

# A HERMENEUTICAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF SILENCE

## UNA FENOMENOLOGÍA HERMENÉUTICA DEL SILENCIO

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**ABSTRACT:** Silence as a spiritual practice is not a negative phenomenon that cuts off speech, but enables a higher form of speech, i.e. that of ultimate reality. Hermeneutical phenomenology can illuminate this spiritual practice. Hermeneutical phenomenology does not accept the phenomena of consciousness as given, but views them in light of historical-social structures that make phenomenal objects of intentionality possible. Structures of intelligibility can either discover, or cover up phenomena, turning them into appearances that merely announce on the surface what is hidden in the depths. We need to interpret our average everyday understanding, in order to bring the Being of objects fully to disclosure. Without silence, we will perpetuate the average structures of intelligibility that make communication possible, which will function as implicit distortions. I examine silence through hermeneutic phenomenology, showing how silence can give us a more primordial sense of phenomena than mere idle talk.

**KEYWORDS:** Silence, Hermeneutics, Heidegger

**RESUMEN:** El silencio como práctica espiritual no es un fenómeno negativo que corta el habla, sino que permite una forma superior de habla, es decir, la de la realidad última. La fenomenología hermenéutica puede iluminar esta práctica espiritual. La fenomenología hermenéutica no acepta los fenómenos de la conciencia como dados, sino que los ve a la luz de las estructuras histórico-sociales que hacen posibles los objetos fenoménicos de intencionalidad. Las estructuras de inteligibilidad pueden descubrir o encubrir los fenómenos, convirtiéndolos en apariencias que simplemente anuncian en la superficie lo que está oculto en las profundidades. Necesitamos interpretar nuestra comprensión cotidiana promedio, para poder revelar plenamente el Ser de los objetos. Sin silencio, perpetuaremos las estructuras promedio de inteligibilidad que hacen posible la comunicación, que funcionarán como distorsiones implícitas. Examinó el silencio a través de la fenomenología hermenéutica, mostrando cómo el silencio puede darnos un sentido más primordial de los fenómenos que la mera charla ociosa.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** silencio, hermenéutica, Heidegger

The cultivation of silence is a common feature of spiritual traditions. St. Teresa de Jesús, maintains that the soul receives special graces from God in silence (de Jesús, 2004, 7.3, pg. 242). There is metaphorical significance in the use of ready-made stones in building the temple of Solomon, since there was no sound of hammering: “Pasa con tanta quietud y tan sin ruido todo lo que el Señor aprovecha aquí el alma y la ensena, que me parece es como en la edificación del templo del Salomón, adonde no se había de oír ningún ruido...” (de Jesús, 2004, 7.13, pg. 243). In Buddhism, silence is a *jhana*, i.e. a training of the mind, helping it to dissolve the “verbal fabrications” that create a false idea of reality. (*Kolita Sutta*, 2024, SN 21.1). Silence has a revelatory effect, since it allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the illusory nature of the egoistic self. In Japanese culture, the concept of *haragei* (腹芸) refers to a rich silence that is a more profound communication than words (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, 103-108).

In this paper, I explore the revelatory power of silence, in light of Heideggerian phenomenology. Phenomenology, broadly speaking, involves a turn away from a straightforward investigation of metaphysical and empirical objects, towards investigation of the structures of consciousness that make any such investigation of objects possible (Zahavi, 2012, 1). Silence and phenomenological research have natural affinity, since, in spiritual traditions, silence is a practice that aids consciousness in the disclosure of being. Phenomenology examines how being appears to consciousness, and silence permits greater intelligibility of being to consciousness, and so silence and phenomenology complement one another. Rúben Muñoz Martínez affirms that silence is the original space for the manifestation of being in Heidegger (2007, 11). The practice of silence suggests that objects of consciousness are not given transparently, but that there are layers of distortion caused by the common use of speech. These common uses of speech contain presuppositional structures that cover the deep meaning of phenomena.

Heideggerian phenomenology emphasizes hermeneutics, or explication (*Auslegung*). Hermeneutics does not merely accept the appearances of consciousness as given, but probes beneath their surface for insight into the structures of intelligibility that make the presentation of objects possible. A hermeneutical analysis of the content of consciousness does not just describe it, but explicates (*Auslegung*), elucidates (*Verdeutlichung*), and clarifies (*Klärung*), just as researchers approach a difficult text (Figal, 2012, 525). The object of consciousness is not fundamental, but depends on anticipatory structures based on the historicity of consciousness, and its limited possibilities bound to social embeddedness. Hermeneutics unpacks the Being of entities, not entities themselves, i.e. frameworks

of intelligibility that present entities to us. The *phenomenal* is what consciousness immediately encounters, e.g. a car. The *phenomenological* “belongs to the species of exhibiting and explicating” the preliminary structures that make the phenomenal presentation possible, e.g. the cultural and historical deposit that allows us to perceive a car as a car (*SuZ*<sup>1</sup>, 1962, 37). *Transcendental* phenomenology seeks an absolutely grounded science of consciousness, a distillation of the pure essence of consciousness (Husserl, 1977, 8). But, in hermeneutic phenomenology, we are not pure knowers, viewing things from a foundationalist point of certainty, but we bring past conditioning to experience. Temporality is a horizon for awareness (*SuZ*, 1962, 18). Hermeneutic phenomenology, instead of developing an absolute science of consciousness, encounters consciousness in its ordinary life, in its *facticity*, occupying a quotidian moment and place (Luft, 2018, 58).

