eberhard von goldammer

annotations to

Identity, Counter-identity, and Negative Language

> But insofar as positive language is preoccupied with all that is created of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, by its own very existence, it places out of sight the problem of creating; that is, the act in which the created appears only as secondary. By means of positive expression one can indeed learn what the laws of thought are, but it utterly fails when one wants to look behind the result of creation and 'know' something about the process by which within the uncreated the created came to be. ...
> ... At the problem of creation, positive language encounters its own final limit.
> [...]
> The emergence of a counter-identity presupposes, though, that philosophical reflection knows only this world. A secularization of the Beyond must have preceded which through the progressive dissolution of its mythological content brought that other world into this one. Now data we once met with as fantasies of the hereafter appear as physical facts of this world. The idea of the 'doppelgaenger', which at the time of its appearance marked an irruption of the otherworldly into the earthly, transforms itself in the logical concept of accretive negation into a structural feature of the physical world. In mathematically-based physics there now suddenly appears the idea of a very earthly counter-identity. It emerges precisely at the point where the classic image of nature, whose rationality was sufficiently represented by the logic of identity, explodes by way of Einstein's theory of relativity.
>
> Gotthard Günther

The two relations (4) and (5)

$$p \equiv N_{1,2,1,2,1,2}\, p$$

and

$$p \equiv N_{2,1,2,1,2,1}\, p$$

in Günther's essay *Identität, Gegenidentität und Negativsprache* from 1979 [1] can be written as:

$$p \equiv N_{1,2,1,2,1,2}\, p \quad \text{corresponds to} \quad p \equiv N_1\, N_2\, N_1\, N_2\, N_1\, N_2\, p \qquad \text{(A1)}$$

In the following the different (global) negations in (A1) will be executed in the way Günther did it in his essay, namely from the left to the right. The negation N1 and N2 are defined according to the table (A2a, b):

p	N_1p
1	2
2	1
3	3

(A2a)

p	N_2p
1	1
2	3
3	2

(A2b)

The proposition variable p will be considered from a standpoint 1 (S1) in relation to standpoint S2 or any other standpoint. In other words, the (global) negations are inter-contextural, i.e., a contexture in relation to another contexture is negated or rejected. (A1) can be interpreted as given in the following steps:

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1 Gotthard Günther, lecture: International Hegel-congress, Belgrade 1979. Published in: Hegeljahrbücher 1979, p. 22-88 — English translation by *Joachim Paul* and *Joe Newbury*

step 1: $\mathbf{p} \equiv \mathbf{N_1}_{,2,1,2,1,2}\ p$ bzw. $\mathbf{p} \equiv \underset{\mathbf{1}}{\mathbf{N_1}}\ \underset{2}{N_2}\ N_1\ N_2\ N_1\ N_2 p$

If the propositon p is considered from S1 in relation to S2, standpoint S1 can be designated or not designated, i.e. negated or rejected. A designation (affirmation) of S1 would be the end of the inter-contextural negation process, i.e., the logical domain (contexture) corresponding to S1 would have been chosen. If, however, S1 in relation to S2 will not be designated – which is the case in our example (A1) – then an exchange of the standpoint from S1 to S2 occurs, as indicated in table (A2a). Since every standpoint is characterized by at least one logical domain (contexture) this process corresponds to an exchange of standpoints. From a logical point of view it is an ***inter-contextural*** (or ***discontextural***) *process*.

step 2: $\mathbf{p} \equiv N_{1,\mathbf{2},1,2,1,2}\ p$ bzw. $\mathbf{p} \equiv \underset{\mathbf{1}}{N_1}\ \underset{2}{\mathbf{N_2}}\ \underset{3}{N_1}\ N_2\ N_1\ N_2\ p$

Now the proposition p will be considered from standpoint S2 in relation to S3. Again the negation (or rejection) of S2 in relation to S3 is of interest, because an affirmation (or designation) of S2 would terminate the inter-contextural (discontextural) process. According to table (A2b) an exchange from standpoint S2 to S3 results.

step 3: $\mathbf{p} \equiv N_{1,2,\mathbf{1},2,1,2}\ p$ bzw. $\mathbf{p} \equiv \underset{\mathbf{1}}{N_1}\ \underset{2}{N_2}\ \underset{3}{\mathbf{N_1}}\ \underset{3}{N_2}\ N_1\ N_2\ p$

Now the proposition p will be considered from S3 in relation to S1/S2 and no exchange of the standpoint occurs (cf. table A2a).

