

A Pre-Logical World to Begin With: Singing New Paradigms

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Abstract

The present work focuses on the pre-logical realm from which different logics and paradigms are derived. It is a realm before us, fully sensed by us, yet unthought by us. We know it, are immersed in it, but do not think it. It defines us, prompts us, motivates us, reveals itself to us, yet remains concealed. Here we focus on commentaries by continental philosophers Nietzsche and Heidegger, as well as the Andalusian Muslim mystic Ibn Arabi in investigation of the pre-logical realm. Relationships between knowledge and power, in this context, are explored. In the light of resonating thoughts by above-mentioned thinkers, we elaborate and revisit laws of thought as well as multiple well-known 'self-evident' axioms such as principals of contradiction, identity, non-circular reasoning, and causality (to name a few), which can and should be always revisited, enabling new openings and singing of new paradigms.

Keywords

Logics, self-evident, axioms, contradictions, pre-logical, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Ibn Arabi

I. Immediate Certainties?

We commonly picture our works and our thoughts as strongholds built upon 'self-evident' axioms and foundations (an example is the law of contradiction). Is there is a world before these, a prelogical world, upholding these laws? What if these axioms are not as they seem? What if they're not as true as we think they are? What if they are formed by deeper directives? Thinkers of different ages have wondered these questions. Greek thinkers, who posited laws of logic, had encounters of their own kind. They witnessed Being, Heidegger would say, with "immediacy and purity" yet had "lack of any need—thought in a modern way—to go *back behind* [their positing] ... The Greek thinkers 'only' show the first steps *forward*" (1979a, 113). Yet, they had a vision, a command, a directive, moving them forward (more on this later).

A problem is that we build on their 'derived' logic and move only further forward, lacking their original vision and command. Somebody like Nietzsche then steps up and questions the entire thing. His philosopher, replying to any axiom and 'immediate certainty' such as Descartes' *I think*, would respond:

"When I dissect the process expressed in the proposition 'I think,' I get a whole set of bold claims that are difficult, perhaps impossible, to establish, – for instance, that I am the one who is thinking, that there must be something that is thinking in the first place, that thinking is an activity and the effect of a being who is considered the cause, that there is an 'I,' and finally, that it has already been determined what is meant by thinking, – that I know what thinking is. Because if I had not already made up my mind what thinking is, how could I tell whether what had just happened was not perhaps 'willing' or 'feeling'? Enough: this 'I think' presupposes that I compare my present state with other states that I have seen in myself, in order to determine what it is: and because of this retrospective comparison with other types of 'knowing,' this present state has absolutely no 'immediate certainty' for me." – In place of that "immediate certainty" which may, in this case, win the faith of the people, the philosopher gets handed a whole assortment of metaphysical questions, genuinely probing intellectual questions of conscience, such as: "Where do I get the concept of thinking from? Why do I believe in causes and effects? What

gives me the right to speak about an I, and, for that matter, about an I as cause, and, finally, about an I as the cause of thoughts?" (Nietzsche 2001, Aphorism 16)

The Greeks may have been right; they may have had their own directives and missions to found and to poetize new paradigm. But we need to sing our own songs, arrive at our own directives. Consider what Nietzsche said elsewhere:

The question remains open: are the axioms of logic adequate to reality or are they a means and measure for us to first create reality, the concept "reality," for ourselves?—In order to be able to affirm the former one would, as already said, have to have a previous knowledge of beings—which is simply not the case. The proposition therefore contains no *criterion of truth*, but an *imperative* concerning that which **should** count as true. (Nietzsche 1968, Aphorism 516)

