Katherine Withy, *Heidegger on Being Self-Concealing,* Oxford University Press, Oxford 2022, pp. 190, $ 70.00, ISBN 9780192859846

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Developing some ideas foreshadowed in her previous works (Withy 2015, 2017), Katherine Withy's *Heidegger on Being Self-Concealing* engages with the fascinating (as well as elusive) issue of un-concealment in Heidegger's thought. Borrowing the overtly ambitious words that the author herself uses in her conclusions, the book aims for nothing less than to "illuminate being with its proper brightness – one that makes its 'dark pure and clear'" (p. 157).

Admittedly, in leafing through the first pages, one might get the impression that this effort eventually results in an *obscurum per obscurius* case. Withy writes in a densely argumentative prose – demanding a certain degree of attention from the reader – and fixes from the beginning a very precise terminology (distinguishing what she calls "*lēthē*", "*kruptein*", "*kruptesthai*", and so on), a terminology which is supposed to interpret Heidegger's own usage, making it even more consistent than it actually is (p. 5). Moreover, the book constantly refers to and dialogues with other contemporary English studies on Heidegger, which could be disorienting for those who have insufficient acquaintance with the English-speaking debate. If these minor difficulties can be overcome, however, *Heidegger on Being Self-Concealing* can be appreciated as a great work of theoretical clarification.

The book starts with the claim by Mark A. Wrathall (2010) that four interconnected "planks" or "levels" of unconcealment can be identified in Heidegger's thought: 1. that of linguistic communication, connected (in Withy's terms) with the "manifestness of the entity as x in speaking"; 2. that of discoveredness, i.e., of the "manifestness of a specific entity as x in behaving"; 3. that of disclosedness, i.e., of the "manifestness of entities as such and as a whole"; and 4. that of the clearing, i.e., of the "manifestness of being as such". According to Wrathall, these levels are interconnected in the sense that each of them presupposes the higher one: only within the clearing (4) is disclosedness (3) possible, only within disclosedness (3) can the *Dasein* discover entities (2), and so on.

Wrathall's taxonomy provides the basis for the one that Withy herself comes to outline at the end of the essay (pp. 161-165). After three introductory chapters (1-3), the remaining twenty-one that make up the book are indeed a punctual analysis of each of these four planks, arranged according to the author's line of argument (chapters 4-8 are dedicated to the second plank, chapters 9-10 to the first, chapters 11-17 and 21-24 to the third, and chapters 18-20 to the fourth). On the whole, the taxonomy set out in *Heidegger on Being Self-Concealing* differs from that of Wrathall's *Heidegger and Unconcealment* in three respects.

First, by her own admission, Withy turns Wrathall's levels of unconcealment into levels of unconceal*ing* (p. 9) – which means that, for each resulting unconcealment, she aims to additionally analyze both the relevant events of unconcealing and those states of concealment that each unconcealing overcomes (e.g., when dealing with plank one, Withy dwells not only on the unconcealment produced by speaking but also on the way in which speaking unconceals and on the state of concealment that speaking removes).

Second, Withy integrates Wrathall's taxonomy with secondary events of concealment. Most of them are side effects of an unconcealing process, which in its unconcealing conceals either itself (in which case Withy speaks of "*kruptesthai*" or "self-concealing", e.g., our behaviour towards an entity that uncovers the entity as x may conceal precisely that it uncovers that entity as x) or something else (in which case Withy speaks of "*kruptein*" or "other-concealing", e.g., that same comporting, in discovering that entity as x, may conceal that entity as y). Correlatively, such events of concealments can sometimes be overcome by as many appropriate events of unconcealing, which end up in the final taxonomy as well. As a consequence, Withy's table (pp. 161-165) comes to be much richer than Wrathall's.

Third, Withy makes a case for the deletion of Wrathall's fourth plank and, thus, basically reduces the number of planks to three. Her point in this regard – which finds one of its fundamental arguments in Heidegger's *The Principle of Reason* – appears highly convincing to me: being and disclosing self-ground themselves – that is have "no independent moving cause" – and so, as she concludes, there is not "any reason to posit a fourth plank at all" (p. 134).

The resulting taxonomy is solid and consistent; furthermore, it has the merit of trying to provide a plausible framework for particularly insidious and recurrent topics of the Heidegger studies, such as the notion of *Erde* and the relation between *Dasein* and animals. Still, I think it would be going too far to consider *Heidegger on Being Self-Concealing* an exhaustive and definitive picture of the idea of concealing in Heidegger's thinking as a whole (in a way, inevitably, given the sheer complexity of the issue at stake). First of all, it should be mentioned that Withy adopts some very restrictive (albeit honestly and clearly declared, pp. 1-7) methodological assumptions. Namely,

she has a continuist interpretation of Heidegger's thinking (i.e., she rejects any significant distinction between an "earlier" and a "later" Heidegger) and claims that Heidegger never thinks "that being 'is' independently of Dasein" (p. 4). At the antipodes of the William J. Richardson-Richard Capobianco line – both arguing that Heidegger's first texts already foreshadow those themes and accents that we usually associate with his later thinking – Withy believes that even the later Heidegger retains a transcendental-phenomenological approach.

