

Lorenz B. Puntel once presented four reasons for rejecting "your use of 'being' for [the German and Latin terms] 'Sein/esse' and of 'be-er(s)' for 'Seiende(s)/ens-entia'." Puntel identifies the first and second as the most important, and deems them decisive.

AW: It is essential to note at the outset, although this is repeated in various places below, that neither *TAPTOE* nor "Rearticulating Being" ("RB") uses "being" either exclusively or primarily for "Sein/esse." Both texts use "being" most importantly *as a component of the present-continuous verb in the sentence "It's being" and the sentence-operator "It's being such that..."* Both texts argue that adequate articulations of being *cannot rely exclusively or even primarily on nouns*—and both "Being" and "being," when they translate "Sein/esse" and "Seiende(s)," are, at least in the overwhelming majority of instances, nouns.

For "Sein/esse," "to be" would be more accurate than is either "being" or "Being," but a text that translated "Sein/esse" with "to be" would be unintelligible—"Sein/esse" are simply used, in German and Latin, in ways that "to be" cannot be used in English. (More cautiously: I do not see how to use "to be," consistently, as a translation for "Sein/esse," and I am not aware of any attempts by anyone else to use "to be" in that way.)

*TAPTOE* and "RB" *do* use "being" for "esse." The reason is that arguing in favor of a *rearticulation* of being involves introducing *currently available* articulations of being. *TAPTOE* and "RB" could, without inconsistency, use "Being" for "esse" (and "einai," "Sein," etc.). But they need not, and they do not, because they do not accord those terms central importance within their rearticulations of being. If "Sein," "esse," etc., had not been and were not considered important by other philosophers, there would be no need for *TAPTOE* or "RB" to introduce them at all.

Puntel's first reason for rejecting my terminology is that the use of "being" (only) for "Sein/esse" and for "Being," as it appears in various English texts (including many translations of Heidegger, and also *Being and God* and *Being and Nothing*) generates "measureless confusion, a genuine chaos." The reason is that "the entire English-speaking philosophical community understands and uses the term 'being' (lower case) primarily in the sense of 'Seiende(s)/ens-entia': a being, beings—entities. In analytic philosophy, indeed, that is absolutely the term's only meaning, because this philosophy knows nothing of 'Sein/esse.'" In the literature about such Latin writers as Thomas Aquinas, the term 'being' often has been and often still is used for 'esse,' but that has generated and continues to generate regrettable confusion. For this reason, increasingly many philosophers who write about Aquinas write "being (esse)" in order to make clear that in such cases 'being' is used for Aquinas's *esse* and not, in those cases, for *ens*. In translations of and in the literature about Heidegger, it is increasingly the case that only 'Being' is used for 'Sein.'

"This shows two things: (a) for 'Seiendes/ens,' the term 'being' is the only one that is used; (b) if 'being' is used in any other way (as in tentative attempts in analytic philosophy in the direction of thinking about *Sein/esse*, and in interpretations of such

authors as Thomas Aquinas), then, in order to avoid confusion, 'esse' is added: 'being (esse).'

"This shows that it makes absolutely no sense to use 'being' *not* for '*Seiende(s)/ens/entia*' but instead exclusively for '*Sein/esse*.' That use would double or indeed triple the confusion that already reigns. I am convinced that no English-speaking philosopher who really knows what he is doing and how he should speak will accept your decision *not* to use 'being' for '*ens/entia/Seiende(s)*,' but instead, exclusively, for "*Sein/esse*." That goes against the entire philosophical community. I know of no one who has made or even considered a suggestion such as yours ('being' exclusively for '*esse/Sein*').

"From decades of experience, I have learned that there is a wonderful solution to this chaotic situation that avoids every confusion: 'being' for '*Seiende(s)/ens/entia*' and 'Being' for '*Sein/esse*.' Quite simple, and having the wonderful consequence of avoiding confusion altogether."

The convictions that my using "being" to mean anything other "entity" (1) is inevitably confusing both now and forever and that (2) it will never be accepted by any English-speaking philosopher other than me—or perhaps, that it will never be accepted by a sufficient number of English-speaking philosophers—provide reasons for avoiding that usage, but only for those who share those convictions. I do not. In addition, as indicated above and again below, what is most important about "being" in my account is that it is a component of the present-continuous verb in the sentence "It's being" and in the sentence operator "It's being such that...." As a component of that present-continuous verb, it is irreplaceable (save perhaps by "Being"—of that, more below). If it is used as a component of the verb in "It's being" and *also* used to mean "entity," then it plays two roles. I take the multiple roles played by "being" in philosophical treatments to have caused serious problems. Those problems are among the ones I attempt to avoid by my rearticulation of being.

