where Heidegger is focused on the (very real) pitfalls of the communities and traditions that constitute our world, Lonergan also recognizes their essential role in our ethical development.” I do not know how much Heidegger Floyd reads, but the entirety of Heidegger’s project of

beyng-historical thinking is one that grants an essential role to both communities and traditions. To be sure, one must analyze the tradition and community they have received in order to discern the biases and errors of thought contained therein, but one cannot for Heidegger run away from one's heritage. Thus, even if we are to disagree with Platonism, Plato is part of our heritage. It is only due to Plato being a part of our heritage can we authentically agree or disagree with him. Of all of the twentieth century philosophers, Heidegger was the most engaged with the history of philosophy, trying to re-dis-cover the truths revealed to the ancient Greeks. The destruction of the history of ontology is a *positive* activity, not a negative one.

Just as Lonergan and Heidegger are well connected in the first two sections of the essay, they are actually well connected in the third section. I want to say that Floyd is simply trying to introduce contrast into an otherwise comparative paper. Unfortunately, the contrast he made was not a strong one and reveals a misreading (or at least a massaged interpretation to heighten differences between the two thinkers). The overall project, however, is salvageable: both Heidegger and Lonergan offer accounts of hermeneutics that do not create an impasse between interpretation and normativity. Thank you.