step 4: $\mathbf{p} \equiv N_{1,2,1,\mathbf{2},1,2}\ p$ bzw. $\mathbf{p} \equiv \underset{\mathbf{1}}{N_1}\ \underset{2}{N_2}\ \underset{3}{N_1}\ \underset{3}{\mathbf{N_2}}\ \underset{2}{N_1}\ N_2\ p$

Considering the proposition from S3 in relation to S2 causes an exchange from S3 to S2 (cf. table A2b).

step 5: $\mathbf{p} \equiv N_{1,2,1,2,\mathbf{1},2}\ p$ bzw. $\mathbf{p} \equiv \underset{\mathbf{1}}{N_1}\ \underset{2}{N_2}\ \underset{3}{N_1}\ \underset{3}{N_2}\ \underset{2}{\mathbf{N_1}}\ \underset{1}{N_2}\ p$

Within the range of step 5 the proposition p will be considered from standpoint S2 in relation to S1 (inversion of step 1). An exchange from S2 to S1 takes place.

step 6: $\mathbf{p} \equiv N_{1,2,1,2,1,\mathbf{2}}\ p$ bzw. $\mathbf{p} \equiv \underset{\mathbf{1}}{N_1}\ \underset{2}{N_2}\ \underset{3}{N_1}\ \underset{3}{N_2}\ \underset{2}{N_1}\ \underset{1}{\mathbf{N_2}}\ \underset{1}{N_2}\ p$

Step 6 can be considered as the inversion of step 3, i.e., the proposition p is considered from S1 in relation to S3/S2 and no exchange of the standpoint occurs (cf. table A2a).

* * * *

At the end of such an negation circle the proposition p has a "history of reflection" like Günther calls it in the foreword of his *Beiträge*...(2nd volume) [2]. The classical negation (~) never gains such a "history of reflection":

example: the classical (mono-contextural) negation

a) p has the meaning: p ≡ "the particle is a proton"
   negation of p: ~ p ≡ "the particle is not a proton" (– *what is it ?*)
   double negation: ~ ~ p ≡ " the particle is a proton "

b) q has the meaning: q ≡ "the rose is red"
   negation of q : ~ q ≡ "the rose is not red" (*the rose could be yello, or white, or... – but not red*)
   double negation: ~ ~ q ≡ "the rose is not (not red)"

– *what is the color of the rose now* ?
– for a computer the rose is red !
– but for a reflecting human being ?

---

[2] Gotthard Günter, Beiträge zur Grundlegung einer operationsfähigen Dialektik, vol. 1-3, Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg, 1976-1980.
(Translation of the title: Contributions to a Foundation of an Operational Dialectic)

What teaches this example about classical negation ?

The negation of p ≡ "the particle is a proton" or q ≡ "the rose is red" presupposes the knowledge of the existence and/or the attributes of protons or roses – otherwise it would be absurd to negate features of objects like protons or roses. In other words, any classical negation refers to the positive – *the positive is always included implicitly within the negation*.

There are two other aspects which are normally not mentioned in text books of logic: The two negations a) and b) in the example given above are different if they are negated twice. The double negation of p ≡ "the particle is a proton" easily can be interpreted as ~ ~p ≡ p while the single negation of p leaves some confusion about the identity of the particle under consideration. We only can derive that there are particles which we designate as protons. There is no direct or indirect reference or relation to any other attribute of atomic particles.

The situation in example b) is different. Again, the negation of q, i.e., ~q ≡ "the rose is not red" has no relation to any other attribute of roses like colors or whatsoever. But now the double negation of q does not lead us to a "red rose", i.e., ~ ~q ≡ q is not fulfilled for the attribute of colors at least for a reflecting being. For an inferring computer working on the basis of a 0-1 algebra, the double negation of q always leads to ~ ~q ≡ q. But the computer is an unreflecting machine. For the reflecting human being the situation is quite different, because the negation of q, i.e., ~q ≡ "the rose is not red" simply means that the considered object (a rose) is either yellow, or white, or what color ever – but certainly not red. Any further negation does not change this fact, i.e., ~ ~q ≢ q. The propositional calculus does not offer any possibility to construct relations to any other attribute of an object (or proposition). In other words, the classical negation is total, there is no mediating property between different attributes of an object or the proposition of an object.