Regarding this 'imperative' or *command*, Heidegger says, "the essence of knowledge has the essential nature of command deep within it" (1979a, 117-122). The command arises from a freedom. It "does not mean merely *making* a demand *known* and requiring its fulfillment." Rather, commanding at first is the very "erecting" and "venturing" of this demand. It is "always more difficult than obeying in the sense of following the command already *given*. True commanding is obedience to what is taken on in free responsibility." So this commanding is a "founding", arising "only from *freedom*." As such, it is nothing other than *poetizing*. We must think of the living to be "*in the direction of commanding and poetizing, of the perspectival and horizontal: in the direction of freedom.*"

II. Knowledge and Power

There is a related angle by which to look at this. Hume's *is-ought problem* pursues the link between positive/descriptive vs. normative/prescriptive statements. The former involves rules of logic and epistemologies; the latter, ethics, religion and ontologies. Foucault's extensive works can be read (Soleiman-Panah 1999) to demonstrate that in the modern world, the positive sciences (e.g. sociology) have had the guise of the former (establishing games of truth) but the role of the latter (governmentality; directing conduct of individuals and groups), thus rendering a unique and deep reading of "knowledge is power."¹ The *is*'s lead to *ought*'s. This perspective we do not elaborate further here; suffice to say that it appears pessimistic (though Foucault himself worked in order to liberate himself²). Heidegger's works we

¹ It must be noted that knowledge and power are not identical; the question is their relation. In fact, Foucault himself said:

You must understand that is part of the destiny common to all problems once they are posed: they degenerate into slogans. Nobody has said, "Reason is power." I do not think anyone has said knowledge is power...but you have to understand when I read—and I know it was being attributed to me—the thesis "knowledge is power" or "power is knowledge," I begin to laugh, since studying their *relation* is precisely my problem. If they were identical, I would not have to study them and I would be spared a lot of fatigue as a result. The very fact that I pose the question of their relation proves clearly that I do not *identify* them (Foucault 1998, 455).

² Consider these very telling statements by Foucault:

I know very well, and I think I knew it from the moment when I was a child, that knowledge can do nothing for transforming the world. Maybe I am wrong. And I am sure I am wrong from a theoretical point of view, for I know very well that knowledge has transformed the world.

But if I refer to my own personal experience, I have the feeling knowledge can't do anything for us, and that political power may destroy us. All the knowledge in the world can't do anything against it. All this is related not to what I think theoretically (I know that's wrong), but I speak from my experience. I know that knowledge can transform us, that truth is not only a way of deciphering the world (and maybe what we call truth doesn't decipher anything), but that if I know the truth I will be changed. And maybe I will be saved. Or maybe I'll die, but I think that is the same anyway for me.

read as an optimistic counter: the human-being, in freedom, can do the opposite, generating and singing new songs, logics and epistemologies from a deep ontological realm. The *ought's* command new *is's*, allowing the human-being to behold and construct new realities.

Why do we take 'truths' of our fathers as 'self-evident'? Do we not have a renewing, commanding, poetizing space within us, coming face-to-face with Being, to withstand it, to guard it, to act as a locus receptive to it? How profoundly this dimension within us, this very being of us, has been neglected. Descartes commented:

...when I stated that this proposition *I think, therefore I am* is the first and most certain which presents itself to those who philosophise in orderly fashion, I did not for all that deny that we must first of all know *what is knowledge, what is existence, and what is certainty*, and that in *order to think we must be*, and such like; but because these are notions of the simplest possible kind, which of themselves give us no knowledge of anything that exists, I did not think them worthy of being put on record" (Descartes 1911, 222).

Are these really not worthy of being put on record? Very few have attempted this. In a footnote by editors on Heidegger's writing, we read, "One can hardly resist the comment that Heidegger's labors from *Being and Time* ... represent the effort to *put these things on record*." (Heidegger 1979b, 125).