Silence is a kind of interpretation, insofar as it stills our accustomed modes of speech, to gain an awareness of higher modes of speech that can critique accustomed modes. Silence and hermeneutics appear complementary, since silence seems necessary to distance oneself from one’s facticity. Martínez notes that silence is the logic of philosophy for Heidegger, more eloquent than words (2007, 11). We gain awareness of the “there” before us through having the capacity for meaningful disclosure. This meaningful disclosure consists in a “whole of significance” that precedes the “there” (*SuZ*, 1962, 151). Without silence, we will unreflectively presuppose this whole of significance. Heidegger acknowledges the power of silence for disclosure, writing that “reticence makes something manifest” (*SuZ*, 1962, 165). The silencing of ordinary thinking is what allows poetry to name what is holy, i.e. to transcend ordinary categories of thinking, in poetic language, and access a transcendent reality that is beyond all questions (*WiM*<sup>2</sup>, 1955, 51).

My aim in this paper is to provide a theory of the interpretative role of silence in terms of hermeneutic phenomenology. In the first section, I explain how Heidegger’s version of phenomenology incorporates hermeneutics. Heidegger’s phenomenological method is a culmination of his call to destroy all pre-existing ontology, the science of being (*SuZ*, 1962, 20). The destruction of ontology is necessary, because it forms a tradition that hides from us a primordial understanding of things. There is an inveterate tendency in Western culture to name and place labels on things (Martínez, 2007, 12). Phenomenology reveals the

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<sup>1</sup> SuZ: Sein und Zeit.

<sup>2</sup> WiM: Was ist Metaphysik?

Being of entities, that which is primordial to the presentation to consciousness, which gets hidden in unreflective consciousness that accepts stultifying names/labels (*SuZ*, 1962, 35). Hermeneutical phenomenology does not accept the intentional object of consciousness as basic, but instead recognizes the mediatory role of a deposit of historically contingent tradition. We do not view a “world-in-itself,” but instead one mediated by the average everyday understanding necessary to interact with our contemporaries (*SuZ*, 1962, 170). Hermeneutical interpretation develops the understanding, by bringing to light what understanding presupposes (*SuZ*, 1962, 148).

In the second section, I address Heidegger’s reference to Kant’s schematism, and connect it to the project of hermeneutic phenomenology. Heidegger acknowledges Kant as the first philosopher to recognize the “problematic of temporality” (*SuZ*, 1962, 23). The doctrine of the schematism recognizes that we cannot directly represent objects in time through *a priori* structures of the understanding. Instead, we need schema, developed by the imagination in time, that express a rule, based on an *a priori* concept, for the representation of specific images (Kant, 1998, A139/B178). The relevance of the schematism for this paper is Kant’s affirmation that the imagination develops schema in the unconscious depths of the psyche, which we uncover with difficulty (Kant, 1998, A141/B181). The idea of schema, representing objects to us through an unconscious process, lends itself to hermeneutic phenomenology. Since schema are not objects, but preliminary structures that make the disclosure of objects possible, they form the underlying deposit of intelligibility that is the target of the phenomenological method. Phenomenology addresses the “Being of entities,” not merely the entities themselves (*SuZ*, 1962, 36). Instead of allowing a hardening into entities, like Idea, or substance, characteristic of western philosophy, phenomenology searches for Being (Martínez, 2007, 13). The unconscious application of schema highlights the importance of silence for the phenomenological project. Only in silence can we access that of which we are unconscious while speaking, i.e. hardened categories of thought.

In the third section, I provide a theory of the revelatory power of silence in terms of hermeneutical phenomenology. I cover the phenomenological notion of phenomena, which has to do, not with ordinary objects, but with the preliminary structures that make the presentation of objects possible (*SuZ*, 1962, 31). I explain the role of *logos* in phenomenology, as a structure of discourse that allows us see objects *as objects*, with a coherent identity. We cannot see a coherent object, instead of a medley of sensations, without a *logos* synthesizing

sensations (*SuZ*, 1962, 33). In *idle talk* (*Gerede*), we complacently presuppose the *logos* that make communication possible (*Mitbefindlichkeit*) (*SuZ*, 1962, 162). Silence allows for a phenomenological revelation of these fore-structures (*SuZ*, 1962, 165). This turn to silence is evident throughout Heidegger's *oeuvre*, in the movement of the disregarding of names (Heidegger, 2000, 20). But it reaches a culmination in the late Heidegger, who recommends a *pensar merodeante* (creeping thought) that resists explicit articulation in words, in order to reach a radical grasp of being (Martínez, 2007, 14).

## 1. Hermeneutical Phenomenology

The split between Husserl and Heidegger finds expression in the dichotomy between a phenomenology of consciousness and a phenomenology of being (Gorner, 2007, 4). Whereas Husserl sought a transcendental subject that is world-less, a pure essence of consciousness delineating the universal structures for disclosure, Heidegger's phenomenology situates consciousness in the world. We are not a pure solipsistic consciousness, but inherently have a structure of engagement with the world (*SuZ*, 1962, 57). This engagement occurs at specific points in time, and so engagement is historical.