Does my terminology run counter to current philosophical practice (or practices)? Of course; that's why it is labeled, in the title of my article, a *rearticulation* of being. Does the use of "being" and "Being" in the way championed by the objector avoid all confusion? No, as is evident from (among many other things) the objector's acknowledgment that analytic philosophers tend to ignore Being/*Sein/esse* altogether. And, as shown (for example) in Chapters 2 and 4 of *Being and God*, confusion about—in the objector's terminology—Being/*Sein/esse* is also rife within so-called continental philosophy.

So: it is far from the case that the use of "being" and "Being" (or their Greek, Latin, German, etc., counterparts) in the ways championed by Puntel currently constitutes an ideal situation for articulating being.

I do not pretend to be able to do more than guess about how philosophers in general or analytic philosophers more specifically might respond to my rearticulation of being if they were to become aware of it. One of my own guesses—again, nothing more than a guess—is that many analytic philosophers,

upon becoming aware that a philosophical account relied on the term "Being," would immediately think something along the lines of, "Oh, more Heideggerian rubbish," and pay no attention to the account.

The objector's second reason: "an immense incoherence resulting from the introduction of 'be-er(s)'. You emphasize that the structural-systematic philosophy (SSP), which you defend, takes its semantic and ontological bearings by sentences that do not have the subject-predicate structure. If the attempt were made to extend this to the syntactic domain—that is, to use no sentences with the subject-predicate structure—what would result would be a linguistic account that would no longer be English (or German, or French, etc.), because it would depart so greatly from those languages as to be unreadable. The solution to this problem suggested in *Structure and Being* and in *Being and God* is to use subject-predicate sentences, and reinterpret them only *semantically*. (Quine proceeds similarly: he argues that singular terms should be eliminated, but does *not* argue that philosophers should no longer use subject-predicate sentences; the elimination is on the semantic, not the syntactic level.)

"*Structure and Being* and *Being and God* provide some examples of sentences from a philosophical language relying only on sentences lacking the subject-predicate structure. An account relying only on such sentences would be some kind of monster.

"You, however, have, on the basis of the flexibility of the English language, undertaken to transform all philosophical sentences into sentences lacking the subject-predicate structure. You take this to be made possible by the way "-ing" can be used in English. Thus, for example, "It's being" (preferable would be, "It's Being"). You then introduce "facting," "stegosaurusing," etc.

But then you do something remarkable, indeed paradoxical. You want to completely replace 'being(s)' (in the sense of *Seiende(s)/ens/entia*) with a term that does not end in "-ing," namely, 'be-er(s)'. You replace a term ending in '-ing' ('being') with a term that does not end in '-ing' ('be-er'). This directly contradicts your own assertions. Is that coherent? Not that I can see. What seems to have happened is that your (in your eyes) wonderful discovery of 'be-er(s)', of which you appear to be completely enamored, has blinded you to everything else. That is not a reasonable way to proceed philosophically. I have no objection, in principle, to the introduction of new terms in cases in which it is clear that the new term does not have the function of replacing another term that is *irreplaceable*, and in which it is clear that the new term has a coherent function. The term 'be-er(s)' satisfies neither of these criteria. Still, if the term 'be-er(s)' were used *in addition to* and *as a synonym for* 'being(s)', that would be unobjectionable, but it would also be pointless. It would be utterly superfluous, but at least, for the most part, not damaging.

Nowhere have I ever suggested, much less attempted, a transformation of all philosophical sentences into sentences without the subject-predicate structure. The briefest glance at *TAPTOE* or at "Rearticulating Being" reveals that the overwhelming majority of their sentences have the subject-predicate structure.

As for "be-er(s)," clarification is indeed required. The term is introduced on a metasystematic level, as is obliquely indicated (*TAPTOE* 140, "RB" 4) by the

identification of various ontologies—theories of be-ers—currently defended, and by the indication, in “RB” (23–24), that “It’s being” and “It’s being such that...”—along with, although “RB” does not note this, “be-er(s)”—could be used within theoretical frameworks other than that of the SSP.