The whole book rests on this kind of reading, starting from the very top-bottom interdependence of the three levels of un-concealing, which arguably fits *Being and Time* better than Heidegger's later writings. This becomes particularly evident regarding the transition from the second plank to the first – the alleged dependence of "linguistic unconcealing" on "discoveredness". Withy believes "that first-plank unconcealing in language use" requires "the second-plank unconcealing of comporting towards entities" and that this confirms the latter as being "the condition of possibility of the former" (p. 67). In my view, this contention may (perhaps!) be supported by some reading of the treatment of language as grounded on *Rede* in §34 of *Being and Time* (although, even there, *Rede* is said to be "equiprimordial" with *Verstehen*) but looks clearly disputable if one has in mind Heidegger's lectures on Hölderlin or *On the Way to Language* (texts that, unsurprisingly, are hardly ever mentioned in the essay). Here, the unconcealing taking place in language does not appear to be *posterior to* or *dependent on* other forms of unconcealing; in fact, it could even be argued that language becomes the eminent place of both second-plank and third-plank unconcealing. In any event, Withy is perhaps following a reading à la Wrathall (Wrathall 2010, pp. 119-155) instead, without making it explicit, and is taking "language" as "ordinary language" rather than "o-

riginary language" – which is perfectly legitimate. One might simply expect a few more words on the interpretative framework that prevents statements such as "only where there is language, is there world" (GA 4: 38) from having a place in her taxonomy.

The second point in Withy's analysis that probably deserved more caution is the interpretation of *lēthē* as the *absolutely* originary dimension. Withy underlines only in passing that *lēthē* "is prior to […] being" (p. 90), but this is indeed, on closer inspection, a somewhat strong claim. In fact, there are passages in the *Gesamtausgabe* that evidently problematize a reading of this kind. I am referring not only to statements such as the ones in the writing *On the Question of Being* – "being and nothing are not given alongside one another" (GA 9: 419) – or in the 1966-1967 seminar with Fink on Heraclitus – "the darkness is without light (*lichtlos*), but cleared (*gelichtet*)" (GA 15: 262) – but also (and mainly) to the significant *retractatio* that takes place in the Zähringen seminar of 1973 (GA 15: 395), where Heidegger corrects the perspective set out in *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*. There, Heidegger contended (somehow in line with Withy) that *lēthē* was the "non-trembling heart of alētheia"; here, he argues instead that such a non-trembling heart is "the disclosure which fittingly encircles the *eòn*, that is, the presencing: presencing itself", for "the alētheia is no empty opening, no motionless chasm" (GA 15: 398).

Perhaps Withy felt she could avoid these oscillations, given that she had not committed herself to provide a "history of the idea of being's self-concealing in Heidegger's thought" (p. 3). However, I find that there is something very important at stake here – just the same problem that Capobianco sees when he draws a distinction between *Sein* (that is, *Seiendheit*), which is

given or granted by the *Ereignis*, and *Sein selbst*, which is the *Ereignis* (Capobianco 2010, pp. 48-49). When Withy argues that *lēthē* is prior to being, I think we must first clarify which of the two we are talking about: if it is *Sein* which we have in mind, Withy is right; however, if we are talking about *Sein selbst* instead – as I believe Heidegger does in the above-mentioned passages – we would instead have to say that Being/*alētheia*/*Ereignis* is prior to *lēthē*.

A more prudent formulation, therefore, might be that *lēthē* is different from (and maybe prior to) "the being of beings" (*Seiendheit*), which would allow *lēthē* to still be part of being (itself): *lēthē* is being in its being irreducible to the domain of phenomenality. In this sense, the manifestation of beings as such would presuppose *lēthē* as its relevant rather-than – as Withy appropriately claims – while at the same time, this *lēthē* would not be located outside being but would be a fundamental polarity of the a-lethic movement of which being (itself) consists.

I believe *lēthē* lies within *alētheia*, even if it is there only as the darkness that light endlessly overcomes – or, to put it differently, being is both darkness and light, even if the only way to catch sight of it as darkness is to experience the gratuity of the presencing of light. A *lēthē* conceived otherwise than as a counterpoint to "the being of beings" – as the very lack of ground of the phenomenal world – seems to me to lead Heidegger's thought into an incomprehensible dualism. Nevertheless, once again, it arguably all depends on Withy's assumptions: if one does not admit some degree of independence of being from the transcendental horizon of *Dasein*, it is at the same time inevitably difficult to make sense of *lēthē* as still immanent to being.

Apart from these remarks – which I intend to portray more as further problematizations than as objections and which concern Withy's premises more than her consistent

conclusions – *Heidegger on Being Self-Concealing* is a precious text which organizes in a precise and unprecedented way a chapter that is crucial in Heidegger's thought. If then by re-discussing some elements of its framework Withy's *diairesis* could be improved, especially at its extremes (planks one and three), this would only be one more sign of the great clarification produced by this pioneering work.

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