Phenomenology for Heidegger is not concerned with merely seeing, but with the Being of the entities that we see. The intentional objects of consciousness, for Heidegger, reach us through layers of tradition that often remain hidden. These preliminary layers constitute the foundation, ground, or Being, of entities, that permits their existence as entities. Preliminary structures have historicity. *Dasein*, which is a "being-there" that discloses its environment to itself, is in constant engagement with its past. "*Dasein's* being finds its meaning in temporality" (*SuZ*, 1962, 19). *Dasein* does not disclose being from some timeless perspective. The historical tradition is not merely in the past, but in the future, working in advance to shape the way *Dasein* discloses entities (*SuZ*, 1962, 20).

History, the discipline, itself presupposes the historicity (*Geschichlichkeit*) of *Dasein*. We would not be able to collect facts about the past were it not for structures of *Dasein* that bring the past into our present disclosure of the world. "Historicity stands for the state of Being that is constitutive for *Dasein's* historicizing as such..." (*SuZ*, 1962, 20). Our historicity makes any search for a timeless ground of consciousness futile. Consciousness is not just an inner

stream (*Erlebnisse*), in which the subject perceives an object transparently. The subject-object awareness in the stream of consciousness depends primordially on our immersion in time. In addition to the experiential self, in which we have a minimal introspective awareness of objects present to our subjectivity, there is the narrative self, in which experience embeds itself in historicity (Lombardi, 2023, 119). The disclosure of entities is embedded in larger narratives, shaped historically, that form the Being of the disclosure of entities. “We always conduct our activities in an understanding of Being” (*SuZ*, 1962, 6). This understanding may arise from a calculative approach to reality, that instrumentalizes it and wraps it, as it were, in *corsés artificiales* (artificial corsets) that reduce reality to the needs of the moment (Martínez, 2007, 16).

*Dasein* might be unaware of how history conditions its disclosure of objects (*SuZ*, 1962, 20). Phenomena require hermeneutical interpretation. The shaping of *Dasein*'s structures of intelligibility, by which it encounters an object, forms a “vague average understanding” that most people unreflectively presuppose (*SuZ*, 1962, 6). Hermeneutical interpretation is a development of the understanding, by which it elucidates what the understanding already presupposes, but vaguely. Interpretation, since it unpacks what the understanding presupposes, does not add new information or transform the understanding. The excavation of interpretation is the understanding becoming transparently itself (*SuZ*, 1962, 148).

There is a temptation for *Dasein* to fall back into its historical tradition, rather than to interpret it and bring it to light. *Dasein* can mistakenly take as absolute what is contingent and historical. “Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence” (*SuZ*, 1962, 21). Tradition masks itself, so that it seems identical to the world itself. There is a tension between tradition and what is *primordial*, i.e. what is more basic than the way a particular tradition makes sense of things. Tradition incorporates categories of understanding that come from primordial sources, but it also hides these primordial sources (*SuZ*, 1962, 21). We are so preoccupied with chatter within our tradition, that we forget about these primordial sources. Being itself is silent, and so we must be on guard lest any form of language impose false categories on being (Bindeman, 1981, 21). Chatter *encorseta*, i.e. restricts things to a reductive identity, but phenomenology *deja ser*, i.e. allows Being to be itself (Martínez, 2007, 16).

Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology is distinctive, insofar as it emphasizes *Dasein*'s finitude, which includes contingent strands of tradition. We are not primarily transcendental subjects bearing universal structures of consciousness,

amenable to an eidetic science of forms of consciousness that captures consciousness *in its ownness*, i.e. apart from any contingent circumstances (Husserl, 1983, 69). Facticity refers to the contingent details that define our existence, distinguishing us as individuals in unique spatiotemporal conditions (SuZ, 1962, 56). Thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) means that we occupy a spatiotemporal location that we do not choose, i.e. we are in a certain “there” (SuZ, 1962, 135). Our thereness means that we cannot make objects intelligible to us apart from a set of temporally specific presuppositions. This prior understanding forms a “totality of involvements” that assigns a role to things in a system (SuZ, 1962, 149). This totality of involvements is not an absolute view from nowhere, but instead has a specific location.

We cannot lazily accept this temporal and historical horizon, lest tradition become our master. We must interpret this horizon, in order to find its ancestral concepts, and reach a more primordial understanding of things by gaining a distance from our immediate conditioning. We must not just ask questions within our historical horizon, but we must examine the presuppositions of this horizon.

“There is” (*es gibt*) precedes “there is *something*,” i.e. a historical structure of intelligibility precedes the disclosure of an object. These structures of intelligibility form a deposit that requires interpretation, lest it remain hidden and unconscious. The recognition by hermeneutic phenomenology of this deposit means that it cannot accept the phenomenological reduction, in which we bracket the question of mind-independent existence of external objects that is part of the natural attitude, as sufficient (Husserl, 1983, 66). Even after the phenomenological reduction, we need further explication to understand how historical structures of intelligibility mediate objects. This temporal-historical horizon forms a whole in terms of which we understand the parts of our experience. It is not an absolute whole, but one of many possibilities of *Dasein*. We cannot simply perform the phenomenological reduction, and describe the object of intentionality, because intentionality rests on deeper structures that make objects intelligible. Prior to any intentional object, Being must be capable of having a meaning for us (Gorner, 2007, 76-77). Silence is important in recognizing this preliminary meaning-generation, since silence can initiate a radical uncovering. Silence is not so important for forms of phenomenology that affirm a transparent subject-object relationship in intentionality.