A central question that emerges from this clarification is whether the term “be-er” can appear in any sentencing situated on the systematic level of the SSP.<sup>1</sup> The question is, can “It’s being-a-be-er” qualify as a sentencing? The reason it might not so qualify is that “be-er”—in isolation!—is a singular term, and sentencings cannot include singular terms. But *TAPTOE* includes (33), as an example of a facting, IT’S BEING-AN-INTERLOCUTOR; this facting would be identical to a propositioning expressible by the sentencing “It’s being-an-interlocutor.” This is an acceptable sentencing, it appears to me, if its “being-an-interlocutor” is understood not to introduce a singular term (“interlocutor”), but instead to be a component of a present-continuous verb. The same holds for “It’s being-a-be-er.” Alternatives to these formulations are “It’s interlocutoring” and “It’s be-ering.”

As for “It’s Being,” apparently accepted above by the objector, that would introduce a double-duty use of the sort I deem it important to avoid. The double-duty: “Being” would be both the translation of *einai/esse/Sein* and a component of a present-continuous verb—unless the “Being” of “It’s Being” is instead understood by the objector as a noun, but then I don’t know what that sentence, in isolation, could mean.

In addition: if “being” is—on the strictly systematic level—used *exclusively* as a component of the present-continuous verb in “It’s being,” then “be-er” is in no way superfluous. Articulating being is facilitated by use of a term clearly linked to the verb “to be” that means, roughly, “entity”: because it is not clearly linked to the verb “to be,” “entity” cannot take that role. “Be-er” can.

The most serious objection I am aware of to “be-er” is that it is, at least initially, unfamiliar. The initial unfamiliarity I readily acknowledge, but I do not recognize this as the basis for a serious objection. Some reasons: I am convinced (1) partly on the basis of experience with students but chiefly with my own experience in using the term, that its easy comparability with “swimmer,” “runner,” etc., sufficiently facilitates its becoming familiar, and (2) that, as is particularly clear from physics, there are times when theories require, for relatively maximal coherence and intelligibility, the introduction of terms that are initially unfamiliar.

Another point relevant to the introduction of “be-er”: as is emphasized at the end of “Rearticulating Being,” that term, like “It’s being,” can be used by *anyone* interested in articulating being in English—there is nothing about those terms that restricts their use to the SSP.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “be-er” can be used, on the systematic level of the SSP, in subject-predicate sentences, because *all* subject-predicate sentences used in presentations of the systematic level of the SSP are, *semantically*, abbreviations or paraphrases of sentencings.

The third objection “can be stated quite briefly. Despite your own assertions to the contrary, you *often* use the term ‘being(s)’ as meaning ‘*Seiende(s)/ens/entia.*’ One need only do a word-search of *TAPTOE* to discover a wealth of such cases, particularly cases of “human being” and especially “human beings”—see 23–25, 27, ..., 120ff, ... 178).”

*TAPTOE*'s methodology explicitly allows and in some cases requires (see 12–13) the initial use of terms and other formulations that prove to be inadequate and that, when the theory has been more completely presented, are replaced by superior terms. Hence, *TAPTOE*'s methodology explicitly allows the looser use of “being(s)” prior to the point—relatively late, in the last of its eight chapters—at which “be-er(s)” is introduced. In addition, footnote 4 on page 136 explicitly notes that “*TAPTOE* occasionally speaks of human beings, although ‘human be-ers’ would be more accurate.” I would prefer to have written “*TAPTOE*'s Chapter 8 occasionally...,” but that is a relatively minor revision. Bottom line: there is not the slightest incoherence in my usage of “being(s),” in various places, instead of “be-er(s).”

Taking a broader view: the word “being,” and various other words with close semantic (although not etymological) relations to it—including “am,” “is,” “are”, and “were”—are used, in ordinary English, in a wide variety of convenient and intelligible ways; they open, to put it one way, an extensive semantic field. Developing a philosophical theory of being requires narrowing that field. Introduction of the term “be-er,” *TAPTOE* and “RB” argue, makes possible an enormously helpful step in that narrowing. Once theories of be-ers are designated as ontologies, it is clear that a theory of being, as distinct from any ontology, cannot be a theory of be-ers. One way to articulate this step: once ontologies are clarified as theories centering on theses formulable as “To *be* a be-er is to *be* an *x*”—with “thing,” “substance,” “fact,” and “trope” among the values of *x* in various currently defended ontologies—an obvious question, for the philosopher wondering whether there are or could or should be theories of being that are *not* ontologies, is, what about the instances of “to be” or “be” in the sentence, “To *be* is to *be* an *x*”? Instead of “To be a be-er is to be an *x*,” one could say, “Every be-er *is* an *x*”; this formulation can motivate the question, what about the “is” in the sentence, “Every be-er *is* an *x*”?

Nevertheless: it does appear to me that it is impossible, in articulating a theory of being in English, to use the word “being” *only* as a component of the present-continuous verb in “It’s being.” But it continues to appear to me that *focusing*, when articulating a theory of being, on the use of that word in the present-continuous verb is enormously illuminating, as is the introduction of the term “be-er.”