Upshot: The classical standard logic as well as all (classical) non-standard logics like modal-logic, probability logic, fuzzy logic, or paraconsistent logics, etc. are truth-definite in the sense of an ontology of identity ("something *is* or it *is not*" – any third is excluded — cf. example above). Günther calls the sciences or languges based upon these truth-definite logics positive sciences or languages. All natural languages as well as the artificial languages like the classical standard- and non-standard-logics or mathematic are positive languages. **Positive languages** are characterized by their (intra-contextural) negations which *always imply indirectly the corresponding positive proposition*.[3]

Günther's **negative language** can be considered as complementary to the artificial positive languages. The negative language is characterized by a variety of negations (negation chains or negation circles) which operate inter-contextural (not intra-contextural) and which are mutually mediated. Therefore any inter-contextural negation always refers to at least one further contexture, i.e., any rejection (negation) of a contexture (standpoint or logical place) is always related to at least one further contexture (standpoint or logical place) as it was demonstrated above (step 1 to 6). In

3 An "indirect implication of the positive proposition" means, that the reflecting human being is able to imply indirectly the positive proposition from the negation. This is impossible for a classical machine during a mechanical inference process because such machine is not able to reflect on its own inference process – the classical machine does not interpret anything at all.

other words, a contexture (standpoint or logical place) can only be negated (rejected) in relation to (at least) one further contexture. — A process (not a state!) where the positive appears not before a contexture (standpoint or logical place) has been designated in the sense of an affirmation. From the view of the classical logic these negations are meaningless since all classical standard- and non-standard logics are mono-contextural, i.e., only one contexture (one standpoint, one logical place) exists which can be located only in the beyond but not within the contexture. For any classical negation there must be a positive ground (cf. F. H. Bradley [4]) or reference point located outside the logical domain, i.e., beyond naught and one:

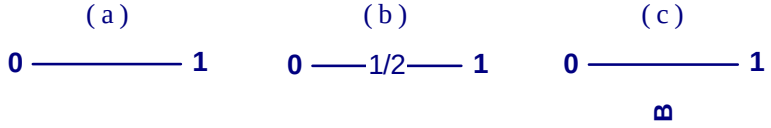

fig. 1

Figure 1a symbolizes a logical domain with its two values 0 and 1 (false/true) and fig. 1b depicts the many-valuedness which is characteristic for a probabilistic logical domain. However, the value between 0 and 1 cannot be taken as a reference point (or ground) for the classical negation because this would be in contradiction to Gödel's incompleteness theorem, — or if expressed in a more pictural way, this would be the situation of Muenchhausen's pigtail characteristic for any self-referential process. [5]

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4 Francis Herbert Bradley, *The Principles of Logic*, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, 1963 (first edition: 1883) - Chapter III : The Negative Judgement

§ 2: … It is not merely as we shall see lower down (§7), that negation presupposes a positive ground. It stands at a different level of reflection….

§ 3: … Thus in the scale of reflection negation stands higher than mere affirmation.

§ 7: Every negation must have a ground, and this ground is positive. It is that quality x in the subject which is incompatible with the suggested idea. A is not B because A is such that, if it were B, it would cease to be itself. Its quality would be altered if it accepted B; and it is by virtue of this quality, which B would destroy, that A maintains itself and rejects the suggestion. In other words its quality x and B are discrepant. And we can not deny B without affirming in A the pre-existence of this discrepant quality.

See also: The law of sufficient ground, etc. as it was discussed in: *gotthard günther* — annotations: A or not-A, that is the question, http://www.vordenker.de/ggphilosophy/gg-annotationen_2004-1_eng.pdf

5 "… every logical operation we can perform is confined to the contexturality in which it originates. It is trivial to add that no logical operation can start in Nothingness or continue there. But also, if we count numbers, this process of counting, i.e., the sequence of numbers, is *confined to the contexturality in which it originates*. You cannot cross the borderline between Being and Nothingness and still continue your process of counting. […]

Nevertheless, the domain of Nothingness has proved extremely useful in the history of human thought. Whenever it was assumed that Reality harbored a rational as well as an irrational component the contexture of Nothingness served as the ontological location for everything that did not seem to be rationally conceivable. It also served as the ontological locus into which the observer of the world could be placed because it became very soon evident in the history of logic and of epistemology that the classic pattern of thinking with its concomitant mono-contextural ontology offered no place for the observer of the world or the thinking subject because it would have been absurd to assume that the subject of *cognizing* belonged in the contexture of that which was *cognized*. […]