Kant is a major influence on Heidegger’s situation of the subject in history, and the recognition of anticipatory structures of consciousness inherited from

history. Kant recognized the “problematic of Temporality” (*SuZ*, 1962, 23). Kant explores this problematic in the section on the schematism (Kant, 1998, A137/B176). The problem of the schematism is how consciousness mediates between the domain of the pure concepts of the understanding, and the experiences of particular images in time. Schema serve as bridging functions between concepts and images, insofar as they, unlike pure concepts, find expression in time, but are also general rules irreducible to particular images. As Heidegger puts it, “The formation of schema [*Schemabildung*] is the making sensible of concepts...” (Heidegger, 1997, 68). Schema concretize universal concepts, so as to represent particular sensible images.

Schema are important for hermeneutic phenomenology, because they pertain to the temporal horizon within which we make sense of objects. Schema, since they enter time rather than remain at the transcendental level, mark the transition from transcendental to hermeneutical phenomenology. Prior to grasping objects, we need schema of these objects that provide a rule for the synthesis of the object. Schema are part of the Being of objects, i.e. what allows them to be objects for *Dasein*, so they are naturally the object of investigation by hermeneutic phenomenology. “In the phenomenological conception of ‘phenomenon’ what one has in mind as that which shows itself is the Being of entities...” (*SuZ*, 1962, 36).

Schema are also important for the theme of silence, since Kant acknowledges that the process of schematization is a mysterious one in the depths of the psyche (Kant, 1998, A141/B181). We need a spiritual practice of silence, to lay bare the process of schematization itself, which otherwise is hidden from us. This necessity for silence, becomes particularly evident following the *Kehre*, after which Heidegger even more radically departs from traditional ontological categories, to linger with being itself (Martínez, 2007, 19). Silence is the tool that transitions us from accustomed categories of discourse, to the discourse, as it were, of being. Language is founded in silence (Heidegger, 1989, 401), i.e. language is a reductive grid imposed on the silent presence of being.

## 2. Schema In the Depths

Kant's doctrine of schematism navigates the relationship between pure concepts, i.e. intrinsic structures of our understanding prior to any experience (*a priori*), and sensibly received objects (*a posteriori*). There is a clash, between pure concepts and sensible objects of experience, between what is atemporal and universal, and what is rooted in a particular time (Kant, 1998, A138/B177). How can an atemporal pure concept represent a temporally specific experiential object? A particular image is a singular representation arising at a particular time, but a concept is universal, serving as an umbrella concept across time (Heidegger, 1997, 66).

For general concepts to represent a singular experiential object, there must be homogeneity between the pure concept and the object experienced in time. We cannot represent objects in time from an absolute perspective of consciousness as such. This problem of the schematism, involving the contrast between absolute structures of judgment and particular images in time, motivates hermeneutic phenomenology. We do not represent objects from a transcendental perspective, involving a universal essence of consciousness, but with a pre-understanding derived from our historical moment. The "ideal subject," existing as a "pure I" representing consciousness as such, is a "fanciful idealization" (*SuZ*, 1962, 229). If the pure subject is to represent particular objects, it must generate a *tertium quid* that connects *a priori* concepts and particular images from experience (Kant, 1998, A138/B177). Schemata represent the historical horizons that transcendental phenomenology misses. Schemata are "categories of factic life," since the imagination produces them in time, so as to concretize person-specific representations (Crowell, 2001, 207).

Schemata, though, are not ordinary objects in time. A schema is a general rule that assimilates images of individual objects. Number, for instance, is a schema that provides a rule for counting in time, which we can apply to many different instantiations of number (Kant, 1998, A140/B1791). Since schema are not themselves objects of experience, but instead rules for representing them, they represent the subject matter of phenomenological science. Phenomenology, for Heidegger, does not address merely objects at the ontical level, but the foundational structures at the ontological level that enable ordinary objects to have intelligibility. Phenomenology addresses "what shows itself in the appearance as prior to the phenomenon" (*SuZ*, 1962, 31). Schematic structures that

constitute prior regulations for the formation of particular images are the target of phenomenology (*SuZ*, 1962, 31).

Schema represent historically conditioned fore-structures of intelligibility that make the disclosure of ordinary objects of intentionality possible. Heidegger would claim that schema are part of the “average everydayness” (*Durchschnittlichkeit*) of *Dasein*. Inquiry is not pure, but brings beforehand a preliminary idea of what it seeks. “...The meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way” (*SuZ*, 1962, 6). We presuppose a meaning for being in our average understanding, through partaking in social discourse and making ourselves intelligible to our contemporaries. We can never fully extricate ourselves from “this everyday way in which things have been interpreted...” (*SuZ*, 1962, 170). This set of presuppositions about being are schemata, because, like schemata, it arises at a particular historical moment. The average understanding is average insofar as it partakes of what is common in a particular sociocultural moment. The average understanding is not a transcendental structure akin to *a priori* concepts, but is part of a representative repertoire in a particular corner of temporality.

Our average understanding of Being is vague, since most inquire into objects, rather than the Being of objects that makes possible the disclosure as objects (*SuZ*, 1962, 6). The vagueness of the average understanding compares well with Kant’s comment that the schemata emerge in the unconscious depths of the psyche. “This schematism of our understanding with regard to appearances and their mere form is a hidden art in the depths of the human soul, whose true operations...lay unveiled before our eyes only with difficulty” (Kant, 1998, A141/B181). Without an interpretative process, in which we excavate these anticipatory rules permitting the conceptual representation of particular objects, they will operate apart from our awareness, and we will not be able to reclaim ourselves. “...This vague average understanding of Being may be so infiltrated with traditional theories and opinions about Being that these remain hidden...” (*SuZ*, 1962, 6).