The fourth reason: you introduce no arguments against using “being(s)” for “*ens-entia/Seiende(s)*” and “Being” for “*esse/Sein*”; you appear simply to dislike this usage.

This is false. Some arguments against this usage are found in *TAPTOE* 8.1.1. That section introduces three peculiarities of ordinary-language articulations that are obstacles to philosophically adequate articulations of being. The text asserts that introduction of "Being" overcomes only one of those peculiarities. A footnote (136n3) adds that an additional problem arises from the fact that English ordinarily capitalizes only proper nouns, and asserts that in *BG*, "Being" is not, or not primarily, used as a noun.

Moreover, *all* my arguments for using "being" most importantly as a component of "It's being" are of course *also* arguments against the "being(s)–Being" terminology.

The objector adds: "One must say that the solution 'being-Being' is the most elegant, the simplest, the least problematic, and the most accurate. On the one hand, it avoids ambiguities, unclarities, and confusions; on the other, it leaves great latitude for more precise interpretations both of 'being(s)' and of 'Being': an ideal philosophical situation.

What the objector takes to be the problem requiring solution is an apparent poverty of English in comparison with Greek, Latin, German, and perhaps others. Where those languages have two terms—a nominalizable infinitive, and a word meaning "entity"—English has only one—"being" ("to be" not being, as noted above, comparably nominalizable). As a result: the use of "Being" as counterpart to *einai/esse/Sein/être*, etc., and of "being" as counterpart to *on/ens/Seiendes/étant*, etc., *at best* makes English as capable of articulating being as are Greek, Latin, German, French, etc. But note: *for over twenty-five hundred years*, philosophers have regularly relied on one or another of those languages. That their articulations have *not* facilitated developments of adequate theories of being is argued at length in *Structure and Being* and *Being and God* (and *TAPTOE* and "RB"). In rearticulating being, I introduce a terminology that I argue to be *superior* to any provided by Greek, Latin, or German. Crucial to my terminology is, to say it once more, "being" as a component of "It's being."

Puntel concludes: "I have made my case. I take the four objections I have introduced to your rearticulation of being to be absolutely unassailable."

I hope that it is clear by now that the reasons for rejecting my terminology that Puntel takes to be "absolutely unassailable" are, almost exclusively, irrelevant, and when not irrelevant, relatively easily assailed.

Puntel's failure to understand the aim of my rearticulation of being or, therefore how I attempt to attain that aim, I take to be an indication of a presumably age-related mental deterioration. Nevertheless, because of that failure, I put the most central thesis of my rearticulation of being in one additional way: my rearticulation involves, centrally, the *liberation* of the term "being" from its *bondage*, in many philosophical accounts, to *einai* and/or *on* and/or *esse* and/or

*ens* and/or *Sein* and/or *Seiende(s)*, etc. *Only* if liberated from that bondage is it *free* to play its most important philosophical role, which is that of being a component of the present-continuous verb in "It's being." If that is not *the only* central philosophical role played by "being," then "being" is ambiguous and invites confusion. And if "being" is *not* liberated to play that role, then that role, in English, will not be played, and being will remain, even where not utterly neglected, significantly obscured. Either would be far from an ideal philosophical situation.

As is noted in *SB* and *BG* and *TAPTOE* and "RB," Heidegger, whatever his faults (and many are identified in *BG*'s Chapter 2), *did* focus on the question of *Sein*—in the usual translations of Heidegger's works, "Being." And Heidegger, too, found the terms available to him for responding to the question of *Sein* *inadequate*. Hence, he sometimes uses "*Seyn*," sometimes "*Sein*," but crossed-out with an "x," he coins "*wesen*" as a verb in order to be able to say "*Das Sein west*"—rendered in *BG* (219) as "Being essences"—and ultimately, of course, he rejects all these versions of *Sein* in order to use, instead, "*Ereignis*," which has no etymological kinship with any form of the verb *Sein* (that is, not to "*bin*," "*ist*," "*gewesen*," etc.). So: again, whatever his philosophical faults, it does appear clear that Heidegger concluded that the terms available to him for articulating being—including, centrally, "*Sein*" and "*Seiende(s)*"—were *insufficient* and that he should *cease to use* the term "*Sein*," although in fact he did not succeed in doing so.

Puntel has never responded to the responses to the objections provided above. Instead, he presented a fifth putatively unassailable objection. See the document, "A fifth objection to my rearticulation of being."

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