

Lee Weisskopf : Notes : 7 July 2025

**1**

—Come on now, Weisskopf. The meaning of being is presence ? I won't say it's nonsense. It has a pseudo-mathematical kind of poetry to it. But I can't *do* anything with it. I thought you were a logical positivist. But here you are, lurching into Heidegger fog.

**2**

Theology is God. Being is ontology. Being is a question. Are these statements abstract or finally *as concrete as it gets* ?

**3**

Being is a question. *Being is the question about being.*

**4**

Being is the world that encloses and includes the ontologist.

**5**

How is this assertion concrete and not abstract ? To abstract is to yank out of context. To abstract is to forget, ignore.

We have inherited a tendency to ignore the situatedness of the manifestation of entities.

**6**

“Before Abraham was, I **am**.”

How can we read this phenomenologically ? *Who* am ?

*Logic* am, the language that speaks us as speakers.

## 7

Weisskopf's latest essay gives us *truncated* Heidegger, *truncated* Hegel. His work is not a place to stop but might be a place to begin.

## 8

The aphorism *theology is God* is a creative summary misreading of Hegel. I call it a misreading because it is an abstraction from Hegel. For Weisskopf, this is the core. The inquiry that seeks for a creator "God" as the essence of reality is *itself* that creative essence. The *logic we live in now* is always already the "true" metaphysics. To say that logic is the essence of the world is to say that we live in our current beliefs. As our beliefs change, the world itself is changed. Absolute knowledge is absolute *belief*. It is belief uncontaminated by the paradoxical projection of some other than belief. Absolute knowledge is the death of belief in truth. Philosophy *begins* with absolute knowledge.

Philosophy is *born* in just this way from the death of theology, from the death of its mother. Theology dissolves into philosophy when theology recognizes itself as the creator it sought always elsewhere. Theology is submissive but imperial. Philosophy is autonomous but tentative.

One justification among others that Weisskopf offers for this interpretation is a quote from Hegel's lectures on aesthetics.

The true content of romantic art is absolute inwardness, and its corresponding form is spiritual subjectivity with its grasp of its independence and freedom. This inherently infinite and absolutely universal content is the ab-

solute negation of everything particular, the simple unity with itself which has dissipated all external relations, all processes of nature and their periodicity of birth, passing away, and rebirth, all the restrictedness in spiritual existence, and dissolved all particular gods into a pure and infinite self-identity. In this Pantheon all the gods are dethroned, the flame of subjectivity has destroyed them, and instead of plastic polytheism art knows now only one God, one spirit, one absolute independence which, as the absolute knowing and willing of itself, remains in free unity with itself and no longer falls apart into those particular characters and functions whose one and only cohesion was due to the compulsion of a dark necessity.

Yet absolute subjectivity as such would elude art and be accessible to thinking alone if, in order to be actual subjectivity in correspondence with its essence, it did not also proceed into external existence and then withdraw out of this reality into itself again. This moment of actuality is inherent in the Absolute, because the Absolute, as infinite negativity, has for the result of its activity *itself*, as the simple unity of knowing with itself and therefore as immediacy. On account of this immediate existence which is grounded in the Absolute itself, the Absolute does not turn out to be the one jealous God who merely cancels nature and finite human existence without shaping himself there in appearance as actual divine subjectivity; on the contrary, the true Absolute reveals itself and thereby gains an aspect in virtue of which it can be apprehended and represented by art.

But the determinate being of God is not the natural and sensuous as such but the sensuous elevated to non-sensuousness, to spiritual subjectivity which instead of losing in its external appearance the certainty of itself as the Absolute, only acquires precisely through its embodiment a present actual certainty of itself. *God in his truth is therefore no bare ideal generated by imagination; on the contrary, he puts himself into the very heart of the finitude and external contingency of exis-*

*tence, and yet knows himself there as a divine subject who remains infinite in himself and makes this infinity **explicit** to himself.* Since therefore **the actual individual man is the appearance of God**, art now wins for the first time the higher right of turning the human form, and the mode of externality in general, into an expression of the Absolute, although the new task of art can only consist in bringing before contemplation in this human form not the immersion of the inner in external corporeality but, conversely, the withdrawal of the inner into itself, the spiritual consciousness of God in the individual.