Like schema, the average understanding operates in the depths of the psyche. The average understanding represents deep narrative structures of our experience that do not enter the primary “mineness” of experience, the pre-reflexive sense of self-consciousness (Lombardi, 2023, 121). The narrative structures constituting the average understanding, unless *Dasein* interprets them, come from *das Man*, the “they,” a collective consciousness that socially conditions us. “In this averageness with which it [the ‘they’] prescribes what can and may be ventured, it keeps

watch over everything exceptional that thrusts itself to the fore” (*SuZ*, 1962, 127). The “they” traffics in information, which serves our technological mastery over things, but which is also a reductive picture of Being that is oblivious to what it conceals (Pöggeler, 1987, 278). Heidegger’s goal, particularly as he becomes more mystical in his later work, is to view things from the perspective of their being, and not from the perspective of any instrumentalizing set of categories derived from sociocultural conditioning. “*La pretension de Heidegger es la de convertirse en el médium del ser...*” (Martínez, 2007, 22).

We bring the social conditioning of the “they” to light, by hermeneutical interpretation, which unpacks the implicit content of understanding. “In it [interpretation] the understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it” (*SuZ*, 1962, 148). Kant’s schema figure in this hermeneutical interpretation, because they arise in time as features of our embedded historicity, and are not transcendental structures of *a priori* consciousness. Hermeneutics interprets how whole structures mediate our understanding of parts, and so schemata, representing general rules, are targets of hermeneutical explication. We need silence, to uncover these schemata, and to approximate being instead of a socially filtered version of it. Silence is necessary for shutting down the superficial chatter that recycles the average understanding. We can never penetrate to the depths of the psyche from which schema emerge, if we only remain on the ontical level, chattering about things, instead of the Being of things at the ontological level (*SuZ*, 1962, 11). In superficial chatter, we understand the explicit content of the talk. But, superficial chatter cannot gain a primordial understanding of the Being of the entities explicitly mentioned, which would include the schemata necessary for their disclosure.

We are able to communicate on the ontical level about particular things, only because we presuppose an average understanding that mediates this ontical level. “What is said-in-the-talk gets understood; but what the talk is about is understood only approximately and superficially” (*SuZ*, 1962, 168). To reach being itself, we have to surrender the logic and words of the average understanding, to the logic and words monopolized by Being itself (Heidegger, 1989, 78). This surrender requires silence, creating a vacuum for a new logic of being. “*El ser se expresa en silencio*” (Martínez, 2007, 25).

In this section, I have established that Kant’s schematism provides insight into the historical structures of *Dasein* that require interpretation, and that the schematism provides insight into the need for silence. The production of

schemata by the imagination, in a historically specific expression, shows the error of the pure consciousness, independent of time, of transcendental phenomenology. I now provide a full theory of the revelatory power of silence through Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology.

### 3. Hermeneutical Phenomenology and Silence

In Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology, we cannot access phenomena, except for a process of explication that views our construction of phenomena in terms of historical situatedness. Through interpretation of the anticipatory traditions forming a background whole, in virtue of which we perceive individual things, we can identify the "birth certificate" of our manner of perception (*SuZ*, 1962, 22). Silence, in spiritual traditions, plays an interpretative role of distancing ourselves from the historically contingent conditioning, and opening ourselves to more primordial perspectives. Through silence, we can access the mystical, because our ordinary language cannot capture what is mystical (Bindeman, 1981, 2). In the *General Instruction for the Liturgy of the Hours*, one reads that "the purpose of silence is to allow the voice of the Holy Spirit to be heard more fully in our hearts..." (*General Instruction*, 2024, Section XII, no. 202). Silence is not an empty passivity, but an active passivity, in which one becomes still, in order to make space for the mystical. Silence is loud, since it is not the absence of sound *per se*, but the absence of one type of sound that allows for the emergence of a higher type (Ratzinger, 2014, 215). Not only spirituality, but also poetry, allows us to move out onto the silent abyss, *Ab-grund*, of Being, that undercuts accustomed explanatory frameworks informing ordinary speech, to touch what is holy (Pöggeler, 1987, 283).

Silence omits one *logos*, human speech, in order to make room for a higher logic, that is not the absence of logic, but a more authentic logic (Heidegger, 1989, 78). We should not project on Heidegger the specifically Christian theological commitments of a figure like Ratzinger. The silence of Heidegger suspends habitual logic, denying the exhaustiveness of typical (e.g. Aristotelian) logic and opening thought to a primordial, supra-logical grasp of reality that acts like a vortex (*WiM*, 1955, 36f). This vortex resists any strict categorization that a particular theological tradition seeks to impose (Pöggeler 1987, 273). The approach of *merodear a tientas* (creeping in the darkness) dispenses with traditional logical categories, for a radical proximity to an ineffable being which we

only approximate by suspending our language (Martínez, 2007, 15). Silence is a key virtue for the ontological destruction necessary to free ourselves for a deeper investigation of phenomena. "...This hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments which it has brought about must be dissolved" (*SuZ*, 1962, 23). To loosen the ontological tradition we presuppose in our average understanding, we need to stop using it in constant chatter.

