§ 38. Introductory Remarks.

Heidegger's concept of phenomenology is inextricably bound up with his understanding of ontology. "Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible" (BT, 60/35). His understanding of ontology is guided by the insight that the question concerning its theme, Being (Sein), "has today been forgotten" (BT, 21/2). It has been forgotten in the sense that Being is understood, without more ado, as the most universal, undefinable, and self-evident concept.

In order to reawaken the question concerning the meaning of Being, Heidegger finds it necessary to first explicitly restate the question of Being. On the basis of a formal consideration of structure of any question whatever, he gains the insight which enables him to explicitly formulate the question about the meaning of Being. The special way in which this question becomes manifest (sichtbar), as formulated in accord with this insight, exhibits (aufweisen) a "positive phenomenon" (BT, 25/5) regarding both the mode of being (Seinsmodus) of the questioner and "that which is to be found out by the questioning" (das Erfragte), viz., the meaning of Being. This positive phenomenon "requires elucidation (bedarf Aufklärung)" (BT, 25/5-6), and does so in a manner appropriate to the "the thematic object of the investigation (either the Being of entities or the meaning of Being as such)" (BT, 49/27). The appropriate manner of elucidation is understood by Heidegger to be phenomenological, and contrary to what he takes to be phenomenology's current understanding of itself, such a manner or method of investigation does "not characterize the objects of philosophical research in terms of the what of its subject matter (sachhaltige), but the how of its research" (BT, 50/27). In order to unfold Heidegger's "method-concept (Methodenbegriff)" (Ibid) of phenomenology within the context of its complex interrelationship with his
understanding of ontology, I will begin by turning my attention to his provisional account of the objects of ontology, as they emerge from out of his exposition of the question of the meaning of Being.

§ 39. Heidegger's Unfolding of the Formal Structure of the Question about the Meaning of Being; the Provisional Account of the Related 'Objects' of Ontology: the Being of Entities and the Meaning of Being as Such.

As mentioned above, Heidegger unfolds the formal structure of the question of the meaning of Being under the guidance of his insight into the structure of any question whatever. This insight is afforded to him on the basis of clues he gleans from the consideration of what is involved in any questioning. He writes:

Every questioning is a seeking (Suchen). Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought. Questioning is a cognizant (erkennende) seeking for an entity with regard to the that (Daß) and how of its being (BT, 24/5).

According to Heidegger, it is possible to expose the character of that which the question is about in any questioning. By so doing, he understands the cognizant seeking of questioning to become an investigating (Untersuchen). Heidegger's unfolding (exposing) of the formal structure of any question is thus taken by him to be just such an investigation, i.e., a questioning whose cognizant seeking asks after the character or, as he also is wont to say, structure, of the question involved in any questioning.²

Heidegger's investigation finds that the question involved in any questioning about . . . (Fragen nach . . . ) manifests the following tripartite structure: (a) that which is asked about (ein Gefragtes); (b) that which is interrogated (ein Befragtes), and (c) that which is to be found out by the asking (das Erfragte), i.e., the aim (Ziel) of the questioning. He also finds that "questioning itself is the comportment (Verhalten) belonging to an entity, the questioner, and as such has its own character of being" (Ibid).

Taking this structure and comportment as his clue, Heidegger then formulates the question about the meaning of Being. On the one hand, he finds that the questioning about the meaning of Being "must be guided beforehand by what is sought" (BT, 25/5), i.e., must be guided in some way by an "understanding of Being (Seinverständnis)" (Ibid). Indeed, he finds that "out of this understanding of Being arises both the explicit question of the meaning of Being and the tendency toward its