The logical dilemma becomes clear if we look on fig. 1c. Any point of reference which is located beyond 0 and 1 (i.e., outside the logical domain) can only be imagined in the beyond, in the other world, – or more philosophical as the *coincidentia oppositorum* introduced by Nicholas of Cusa [6] for which no logical foundation can be given. In order to demonstrate the intellectual challenge, we will quote from Heidegger's lecture on *Identity and Difference* [7]:

Heidegger raises the question:

> "Where does the spring go that springs away from the ground? Into an abyss?"

and he answers:

> "Yes, as long as we only represent the spring in the horizon of metaphysical thinking. No, insofar as we spring and let go. Where to? To where we already have access: the belonging to Being. Being itself, however, belongs to us; for only with us can Being be present as Being, that is, become present."

At this point we would like refer to Günther's essay *Negation and Contexture*:
http://www.vordenker.de/ggphilosophy/gg_negation_and_contexture.pdf

⟶ to the essay

Seymour Papert (in: M.Minsky, "The Society of Mind")

You cannot think about thinking, without thinking about thinking about something.

Proemial-Relationship

In order to elucidate the different steps of negation given above, we would like to recall Günther's proemial relationship which he introduced in *Cognition and Volition* [8].

> … if there ever existed any agreement in the history of logic, then it was this: that such a logical principle could not generate the ontological conditions for the existence of a thinking subject. The relation of the cognizing subject to its range of objects is always one of discontexturality."
>
> Gotthard Günther, in: Beiträge..., vol. 2, *Life as Polycontexturality*, p. 287-288.
> http://www.vordenker.de/ggphilosophy/gg_life_as_polycontexturality.pdf

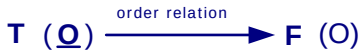
6 Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) was a cardinal of the Catholic Church, a philosopher, a mathematician, and an astronomer. He is also referred to as Nicolaus Cusanus and Nicholas of Kues – http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophie_der_Renaissance_und_des_Humanismus
and/or http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_of_Cusa

7 Martin Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, Vortrag, der beim 500-jährigen Jubiläum der Universität Freiburg zum Tag der Fakultäten am 27. Juni 1957 gehalten wurde — abgedruckt in: M. Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, Günther Neske Verlag, Pfullingen, 1957, S.13-54.
English translation by Joan Stambaugh: Heidegger's *Identity and Difference*, Harper & Row Publ., Inc., New York 1969, p. 69. —— see also: Introduction to Heidegger's *Identity and Difference* by Joan Stambaugh — *to the introduction* ⟶

In his foreword of *Beiträge*…vol.2 Günther pointed on the general problems representing complex facts, which exceed our everyday conciousness, within a positive linguistic framework. A good example of these difficulties is given by Heidegger's *Identity and Difference*. See also: Gotthard Günther, *Martin Heidegger und die Weltgeschichte des Nichts*, in: Beiträge zur Grundlegung einer opertionsfähigen Dialektik, Band 3, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1980, p. 260-296.

8 A short version has been published in: Cybernetics Technique in Brain Research and the Educational Process, 1971 Fall Conference of American Society for Cybernetics, Washington D.C., 119-135. The full text is published in: Gotthard Günther, Beiträge zu einer opertionsfähigen Dialektik, Band 2, Felix Meier Verlag, Hamburg [1]1979, p.203-240.
See also: http://www.vordenker.de/ggphilosophy/c_and_v.pdf

The structure of the (monocontextural) clasical logic will be symbolized by:



The arrow stands for the order-realation between true and false (1 and 0) and/or for the order relation between an operator (relator) and the corresponding operand (relatum). The figure also symbolizes a logical domain (system) which will be called in the following a (logical) contexture.

In order to mediate several logical domains, i.e. contextures, Günther[9] introduced within his semi-classical place-valued logic the so-called proemial relation where at least three contextures are mediated by order-, exchange-, and coincidence relations:

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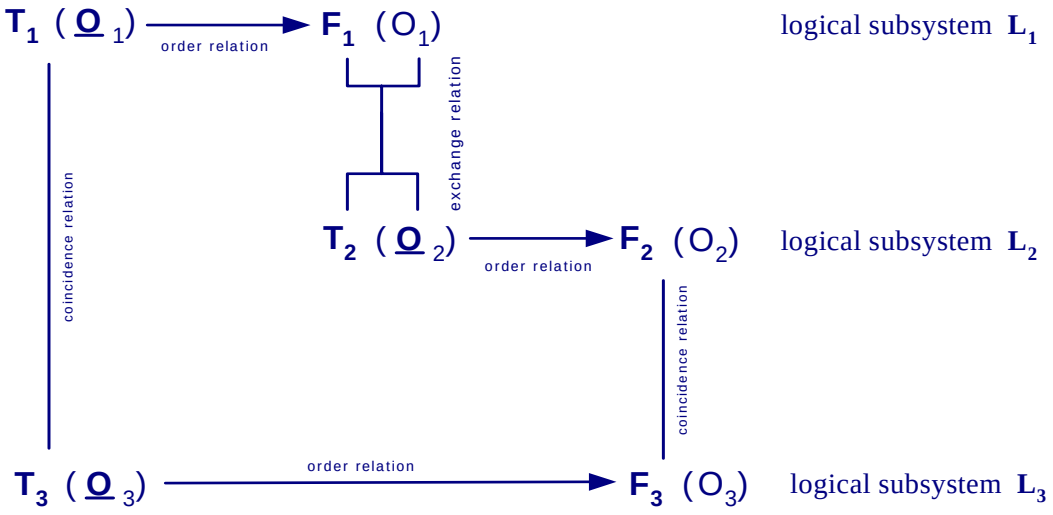
9 "Between the inanimate phenomena of this Universe and the phenomenon of Life or Subjectivity there exists a logical break of contexture. If we speak of Life, Consciousness, Soul, Thought or Will we refer to an as yet unexplored property of the Universe which we shall call its discontexturality. What classic science has investigated so far is a subjectless Universe; and a subjectless Universe presents us with a rigorously mono-contextural structure. The property of discontexturality has no place in it. But when early Man discovered that this Universe also harbored the phenomenon of animated matter there was no other way to explain it but to say that Man had not only to deal with the forces of this World but in addition with trans-cosmic powers that broke into this World from an unapproachable Beyond. When the world religions speak of Heaven, or Hell they refer, in fact, to the phenomenon of discontexturality. But since every higher religion is coupled with the unshakeable belief that this earthly realm is mono-contextural, discontexturality automatically assumed the function of the borderline between physical reality and a spiritual Beyond.

On the other hand, the turn from classic to trans-classic thinking means that the mono-contextural concept of Reality is abandoned and replaced by a poly-contextural theory of Existence which makes room for the phenomenon of Life within this Universe. In a poly-contextural Universe we do not have to consider Life as an element totally alien to inanimate matter, because matter in itself already contains the seeds of Life in its dialectical contraposition of Being and Nihility."

Gotthard Günther, in: Beiträge..., vol. 2, *Life as Polycontexturality*, p. 304.

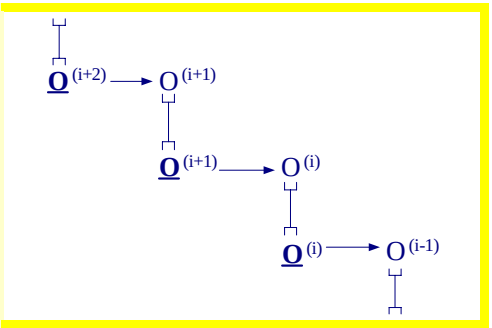
"We assert: The distinction between form and content of form is algorithmically equivalent to the distinction between the relationship (or the relator) on one hand and the individual relatum on the other. Nobody who ever used the therm 'subject' could have meant (although he will not have been aware of it) anything else but a relator and when he referred to 'objects' he talked wittingly or unwittingly about relata. However, when somebody used the term 'relation' (which means the relator *and* the relata) he referred unavoidably to a compound situation in which subject and object were inextricably fused. Incidentally, it should be added that the subjectivity involved in a complete relation is always the objective subject and not the subjective subject which generates, in the process of self-reference, an image of itself and in the process of hetero-reference an image of other egos, the Thous. It should now be clear why classic logic cannot handle the problem of subjectivity. A two-valued logic (as far as it is relational at all) deals only with relations, meaning: with a pre-established synthesis between relationship (relator) and relatum. And using such devices as the theory of types or meta-languages it can also use relations as relata. What these traditional theories never deal with, however, is the theory of the relationship (relator) as related to the relatum. It is of utmost importance that this theory should not be confused with the description of the possible connection between a *relation* and a relatum. This can easily be taken care of by traditional logical devices."

Gotthard Günther, in: Gotthard Günther, in: Beiträge..., vol. 2, *Cognition and Volition*, p. 204.