III. Living Contradictions

Re-visiting logic and founding new paradigms has not been entirely absent, and in fact represents creative contributions. Consider an example that has emerged in science. Historically, scientific thought has been dominated by classical, Aristotelian, bivalent logic. Yet, some have traversed different paths, opening new possibilities. Fuzzy logic (itself an example of many-valued logic systems) involves fuzzy sets that allow for elastic membership of members (McNeill and Freiburger 1994). Transition from being a member to a non-member is gradual, and not abrupt as in conventional crisp sets. A 35-year-old individual may have partial membership in both age classes *young* as well as *not-young* (unlike statement by the law of contradiction), and as one ages, membership decreases in the former class, while increasing in the latter. Fuzzy logic was only conceived in 1965 by Lotfi Zadeh and has since found a wide array of practical applications.

Let us turn to a deeper example. In Heidegger's analysis of understanding and interpretation in *Being and Time* (2010, 147-149), he brings up the critique that since "interpretation always already has to operate within what is understood and nurture itself from this, how should it then produce scientific results without going in a circle?" He responds that to see this as a vicious cycle "and to look for ways to avoid it ... is to misunderstand understanding from the ground up." Our hereditary logical system does not look favorably upon circularity, denoting it as a fallacy; but ontological-historical knowledge transcends such "rigor of the most exact sciences." In fact, mathematical and logical thinking is not more exact than history and historical knowledge "but only narrower with regard to the scope of ... existential foundations." So as goes the circle, "what is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to get into it in the right way."³

You see, that's why I really work like a dog, and I worked like a dog all my life. I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my own transformation... (Foucault 1997, 130-131)

³ In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger brings up a similar circularity in understanding the work of art vs. essence of art. "Ordinary understanding demands that this circle be avoided because it violates logic." However, "we are compelled to follow the circle. This is neither a makeshift nor a defect. To enter upon this path is the strength of thought, to continue on it is the feast of thought ... Not only is the main step from work to art a circle like the step from art to work, but every separate step that we attempt circles in this circle" (Krell 2008, 144).

Subsequently, later in the book, Heidegger revisits this topic (2010, 300-302), commenting that interpretation “lets what is to be interpreted be *put in words for the very first time, so that it may decide of its own accord whether, as this being [Seiende], it will provide the constitution of being for which it has been disclosed.*” We are circular in our very constitution; it defines us, yet our ‘common sense’ wishes to deny this. “What common sense wishes to get rid of by avoiding the ‘circle’, believing that it does justice to the loftiest rigor of scientific investigation, is nothing less than the basic structure of care. Primordially constituted by care, Dasein is always already ahead of itself.” We begin by understanding, we always already know; we seek interpretation, making things explicit, and subsequently re-position our being. By contrast, our common sense “only takes care of beings that are in view of its circumspection”, and “believes that it experiences only ‘factual’ beings in order to be able to rid itself of its understanding of being.” Our common sense fails to recognize that “beings can be ‘factually’ experienced only when being has already been understood, even if this understanding is not conceptualized.” We operate in a different world than the world we believe we operate in. One sees how penetratingly critical Heidegger can be of the Cartesian framework. “Not too much, but *too little* is ‘presupposed’ for the ontology of Dasein, if one ‘starts out with’ a worldless I [*ego cogito*] in order then to provide that I with an object and an ontologically groundless relation to that object.”

IV. The First Law of Thought

To gain further insights, we focus on Heidegger’s *Letter on Humanism* (Krell 2008). The world of Being is worth all the reflection and thinking. “Man is the neighbor of Being.” The human being is debased when labeled by metaphysics as a *rational animal*. “Being is still waiting for the time when it will become thought-provoking to man.” “Are we really on the right track toward the essence of man as long as we set him off as one living creature among others”? In doing so, we “abandon man to the essential realm of *animalitas* even if we do not equate him with beasts but attribute a specific difference to him ...”. Metaphysics “does not think in the direction of [man’s] *humanitas*.” It misses that man “is claimed by Being.” Such standing in the lighting of Being, Heidegger refers to as “ek-sistence of man” which is proper only to him. Ek-sistence is in fact “the ground of the possibility of reason, *ratio*.” Our modern analysis places us under the tyranny of logic, while rendering us a tyrannical, calculative quantitative subject amongst objects, entirely missing things in themselves.