We deepen our silence to expand the possibilities of thinking, beyond a customary logic that avoids the deeper logic of concealment (Pöggeler, 1987, 274). *Sigetik* is the logic of silence, that is open to what ordinary language conceals, and which flirts with mystery (Pöggeler, 1987, 276). A "*des-significación*" is necessary to overcome entrenched categories. Silence allows us to separate from the ontical level, in which we continually talk about objects, to become aware of the ontological whole, the Being of entities that frames them. When we talk, we unconsciously reaffirm our historical situatedness. Otherwise, we would be unintelligible to our contemporaries.

In our talking, we do not hear pure noise, but instead meaningful noise. The fact that discourse is meaningful, and not raw noise, shows that we bring to discourse preliminary structures of intelligibility (*SuZ*, 1962, 164). To access these preliminary structures, we need silence to distance ourselves from what discourse presupposes, i.e. the habitual logic that undergirds the meaning of things. "...One's reticence makes something manifest..." (*SuZ*, 1962, 165). Through silence, we can grasp a true unconcealment that is both presence and absence. We do not imagine we have a transparent grasp of objects, because there is always a mysterious periphery of what is not there (Pöggeler, 1987, 275). *Sigetik* embraces the beckoning of concealment, i.e. what lies hidden beyond what is obvious, and so it does not consist in the imposition of rigid categories (Heidegger, 1989, 78).

To elucidate the role of silence in terms of hermeneutic phenomenology, I touch on three areas. First, I show how the revelatory power of silence connects to Heidegger's definition of phenomena as the "showing itself in itself," which is distinct from an appearance of something that is, in its deeper nature, hidden (*SuZ*, 1962, 31). The second area is Heidegger's use of *logos* (λόγος). *Logos* refers to discourse that can either disclose something, letting it emerge from hiddenness, or which covers it (*SuZ*, 1962, 33). I address idle talk (*Gerede*), the counter-concept of silence (*SuZ*, 1962, 168).

*The Phenomenological Conception of Phenomena.* Heidegger defines phenomena as that which shows itself in itself (*SuZ*, 1962, 31). We understand this cryptic phrase by distinguishing phenomena from appearances. Appearances are parasitic on phenomena, since appearances involve showing. But, an appearance also involves hiddenness. The appearance of a thing is not the thing itself, but a superficial announcing of the thing, that itself remains hidden. Red cheeks might be the appearance of embarrassment. The red cheeks are phenomena, because they show themselves, but the embarrassment itself is not, since it does not directly show itself. We infer the embarrassment from the phenomena of red cheeks. Appearances involve a “reference-relationship,” from the phenomenon to the underlying cause of the phenomenon (*SuZ*, 1962, 31).

Phenomena, on the contrary, fully show themselves, not just in their surface aspect but in themselves. The showing of phenomena *in themselves* means that genuine phenomena are part of hermeneutic interpretation, since this interpretation accesses the depths of what makes phenomena intelligible. To fully bring out phenomena, we have to remove any hiddenness associated with appearances. Interpretation makes the understanding itself, i.e. it brings out its full identity, by bringing to light what the understanding has already presupposed in making sense of what appears to it (*SuZ*, 1962, 148).

To make phenomena fully manifest, we must make sure we are not missing deep presuppositions that constitute preliminary structures of phenomena. Without explication of deep presuppositions, phenomena will be mere appearances that refer superficially to what remains hidden. In order to successfully interpret phenomena, bringing out their full Being that makes them intelligible as phenomena, we need silence. In talking, we continue to reinforce the average understanding born of conditioning. “...Talking extensively about something covers it up...” (*SuZ*, 1962, 165). In distancing ourselves from ordinary language, we can attain a poetic language that permits a full showing, rather than a hiddenness by preconceptions (Martínez, 2007, 26).

In making phenomena manifest, we do not just show objects, but the very foundation in virtue of which objects exist. The Being of entities determines entities as entities, and is the basis on which we understand entities (Gorner, 2007, 30). Heidegger provides the example of spatiality. External objects cannot disclose themselves, without the preliminary structure of space. Phenomena in the full, phenomenological sense, refer to “that which already shows itself in the

appearance as prior to the phenomenon as ordinarily understood and as accompanying it in every case..." (SuZ, 1962, 31).

What *Dasein* unveils in the disclosure of phenomena are schema, i.e. general rules that the imagination produces in time in order to translate pure concepts, so as to represent objects at the ontical level. If schema are hidden in the depths of the psyche, then phenomena are really appearances, since they only show themselves superficially, without revealing the general rules making them intelligible. *Phenomenological* phenomena are not just ordinary objects, but anticipatory schemata making objects intelligible. Phenomena necessarily show themselves, and so they reveal the fullness of the structures of intelligibility that informs them, including schema.

Only in silence can we avoid reinforcing the preliminary schemata that make phenomena intelligible. Heidegger maintains that communication rests on a preliminary structure of shared intelligibility. In talking, we presuppose a common articulation of being, in which we view reality in terms of shared categories (SuZ, 1962, 162). To make a specific assertion at the ontic level, we need a shared understanding of the articulation of Being at the ontological level. Communication requires a co-state-of-mind (*Mitbefindlichkeit*) (SuZ, 1962, 162). Without the distance that silence provides, we can never gain reflective awareness of this *Mitbefindlichkeit*. The *Mitbefindlichkeit* generates shared schemata by which people concretize particular images. In loose talking, we presuppose schemata with only limited awareness. We cannot *listen*, unless we silence loose talk, and listening is the essence of thinking in Heidegger (Martínez, 2007, 53).