Rudolf Kaehr ("Materialien...", cf. ref. [10]):
The proemial-relation PR is – as can be seen from the figure at the right – a four-place relation between two operators (relators) and two operands (relata):

$$PR\ (\underline{O}^{(i+1)}, \underline{O}^{(i)}, O^{(i)}, O^{(i-1)})$$



Within this short annotations we will not discuss the problems concerning mediated relations any further such as "relation of relation of … relation of data" and so on. We only would like to mention that this aspect is of importance (in connection with keno-numbers and keno-arithmetic) for an computer implementation of polycontextural systems.

We also will not examine the relations between local and global values in Günther's place-value logic, especially since Günther prefers in his essays global values. In other words, Günther does distinguish explicitly between local and global values, i.e., he did not introduce special symbols for local values. Such a distinction, which is necessary from a formal point of view, has been introduced later by Rudolf Kaehr.[10]

For a better understanding of step 3 in the example discussed above we have arranged the following relations between local and global values for N_1 and N_2:

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10 Rudolf Kaehr, Materialien zur Formalisierung der dialektischen Logik und der Morphogrammatk 1973-1975, in: Gotthard Günther, Idee und Grundriss einer Nicht-Aristotelischen Logik, Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg ^{2}1978.

see also: R. Kaehr und E. von Goldammer, Polycontextural Modeling of Heterarchies in Brain Function, in: R.M.J. Cotterill (ed.), Models of Brain Function, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1989, p. 483-497. – http://www.vordenker.de/ics/downloads/poly_mod_heter.pdf

N_1:

global		local	
p	$N_{1,\ global}$ p	q	$N_{1,local}$ q
1	2	T_1	F_1
2	1	T_2	T_3
3	3	F_2	F_3
		F_2	T_2
		T_3	T_2
		F_3	F_2

N_2:

global		local	
p	$N_{2,\ global}$ p	q	$N_{2,local}$ q
1	1	T_1	T_3
2	2	F_1	F_3
3	2	T_2	F_2
		F_2	T_2
		T_3	T_1
		F_3	F_1

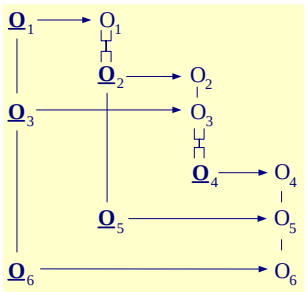
If four (global) values are introduced, the following table can be deduced in complete analogy to eq.(A1):

p	**N**	**1,**	**2,**	**3,**	**1,**	**2,**	**3,**	**1,**	**2,**	**3,**	**1,**	**2,**	**3,**	**p**
1		2	3	4	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	
2		1	1	1	2	3	4	4	4	3	3	2	2	
3		3	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	4	4	4	3	
4		4	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	4	

In order to design a place-value logical system (with two-valued contextures) at least four contextures are necessary in order to be able to reject the total situation given by the proemial-realation. This can easily be demonstrated with the example of the "red rose":

- within the subsystem L1 the attribute "...*is_red*" is brought up as central theme;
- within the subsystem L2 the attribute "...*is_yellow*" is brought up as central theme;
- within the subsystem L3 the relation "...*is_red*" or "...*is_yellow*" is brought up as central theme.

The fourth value yields three further subsystems, as it is shown (without any further explanation) in the figure at the right. The fourth value enables, for example, a rejection of the topic "colour".



JOAN STAMBAUGH [*]

Introduction to:
Heidegger's *Identity and Difference*

return to annotations

The problem of identity has been a basic philosophical issue since Parmenides. Parmenides stated it in the form: "thought and being are the same," with a radicality and a simplicity perhaps never again possible for later thinkers. Heidegger has pondered over Parmenides' statement for years, returning to it again and again in his writings. Thus it came as no surprise to this translator when Heidegger stated that he considered *Identity and Difference* to be the most important thing he has published since *Being and Time*.

That is quite a statement. For between *Being and Time* and *Identity and Difference* lies a veritable wealth of publications throwing light upon the problem of Being and wrestling with the historical oblivion of that problem. The oblivion of Being is not something omitted in the history of philosophy, something left out. Metaphysics has asked the question of Being, but only to bring Being into a relationship with beings as their *ground*.