We have not set our humanity high enough. Our “essential worth” is not in “being the substance of beings, as the ‘Subject’ among them, so that as the tyrant of Being [we] may deign to release the beingness of beings into an all too loudly bruited ‘objectivity.’ ” Instead, we are “thrown from Being itself into the truth of Being, so that ek-sisting in this fashion [we] might guard the truth of Being, in order that beings might appear in the light of Being as the beings they are.” We are not to relate to beings, but to *think* them. “To the things themselves.”

Heidegger continues by saying that man is thus “in thrownness”, meaning that he ek-sists, he withstands Being, and is “more than *animal rationale* precisely to the extent that he is *less* bound up with man conceived from subjectivity.” He is free. In fact:

Man is in thrownness. This means that man, as the ek-sisting counter-throw [*Gegen-wurf*] of Being, is more than *animal rationale* precisely to the extent that he is less bound up with man conceived from subjectivity. Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being. Man loses nothing in this ‘less’; rather, he gains in that he attains the truth of Being. He gains the essential poverty of the shepherd, whose dignity consists in being called by Being itself into the preservation of Being’s truth. The call comes as the throw from which the thrownness of Da-sein derives. In his essential unfolding within the history of Being, man is the being whose Being as ek-sistence consists in his dwelling in the nearness of Being. Man is the neighbor of Being.

Heidegger goes on later to question whether speaking against things like “humanism”, “logic” or “values” means to be in defense of inhumanity, irrationalism and valuelessness. Per the commentary by Richardson (2003, Chapter XII), “the thinking of Being is non-logical, but this means only that it is pre-logical (pre-rational). If someone is to be charged with irrationalism ... should it not rather be they who, in the name of logic, refuse to meditate *λόγος* [logos], insofar as it is the ground of reason and therefore the foundation of logic?” So is this pre-logical thought law-less? Not at all. “All that Heidegger insists upon is that prior to the laws of logic (or, for that matter, of ethics) there is a law of Being which first intimates to man the pattern of arrangement that subsequently can be transformed into the laws of human thought and activity.” In the words of Heidegger himself, if this were not so, then all laws would be “merely something fabricated by human reason.” Thus, even more essential than instituting rules is that “man find the way to his abode in the truth of Being.”

Thus, the first law of thought is the law of Being, “not the rules of logic which can become rules only on the basis of the law of Being.” Thinking is bound by none other than Being, and is “claimed” by it. Thinking is “bound to the advent of Being, to Being as advent.” One may say it is most free, as well as most subservient and docile. Thinking is utterly rich, in that it is utterly poor. Thinking that is to come will no longer be philosophy, “because it thinks more originally than metaphysics—a name identical to philosophy ... Thinking is on the descent to the poverty of its provisional essence.”

V. Chartering New Territories

Nearness to Being demands re-visiting all assumptions. This is perhaps a reading we can have of Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* when he chastises, as lacking ‘seriousness’, those generations that impatiently move forward, building on the works of previous generations, traversing new paths from there, instead of ‘learning’ their very steps. “Suppose someone wanting to learn to dance said: ‘For hundreds of years now one generation after another has been learning dance steps, it’s high time I took advantage of this and began straight off with a set of quadrilles.’ One would surely laugh a little at him: but in the world of spirit such an attitude is considered utterly plausible.” We have not learnt the very first dance moves, those of the encounter with Being. A thinker always dances to the Same, as he thinks the Same. In the words of Heidegger, “When philosophy attends to its essence it does not make forward strides at all. It remains where it is in order constantly to think the Same. Progression, that is, progression forward from this place, is a mistake that follows thinking as the shadow which thinking itself casts.” All original thinkers dance to the Same.⁴ Therefore, “all refutation in the field of essential thinking is foolish. Strife among thinkers is the ‘lovers’ quarrel’ concerning the matter itself. It assists them mutually toward a simple belonging to the Same, from which they find what is fitting for them in the destiny of Being.”