Loose talk, informed by a common worldview, presupposes explanatory structures that forming a network of cause and effect, that serves as a neat schematic for what is real. But, the impulse of phenomenology, to the things themselves, is to expose the reductiveness of these explanatory schemes. *Elucidation*, which suspends hasty explanation and shows the deeper essence of things beyond shared public understanding, is the method of phenomenology (Pöggeler, 1987, 284).

*Logos*. *Logos* is discourse oriented towards making something manifest. *Logos* is oriented towards articulating some phenomenon, so as to show it to consciousness in coherent fashion. *Logos* is not identical to speech, because speech is just the vocal manifestation of the primordial structure of *logos* (SuZ, 1962, 33). We

cannot speak, unless there is a fundamental structure of intelligibility, making things manifest as coherent objects.

*Logos* synthesizes fragments of experience into coherent objects. We do not encounter raw phenomena that have no identifiable structure, but instead we encounter meaningful phenomena. We see things *as things*. To see things as things requires that we integrate the components of a thing into a coherent object. Through discourse, we integrate not only individual things, but we connect them to larger causal relationships, in narratives. *Logos* is a synthesis that allows us to see things in the togetherness of their parts (*SuZ*, 1962, 33). *Logos* is a preliminary ontological structure that allows discernible objects to appear at the ontical level.

We might liken *logos* to Kantian concepts, without which intuitions are blind (Kant, 1998, A51/B75). Without concepts, intuitions we receive through our sensibility lack an articulable structure. In order for general concepts to represent particular images in time, there have to be schema. We can posit that schema and *logos* represent a similar structure of *Dasein*. Both schema and *logos* permit us to represent objects as coherent and synthesized under concepts, rather than as a medley of disparate sensations.

*Logoi* can be true, insofar as they show entities to us, and also they can be false, insofar as they cover up entities (*SuZ*, 1962, 33). *Logoi* are not linguistic structures that are distinct from entities, as if we could compare a distinct proposition to separate states of affairs, and see if there is a correspondence. This test of correspondence depends on a conceptual structure that makes things intelligible in the first place. *Logoi* are not on the side of linguistic propositions, divorced from things, but are part of the very structure of things that allows them to be things (*SuZ*, 1962, 34).

*Logoi* are part of hermeneutic phenomenology because *logoi* challenge the transparency of the conscious subject, contemplating an object in the phenomenological reduction. We do not contemplate an object of consciousness *simpliciter*, but instead we contemplate through preliminary conceptual structures that synthesize the object as an object. These conceptual structures are not pure abstractions, but are situated in time, in the average understanding, and so they are comparable to Kant's schema.

Without silence, *logos* will structure objects in an unconscious way, as Kant warns. Silence allows us to move away from the ontical level, and to consider the ontological structures that make the ontical level possible. Silence is an *ontological listening*, since it allows us to bypass superficial *logoi* for Being itself (Martínez, 2007, 53). *Logoi* can both disclose, and obscure, objects. “Being false amounts to deceiving in the sense of covering up (*verdecken*): putting something in front of something...and thereby passing it off as something which it is not” (*SuZ*, 1962, 33). We need silence to become aware of possibly deceptive schematic frameworks that cover up the primordial meaning of things. This uncovering is the real meaning of truth, *a-létheia*, which is different from the adequation of thought to things in the correspondence theory (Martínez, 2007, 18).

In talking, we reaffirm structures of intelligibility that are the foundation of any communication with people. We reaffirm the explanatory structures that present reality in overly neat causal networks. Communication is not only explicit speech, but general structures of intelligibility, *logoi*, that make mutual understanding possible. “In this more general kind of communication, the Articulation of Being with one another understandingly is constituted” (*SuZ*, 1962, 162). We presuppose a “totality-of-significations” in making the simplest assertions (*SuZ*, 1962, 161). Communication relies on shared structures of intelligibility that unite different minds. These explanatory networks focus on reductively conceived entities, instead of on being. Without silence, we will presume these shared structures of intelligibility underlying communication as absolute measures of intelligibility. Instead, they offer a “sham clarity—the unintelligibility of the trivial” (*SuZ*, 1962, 165). The complacent presupposition of the average *logoi* seems to make things clear, but it obscures.

“Speaking at length [*Viel-sprechen*] about something does not offer the slightest guarantee that thereby understanding is advanced” (*SuZ*, 1962, 165). Through *Viel-sprechen*, and through “busily hearing something all around,” we engage on a superficial ontical level, without unpacking its presuppositions for disclosure (*SuZ*, 1962, 164). Through a superficial engagement at the ontical level, we subject ourselves to the “they,” i.e. *das Man*. We inherit the *logoi* of the masses (*SuZ*, 1962, 167). Silence gives us distance from the structures of intelligibility, presupposed by they-consciousness in the fabric of social discourse. Silence allows us to elucidate, which penetrates to the essence of things, rather than accept hasty explanations. *Emplacement* is an even deeper engagement with unconcealment, that prevents elucidation from hardening into rigid categories that pretend to grasp being comprehensively (Pöggeler, 1987, 284).