Identity and Difference shares with *Being and Time* the fundamental problem of the relation of man and Being. But whereas in *Being and Time* Heidegger began with an analysis of the meaning of man (*Dasein*), proceeding from there toward an understanding of Being, *Identity and Difference* asks about that very "relation" itself *as* the relation of man and Being. It does not inquire into the "components" of the relation, but into the relation as a relation. This manner of thinking about the problem of identity sets Heidegger apart from the traditional metaphysical consideration of that problem. It brings him closer to the pre-metaphysical thinker Parmenides' dimension of identity. As Heidegger points out, Parmenides thinks Being from the point of view of identity as a characteristic of this identity. But later, Metaphysics comes to represent identity as a characteristic of Being. Thus the originality native to identity as thought by Parmenides became subservient to the metaphysical understanding of Being.

In the history of Western philosophy, identity was at first thought as unity, as the unity of a thing with itself. The two thinkers who were most explicitly concerned with unity or identity as a central problem were perhaps Plotinus and Leibniz. Plotinus begins his sixth Ennead, 9 with the statement: "It is in virtue of unity that beings are beings." Plotinus' ultimate reality, the One, is beyond even Being, a statement that puts Plotinus on the borderline of Western thought. Leibniz develops the concept of unity in his Monadology as simplicity, individuality and, above all, uniqueness which he establishes with the help of the principle of the

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* Martin Heidegger, Identity and Difference, originally published by Verlag Günther Neske in Pfullingen under the title *Identität und Differenz*. Copyright 1957 by Verlag Günther Neske in Pfullingen. English translation by Joan Stambaugh, published by Harper & Row Publ., Inc., New York 1969.

identity of indiscernibles. (If two things have absolutely nothing which distinguishes them from each other, they are identical, they are the same thing.)

One thinker who was concerned with the problem of identity as such was Nicholas of Cusa. The dimension in which he thought the problem of identity was not that of the unity of beings, but the relation of God to the world, of the infinite to the finite. His first formulation of the problem was the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the coincidence of opposites. But even more interesting is his later formulation: The non-other is none other than the non-other. Cusanus can define anything with reference to its self-identity and its negation of otherness. But the "non-other" itself by its definition admits of no difference, no otherness whatsoever. Its very nature is to be non-other. Thus Cusanus succeeds in formulating God as the Non-other, as nothing other than himself and as nothing other than the world.

As Heidegger remarks, it took philosophy two thousand years to formulate the problem of identity in its fully developed form as mediation and synthesis. With Leibniz and Kant preparing the way, the German Idealists Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling place identity in the center of their thought on the foundation of transcendental reflection. These thinkers are concerned not with the simple unity of a thing with itself, but with the mediated syntheses of subject and object, of subjectivity and objectivity as such. If one put Parmenides' statement "Thought and Being are the same" in the context of German Idealism, one would get a statement something like: Being is thought, i.e., all "Being" is ultimately thought, the absolute Idea (Hegel), and is destined to become thought. Whatever Being there might be outside thought is simply not yet thought, not yet mediated in the absolute synthesizing activity of the Idea. The simplest statement of this can be found in the Preface to Hegel's *Philosophy of Law*: "The real is the rational and the rational is the real." The principle of identity A=A becomes reformulated by Fichte as I = I, and by Schelling's Philosophy of Identity as the identity, more precisely as the indifference of subject and object. It is perhaps Schelling who in his own way, and still basically although not totally within the framework of Idealism, comes closest to Heidegger's dimension of the problem of identity when he states in *Of Human Freedom* that there must be a being *before* all basis (ground) and before all existence, before any duality at all. Since this being precedes all antitheses, it cannot constitute their identity; it can only be the absolute in-difference of both. Indifference is not a product of antitheses, nor are antitheses implicitly contained in it. It is far rather a unique being apart from all antitheses. It is the groundless. With his idea of the groundless, Schelling is closer to the dimension of Heidegger's thinking than to German Idealism. Yet he still calls this groundless "a being."

How does Heidegger treat the problem of identity and in what dimension does this problem now lie if no longer within the framework of metaphysics as the problem of the unity of a thing with itself or as the transcendentally mediated unity of absolute reflection? Heidegger conceives the problem of identity in such a fundamental way that what is "identical," Being and man, can only be thought from the nature of identity itself. He begins his exposition by questioning the principle of identity as a principle of thinking. He concludes that the principle of identity presupposes the meaning of identity itself. A principle of thought must also be a principle of Being (this "also" is, of course, misleading), the principle: to

every being as such there belongs identity, the unity with itself. This is a fundamental characteristic of the Being of beings.