In Sec. III, we provided two examples countering principle of contradiction and fallacy of circular reasoning. We bring up a few more here. Consider the principal of identity as one of the most well-known ‘self-evident’ axioms. It no longer is an “immediate certainty” to us. The thinkers’ dance steps are in fact the same *yet different*. Elsewhere, we discuss the intermingled sameness/difference of Being and beings (Rahmim 2022). Let us here bring up again this example from Hegel which Heidegger develops: someone wishes to buy fruit from a store, being offered with apples, pears, peaches, etc. He rejects all. “What was offered to him in every instance *is* fruit and yet, it turns out, fruit cannot be bought” (Heidegger 1969, 64). We behold beings in our dance, yet we do not behold Being; but if beings are beings of Being, are we not beholding Being? We have elaborated this, in the above-mentioned work, providing insights from the renowned mystic Ibn Arabi.

⁴ In fact, Heidegger himself said elsewhere, “All great thinkers think the same. Yet this ‘same’ is so essential and so rich that no single thinker exhausts it” (1979, 36).

Let us consider another metaphysical notion: causality. Do causes cause their effects (as the law goes), or are they also caused by their effects (which appears as a contradiction)? Certainly, causality can and must be re-visited. It can be commanded, poetized, sung anew. Let us see what Ibn Arabi says here. In *Bezels of Wisdom*,⁵ his important compendium of mystical thoughts, Chapter 22 is entitled, “The Quintessence of the Wisdom of Intimacy in the Logos of Ilyas (Elijah).” Ibn Arabi states that the spirit and essence of this chapter is on the cause-and-effect dichotomy. He refers to a “Science of Self-Manifestation” (*Ilm al-Tajalli*) which witnesses to *al-Haqq* (i.e. Being which cannot be falsified, the Truth, the Real, Reality, which we have elsewhere (Rahmim 2022) related to Heidegger’s *Being*) as perpetually self-revealing in beings. Specifically, he says, “it is It [*al-Haqq*], not other than It, that manifests Itself in every form.” He provides example of a mirror, which reveals many forms yet is none of them (identity/difference). He also specifically comments that rational speculation is weak and limited compared to this science, which reveals new things:

An indication of the weakness of rational speculation is the judgment ... that a cause cannot be an effect of that to which it is a cause ... However, in the science of self-manifestation, a cause can be the effect of that for which it is a cause.

Ibn Arabi in fact takes this to be an obvious point. To him, cause and effect have such intimacy in reality that the cause can be its effect’s effect, i.e. is influenced by the thing it influences. In fact, as commentators have stated, this is why the word *intimacy* is the very quintessence of this chapter.⁶ (Kharazmi 2000, 919). Ibn Arabi perceives a deep, mutual connection between the two.⁷ According to a commentator (Kharazmi 2000, 933), *al-Haqq* “while manifested in being-a-cause, is [also] manifested in it being-an-effect by that which is its effect: i.e. in the same condition It is attributed with the two opposites and contains the two contradictions, because ‘no state preoccupies It from another state.’” Thus Ibn Arabi raises alarm that from the pre-logical realm that he starts with, causality (as envisaged by conventional rationality) can be inverted and re-imagined. Furthermore, Ibn Arabi comments, “If such is the case regarding causality, what do you think about expanding rational speculation into other [realms] beyond this strict one?” In other words, if such prevalent (and apparently ‘self-evident’) logic can be entirely re-visited, what about so many other thoughts and observations? Overall, Ibn Arabi pushes us to revisit dichotomies, and to move through them and beyond them. He wishes for us to move beyond conventional rationality, and to consider a difference kind of knowledge and realm to begin with.