*Emplacement* is the “manner of saying which Heidegger follows,” because emplacement does not comfortably rest in already circulating *logoi* (Pöggeler, 1987, 285). Emplacement views circulating *logoi* in terms of what is as yet unthought, generating a dynamic tension. Emplacement *leaps* from what is thought to what is unthought (*Sp*<sup>3</sup>, 1959 138). The logic of silence, *Sigetik*, suspends the *logoi* of the they, and moves towards a more primordial engagement with being. This constant traffic between what is thought and what is unthought, distinguishes Heidegger from any account of *logos* with a determinate metaphysical content. The leap of emplacement recognizes the “abysmal character of the history of truth,” i.e. the fact that no ultimate insight or explanatory completeness is possible in the abyss of Being that eludes categorization (Pöggeler, 1987, 289).

*Idle Talk (Gerede)*. Idle talk is superficial talk that reaffirms the public interpretation characteristic of *das Man*. *Dasein* never takes ownership of itself in succumbing to idle talk. “Idle talk discourages any new inquiry and any disputation, and in a peculiar way suppresses them and holds them back” (*SuZ*, 1962, 170). There are networks of schemata that *Dasein* derives from its historical situatedness. These networks of schemata form *Dasein’s* everydayness, i.e. the habitual presuppositions that allow it to function at the ontical level in a socially harmonious manner. “...*Dasein* is constantly delivered over to this interpretedness, which controls and distributes the possibilities of average understanding...” (*SuZ*, 1962, 168).

In idle talk, we lose a primordial relationship to things, because we simply pass along, without elucidation or emplacement, the shared network of schemata characteristic of our sociocultural moment. Since we never elucidate the Being of entities, but pass along information about entities, the sociocultural structure of significance assumes a pseudo-authority. The way “they” think, in a sociocultural moment, is the way one ought to think, the way one has always thought. “Things are so because one says so” (*SuZ*, 1962, 169).

Since idle talk remains at a superficial ontical level, it is groundless (*Bodenlosigkeit*). Idle talk does not understand the network of articulations that form the ground of idle talk, and make its content possible (*SuZ*, 1962, 169). Since *Dasein* never undergoes interpretation in idle talk, idle talk “uproots” *Dasein*, i.e. it prevents *Dasein* from taking ownership of itself. “Idle talk is the possibility

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<sup>3</sup> *Sp: Unterwegs zur Sprache.*

of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own" (SuZ, 1962, 169). Since idle talk encourages superficial attention, it closes off (*Verschliessen*) rather than discloses (*Erschliessen*). "The fact that something has been said groundlessly, and then gets passed along in further retelling, amounts to perverting the act of disclosing..." (SuZ, 1962, 169).

The counter-concept of idle talk is silence. Silence is not a negative phenomenon, the absence of speech. Instead, silence is a richer form of disclosure. By becoming silent, we leave the groundlessness of idle talk, and enter into the ontological level that makes idle talk possible. Silence is not groundless, nor does it pass along, but instead it roots *Dasein* in the presuppositional structures that are implicit in idle talk. "As a mode of discoursing, reticence articulates the intelligibility of *Dasein* in so primordial a manner that it gives rise to a potentiality-for-hearing that is genuine, and to a Being-with-one-another that is transparent" (SuZ, 1962, 165). Silence allows the deep *logoi*, that are preliminary to any assertion in idle talk, to surface. Talking in a superficial way causes the primordial grasp of the structures underlying talking to degenerate. "Whenever a phenomenological concept is drawn from primordial sources, there is a possibility it may degenerate if communicated in the form of an assertion" (SuZ, 1962, 36). Assertions depend on structures of intelligibility that make them possible, and so focusing on assertions leads one to forget primordial structures of intelligibility.

The power of silence to rouse *Dasein* from idle talk, and introduce it to primordial *logoi*, is evident in Heidegger's account of the call of conscience. Conscience in Heidegger is a faculty which brings *Dasein* to an awareness of its lostness in the "they." "But because *Dasein* is lost in the 'they,' it must first find itself. In order to find itself at all, it must be shown to itself..." (SuZ, 1962, 268). Conscience brings *Dasein* to an awareness of the need to reclaim itself, however, without explicit information at the ontical level, through assertions. Conscience instead *summons* the self to itself through silence. "Conscience discourses solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent" (SuZ, 1962, 274). The summons of conscience brings *Dasein* to reticence, so that it can examine the ontological foundations of idle talk, instead of recycling them through constant chatter. Silence, in removing chatter, places us "at the beginning of the way of thinking," i.e. it begins the process of distancing from mere repetition (Bindeman, 1981, 1). Silence permits a *Gelassenheit*, i.e. a surrendering of one's pre-established categories to open oneself to Being (Guilead, 1969, 121).

The phenomenological notion of phenomenon, *logos*, and idle talk, reveal the necessity for silence, to go beyond the superficial level of the average everyday understanding, and to access the schematic framework that would otherwise occur in the mysterious depths of the psyche.

#### 4. Conclusion

I related the spiritual practice of silence to Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology. Hermeneutical phenomenology does not accept the phenomena of consciousness as merely given, but instead as laden with historically contingent structures that anticipate phenomena of consciousness (*SuZ*, 1962, 20). Given this temporal conditioning, the task of phenomenology is not to simply describe phenomenal objects, but to interpret them. Kant's schematism is important in the context of hermeneutical phenomenology, since schema are historical structures in time that are, moreover, general rules distinct from ordinary objects. Schema are the ontological Being of objects that hermeneutical phenomenology targets. I described how idle talk reinforces historically conditioned schemata, but keeping silent is a practice that allows us to gain some distance from schemata derived from *das Man*. Keeping silent is not a merely negative practice, eliminating idle talk, but a positive one, since it allows a deeper understanding of things to emerge.

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