These are heavy lines. How is the individual man “God” ? He “makes his infinity explicit to himself.” He or she is primarily *We*. Theology reveals itself to itself as God over the course of time. Theology *binds time*. Theology *constructs* the God it seeks in the seeking of Him. Spirit is its own product.

Theology loses its alienation when it recognizes its projection *as* a projection. Hegel is a heretic and humanist. This humanist reading of the Incarnation, initially present in difficult language as something *other* than heresy, is revealed as blatant heresy later in Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity*.

## 9

Being is ontology. This is a severe misreading and abbreviation of Heidegger.

Philosophy or ontology is born from the death of theology as what theology becomes as it recognizes its completion.

The early work of Heidegger is atheistic, critical, and destructive.

For Weisskopf, following Heidegger or a misreading of Heidegger, scientism’s projection of a Pythagorean and mathematized “objective reality” is residually theological. Even Husserl, who prioritizes the intuition of eternal essences, continues the monothe-

ist project of securing the universal ground of eternal truth. Husserl's criticism of naturalism is an attempt to secure, ground, and thereby *perfect* it.

Consciousness is conceived as an absolute ground, but this consciousness is "purified" of its *historical situatedness*. The logic which is organic and unstable in its life and concreteness is frozen.

Such a freezing and pinning of conceptuality is only plausible if meaning is *immaterial*. An eternal immaterial scientific conceptuality is projected as ground. This pure meaning, because it is immaterial, requires a partially immaterial subject as its container.

## 10

Weisskopf also curates and misreads Derrida as well as Plato's esoteric doctrine. The point he makes is latent, at the least, the work of Saussure.

Saussure discusses **thoughtsound** in his famous *Course*. The signified and signifier are as inseparable as two sides of one coin.

Saussure also understood that the sound of the other's speech has to be *classified* as the sounding of a word. Sound alone ( material alone ) does not suffice. Language is "form not substance." Or rather the spoken word is *formed* substance. The form and the substance are inseparable, so concepts of form and substance are artificial posits. The head sign or spoken word is only a fusion of form and substance after analysis.

The qualitative presence of the spoken words radiates a "significance" that is never "pure meaning." The quality *is* this "radiance."

Words are *blurry equivalence classes* of such "radiant" sound events. There is no signified except as a handy device for discussing this equivalence class. But this means that the concept of signifier is itself destabilized.

This is how Wiesskopf understands Plato's esoteric doctrine. Not the "One" or the "Dyad" but only quality or presence that can be analyzed in retrospect. We might say in the case of the word that the "one" is the *unity* in the class as such. The "dyad" is the sensory-qualitative continuum which is "carved" into equivalence classes.

## 11

With this demystification of pure meaning — meaning apart from quality — we find ourselves more able to dismantle the container subject.

The subject shrinks to a formal concept indicating situatedness. The heard word in its quality is radiance is heard "by" this formal subject. This subject becomes a "face of world" or a dynamic phenomenal field.

This world-face is associated with an empirical subject, who can report his or her "experience." This "experience" is not inside the subject. The subject is instead inside his or her experience. This experience is the world as it encloses that subject.

## 12

But what makes an entity a sign ? If signs are no longer signifieds paired with signifiers, what makes a sign a sign ?

If we abandon the assumption of meaningless sensation as material from which signifiers are constructed, we recover the life-world as originally significant. This "significance" is never "pure" meaning. Nor is some residue in world left as pure meaninglessness quality.

The dark clouds overhead as significant, but they are not as conventionally or "arbitrarily" significant as the phonemes of "mother."

A sign is an entity that is relatively conventionally significant.

### 13

Being is a question. How ? Why ? A participant in the forum makes the claim. Another in the forum hears it. Members in the forum are usually immersed in practical life. In this immersion, they discuss *beings*. They discuss paychecks and clogged drains. Even in this mode they solve problems.

They “understandingly” exist as problem-solving sense-making. They *care* about what happens. So *they figure out what’s going on*.

We might also say that being is *lived* time. This is to say that being is questioning care. Lived time is an “incarnate” or “situated” *personal continuum* of world from perspective.

### 14

But immersion in practical affairs can pause. You are I can ask **what is going on ?** in a more radical sense. What fundamentally is going on ?

As we ask that question, what fundamentally is going in is that same question.