What about the law of excluded middle? Is there really nothing beyond a statement and its negation? There surely is. We won’t sing that song here. (It is also surely worth pondering over what ‘Not’ means for Hegel and Heidegger).

Let us take another example, the liar paradox. Is the following statement true or false: “This sentence is false.” The other day I wrote this sentence to have a discussion with my son. It is very real. It is as real as anything that I know, yet it may be ‘contradictory’. There is significant literature on this paradox. It suffices here to say that an epistemological contradiction or paradox has the power to deny us meaning

⁵ This highly influential text of Islamic mysticism by Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) has a total of 27 chapters, each linked to the “logos” of a Prophet. Two English translations can be consulted for *Fusus al-Hikam* (Bezels of Wisdom): (i) Abrahamov (2015) and (ii) Austin (1980)..

⁶ The commentary by Kharazmi (14th-15th century) (in Persian) significantly follows commentary by Sharaf al-Din Dawood al-Qaysari (in Arabic).

⁷ The example of the mirror is also used in the sense that the one whose form is reflected in the mirror influences it, while the mirror reciprocally influences the forms, in determination of extent, size, etc. (Ibid; p. 925). Interestingly, in his own summary of this chapter, Ibn Arabi acknowledges two kinds of creation, one by *al-Haqq*, in bestowal of being (*Ijaad*), and one by beings, in determination (*taqdir*) (Chittick 1984, 37).

and truth *only* if we allow it. As an example, related to fuzzy logic, dialetheism seeks to allow certain statements to be both true and false. The human *ought*'s are certainly able to enable new *is*'s.

VI. Concluding Remarks

It is noteworthy that Heidegger, in discussing the law of contradiction in his Nietzsche lectures (1979a, 111-112), starts by saying, "If this [making contradictory statements] happens, the result is that the same thing is affirmed and denied of a being. Man is thoroughly capable of something like this. He can contradict himself." He then provides an apparently cautious note, "But if man maintains himself in a contradiction, what is impossible does not of course consist in the fact that yes and no are thrown together, but that man excludes himself from representing beings as such and forgets *what* he really wants to grasp in his yes and no." He adds, "Through contradictory assertions, which man can freely make about the same thing, he displaces himself from his essence into nonessence; he dissolves his relation to beings as such." This introductory note, however, should not be taken as a final word. One surely can dissolve "his relation to beings as such", but that does not necessarily at all preclude constituting new relations.

Similar to Heidegger, Ibn Arabi wishes for us to persevere in the pre-logical world, the world of Being, the world of self-manifestations; and to be utterly open to it (which we elaborate elsewhere (Rahmim 2024)), to be loyal to it even from a distance. The discoveries from this world may be such that rationality "is not capable of grasping them and considers them as absurd." In fact, when left in the dark, one may be "perplexed regarding what one saw." (Abrahamov 2015, 146). This is also reminiscent of observations that philosophy arrives too late on the scene for instruction (Hegel) or even understanding (Levinas), that "something takes place between the dusk in which the most ecstatic intentionality, which, however, never aims far enough, is lost (or is recollected) and the dawn in which consciousness returns to itself, but already too late for the event which is moving away" (Levinas 1987, 68). The subject is actually asleep at the most crucial moments, and delayed behind its present moment (Davies 2011, 21).

But the key is to recognize this. Amidst this, Ibn Arabi asks for perseverance and loyalty of thought; i.e. that the logical realm becomes attached, not to prevalent rules, but to the vision and directives from the pre-logical realms. Denoting such realms to which the thinker has openness as *lord* or *lords* (manifesting themselves in his being), Ibn Arabi comments, "If one is servant of a lord, he refers his rationality to it, but if one is servant of a speculation, he refers Reality to its rule." Consequence of this kind of thinking and openness to the pre-logical realm, the realm of Being and Reality, is to not reduce it to our yardsticks. As Heidegger would say, "Being is still waiting for the time when it will become thought-provoking to man." It always is.

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