Heidegger then questions Parmenides' statement that thought and Being are the same, interpreting that statement to mean: Being belongs – together with thought – into the Same. A=A has become A is (transitively) A, and the "is" now takes on the meaning of belonging together. Heidegger understands the "is" in identity as the relation of belonging together, and it is this new meaning of identity which concerns him in this lecture. What is new about this understanding of identity as a relation is that the relation first determines the manner of being of what is to be related and the how of this relation. It is perhaps difficult for us to think of a relation as being more original than what is related, but this is what Heidegger requires of us. This relation is then no relation in the ordinary sense of that term. We do not know and we cannot predict what is related. Man does not have the static essence of the animal rationale or the subject thinking its object. One of Heideggers most basic insights is that we do not know what man is, even if he could be understood as a "what" at all. To say that an understanding of Being is "subjective" because man is involved in that understanding is simply thoughtless. Man is, in the language of *Being and Time*, Being-there (*Da-Sein*), man is the "there" of Being. This has nothing to do with subjectivity and nothing to do with the concept of human existence of "existentialism."

Identity is belonging-together. If the element of *together* in belonging-together is emphasized, we have the metaphysical concept of identity which orders the manifold into a unity mediated by synthesis. This unity forms a systematic totality of the world with God or Being as the ground, as the first cause and as the highest being. But if the element of *belonging* in belonging together is emphasized, we have thinking and Being held apart and at the same time held together (not fitted together) in the Same. To come closer to an understanding of the *belonging* together of man and Being, we must leave metaphysical thinking which thinks Being exclusively as the cause of beings and thinks beings primarily as what is caused. But we cannot leave metaphysics by a series of reasoned conclusions. We must simply leap out of it. Thus the principle (*Satz*) of identity becomes a leap (*Satz*) out of metaphysics.

This brings Heidegger to the form of *belonging* together of man and Being in our present age of technology. A short comment might be inserted here about Heidegger's emphasis on thinking as that which man is. One might ask: isn't man more than thought, doesn't he also have emotions, needs as to how he lives, practical problems, etc.? Isn't Heidegger's understanding of man too rationalistic, too idealistic in its emphasis on thought? To this question it must be answered: all of these aspects of man are included in what Heidegger calls thinking. Thinking is not the "upper story" of the split-level being that is the rational animal. Thinking in the form of the Logos has, for instance, brought about the whole world of technology and the atomic age which is concrete enough. Technology isn't just something man has acquired as an accessory. Right now it is what he is.

"Technology" is nothing technical. It is not even a "product" of man. The manner in which man and Being concern each other in the world of technology Heidegger calls the framework. The framework is far more real than all atomic energy and all

machines. But it is nothing necessarily ultimate. It could be a prelude to what Heidegger calls the event of appropriation.[1] The event of appropriation is the realm in which man and Being reach each other in their very core. They lose the determinations placed upon them by metaphysics.

Metaphysics thinks identity as a fundamental trait of Being. For Heidegger, Being and thought belong to an identity whose acting nature stems from the letting *belong* together which is called the event of appropriation. It took thinking two thousand years to arrive at an understanding of identity as transcendentally mediated identity. We cannot expect to grasp instantly the meaning of the non-metaphysical identity Heidegger shows us here.

1 Framework or Frame (Ge-Stell) and event of appropriation (Er-eignis) are perhaps the two key words in this lecture. They are extremely difficult to translate. "Ge-Stell" in the sense in which Heidegger uses it does not belong to common language. In German, "Berg" means a mountain, "Gebirge" means a chain or group of mountains. In the same way "Ge-Stell" is the unity (but not a unity in the sense of a general whole subsuming all particulars under it) of all the activities in which the verb "stellen" (place, put, set) figures: *vor-stellen* (represent, think), *stellen* (challenge), *ent-stellen* (disfigure), *nach-stellen* (to be after someone, pursue him stealthily), *sicherstellen* (to make certain of something).

The event of appropriation (*Ereignis*) is a word belonging to common language and means "event." But Heidegger's use of it is more (1) "abstract" in the sense of being infinitely removed from everyday events and yet of being that which is so close to us that we cannot see it, and (2) "concrete" in its use of the very roots of that word: *er-eignen* (*eigen*=own, thus to come into one's own, to come to where one *belongs*) and *er-äugnen* (*Auge*=eye. This is the real etymological root of er-eignen), thus to catch sight of, to see with the mind's eye, to see face-to-face.