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Rereading Heidegger with Ser and Estar

Abstract: Despite the impressive influence that Martin Heidegger has over 20th-century thought, there has been little scholarship on how *Sein und Zeit* has influenced Latin American philosophy. I correct for this critical oversight by investigating how Rodolfo Kusch, Álvaro Vieira Pinto, and Paulo Freire, respectively, use the words *ser* and *estar* to critique and creatively reappropriate Heidegger's *Sein* lexicon in *Sein und Zeit*.

Keywords: Martin Heidegger, Latin American Rhetoric, Philosophy and Rhetoric, Ontology, Rodolfo Kusch, Álvaro Vieira Pinto, Paulo Freire

INTRODUCTION

The shadow that Martin Heidegger casts is long. Indeed, *Sein und Zeit* is the watershed moment of 20th-century European philosophy, and it is difficult to think of a corner of the European or North American intellectual world after the 1927 publication of *Sein und Zeit* that the book's influence does not reach.

However, with the exception of a few articles, there has been shockingly little work done on Heidegger's influence on Latin American thought.¹ This lack of scholarship is especially noteworthy

¹For example, see Roberto Domingo Toledo, "Existentialism and Latin America" in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Existentialism*, ed. Felicity Joseph, Jack Reynolds, and Ashley Woodward (London, GB: Bloomsbury, 2011), 215-239; Carlos Alberto Sanchez, "Heidegger in Mexico: Emilio Uranga's Ontological Hermeneutics," *Continental Philosophy Review* 41 (2008): 441-461, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-008-9090-9>; Antonio Ziri6n, "Phenomenology in Mexico: A Historical Profile," *Continental Philosophy Review*, 33 (2000): 75-92.

given that, arguably, one of the more interesting histories of the reception of *Sein und Zeit* might very well reside in how Spanish and Portuguese language writers use the words *ser* and *estar* to critique and creatively reappropriate Heidegger's lexicon around the German word *Sein*.

Like *Sein*, *ser* and *estar* both mean *to be*. However, *ser* and *estar*, it might be said, lexicalize senses of *to be* that single *be* words like *Sein* convey through implicature. As a placeholder, we might say that *ser* connotes essential being; *estar* factive being.

The story I tell here narrates how Rodolfo Kusch, Álvaro Vieira Pinto, and Paulo Freire, individually, marshal the semantics of *ser* and *estar* to critique and restructure Heidegger's use of *Sein* in *Sein und Zeit*. Writing from 20th-century Argentina (Kusch) and Brazil (Vieira Pinto and Freire, respectively), these three writers build out from the pragmatic lexical ranges of *ser* and *estar* to craft unique ontologies that North American anglophone intellectual circles have virtually ignored until now.

My work corrects for this critical oversight. I compare how Kusch, Vieira Pinto, and Freire each draw on a different sense of the *ser/estar* pair to critique some aspect of the Heideggerian idiom while they also endeavor to create a unique ontology: Kusch challenges Heidegger's claim in *Sein und Zeit* to be up to fundamental ontology; Vieira Pinto charges Heidegger with leaving the senses of being in Heidegger's well-known notion *In-der-Welt-sein* ("being-in-the-world") ambiguous; and Freire uses the fact that Portuguese has a true progressive verbal aspect to code being as an on-going event—in such a way that might be difficult to render in German.

The story that unfolds is a rhetorical one, because I place in brackets the truth value question about whether the writers herein under discussion describe more accurately how things are than Heidegger does. My goal is not to score boxing matches between Heidegger and his successive challengers of Kusch, Vieira Pinto, and Freire as a work of philosophical scholarship might—looking to see who got it "right" and who got it "wrong." Rather, my goal is to illuminate how these writers develop the semantics of *ser* and *estar* in relation to Heidegger's *Sein* lexicon as topoi for argumentation.

My argument is structured as follows. First, I briefly canvass a method for reading philosophy rhetorically. Second, I review how Heidegger's goal of reawakening the *Seinsfrage* in the epigraph to *Sein und Zeit* might animate discussions of *ser* and *estar*; then, I review different usages of *ser* and *estar*—not from the perspective of the linguist, but rather from the perspective of the interpreter. Third, I apply the findings from my discussion of *ser* and *estar* as heuristics

for reading instances of Kusch's, Vieira Pinto's, and Freire's respective figurations of the words semantics; I argue that Kusch applies a "definitional/factive" pair between *ser* and *estar*; Vieira Pinto, an "occurrence/location" pair; and Freire a "existence/happening" pair. Finally, I summarize my discussion and gesture towards possible future scholarship.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RHETORIC

Depending on how we look at it, we can see *Philosophie der Rhetorik* in both its objective genitive and subjective genitive senses in one of Nietzsche's most well-known remarks:²

Nein, gerade Tatsachen gibt es nicht, nur Interpretationen. Wir können kein Faktum ›an sich‹ feststellen: vielleicht ist es ein Unsinn, so etwas zu wollen. ›Es ist alles subjektiv‹ sagt ihr: aber schon das ist Auslegung, das ›Subjekt‹ ist nicht Gegebenes, sondern Hinzu-Erdichtetes, Dahinter-Gestecktes.³

No, there are no facts, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact 'in itself.' All is subjective, you say: but this is already an interpretation. The 'subject' is not a given, rather something additionally invented, something stuck behind the scenes.⁴

As an example of the objective genitive—rhetoric's philosophy—Nietzsche's remark can be read as a thesis. It articulates a premise that, to many of us, is by now shop worn. The premise entails that

²For this splitting up of *Philosophie der Rhetorik* into objective and genitive senses, see Peter Lothar Oesterreich, *Philosophie der Rhetorik*, Faszination Philosophie (Bamberg, DE: Buchners Verlag, 2003), 16. Clearly, Oesterreich's play on different senses of the genitive owes some of its meaning to the double genitive sense of Heidegger's "hermeneutics of facticity"—that facticity is already interpreted and, hence, phenomenology, as hermeneutics, recapitulates this prior interpretation at a greater level of explicitness. See Theodore Kisiel, "Hermeneutics of Facticity," in *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts*, ed. Bret W. Davis (London, GB: Routledge, 2010), 19.

³Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht: eine Auslegung alles Geschehens* (Leipzig, DE: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1917), §276.

⁴All translations herein are mine, except for the translations of Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit, Erste Hälfte, Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, Band VII[I], hrsg. E. Husserl (Halle a. d. S., DE: Niemeyer, 1927; repr. Tübingen, DE: Neomarius Verlag, 1949), where I use the translation of John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson in *Being and Time* (Oxford, GB: Blackwell, 1962). Hereafter citations in *Sein und Zeit* refer to the Neomarius edition, and citations in *Being and Time* refer to the Blackwell edition.

we cannot know “really” (viz., “objectively,” “literally,” “truly,” etc.) things and facts. Rather, all that we know might be called “rhetorical” because all our encounters with the world are shot through with or made possible by—in varying degrees of explicitness—figurative discourse and power-laden persuasion. In the terms of this thesis, there is no neutral, as Thomas Nagel might say, “view from nowhere” from where we can impartially observe the world independent of our “premises, media, methods, and materials,” that is, what Gabriel Markus calls our various “registries.”⁵

Call this idea heavyweight rhetoric.⁶ For example, Hans Blumenberg fights in this class, when he writes “As poor beings, humans need rhetoric as the art of seeming, an art that allows them to cope with their basic shortage of truth.”⁷ No doubt, though, the 20th-century was an era of heavyweights. Consider a few other contenders. Clearly, there is a rhetorical bent to Richard Rorty’s claim, “The world does not speak. Only we do”—as an outcome of metaphoric “vocabularies,” truth, for Rorty, is on the immanent side of discourse;⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, it might be said, existentializes rhetoric (in both its figurative and persuasive sense) in his term *habitus* to the point of a non-conceptual, bodily, capacity to act, feel, and think;⁹ and Thomas Kuhn suggests that even natural sciences are founded in underlying, quasi-metaphoric “paradigms.”¹⁰ Rummage through

⁵Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986); Markus Gabriel, *Warum es die Welt nicht gibt* (Berlin, DE: Ulstein, 2013), 56.

⁶I owe the difference between “heavyweight” and “lightweight” rhetoric to Amie L. Thomasson “A Pragmatic Method for Normative Conceptual Work” in *Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics*, ed. Alexis Burgess, Herman Cappelen, and David Plunkett (Oxford, GB: Oxford University Press, 2020), 438, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198801856.003.0021>. Thomasson calls metaphysicians “heavyweights” when they insist that their concepts discover deep truths about the world. Conversely, metaphysicians are “deflationists,” when they admit that their concepts are designed for contingent theoretical or practical purposes. Similarly, heavyweight rhetoric names the belief that we have discovered the deep truth that all, somehow, is rhetorical.

⁷“Der Mensch als das arme Wesen bedarf der Rhetorik als der Kunst des Scheins, die ihn mit seinem Mangel an Wahrheit fertig werden läßt.” Hans Blumenberg, “Anthropologische Annäherung an die Aktualität der Rhetorik,” in *Wirklichkeiten in denen wir leben: Aufsätze und eine Rede* (Stuttgart, DR: Reclam 1981), 105.

⁸Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge, GB: Cambridge University Press 1989), 6.

⁹Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique*, Collection Le sens commun 480 (Paris, FR: Éditions de Minuit, 1980), trans. Richard Nice as *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1990).

¹⁰Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed., intro. Ian Hacking (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

the 20th-century archives as you will. You will find some version of “rhetorical constructivism” (say)—the belief that language does not record what is but rather creates it.

However, as an example of the subjective genitive—philosophy’s rhetoric—Nietzsche’s remark can be read as what it, basically, is: a bit of language. Whether spoken or written, philosophy first comes onto the scene linguistically. As language, Nietzsche’s words can be studied semantically, syntactically, phonetically, etc. However, they can also be interrogated rhetorically: rather than arguing about whether Nietzsche’s thought is true as a thesis, we can discuss how he builds his thought as, in this case, an aphorism. Whereas the former might be a philosophical mode of reading concerned with the truth value of claims, the latter might be called a rhetorical mode of reading philosophy in which “the truth question is abstained from. What is asked after, rather, is what the text effectively looks to pass on, and what is necessary for this aim.”¹¹

Call this idea lightweight rhetoric. Unlike its heavyweight counterpart, a lightweight approach does not entail much beyond the truism that the practice of philosophizing is itself linguistic practice. Whereas the heavyweights, seemingly, rest their case on the fact that there are no facts, lightweights suspend this assumption as well, contending rather that the neo-Sophistic appeal to “the factive evidence of no-evidence is just as rhetorically contingent as the criticized metaphysicians’ appeal to the fact of ‘pure’ evidence.”¹² Although the heavyweight position is critical of “metaphysics,” it is still metaphysical. It describes how things must be. However, the lightweight position is heuristic. It merely suggests that “a clear separation between content and form of philosophical texts, between their propositions and stylistic form, which such propositions assume, is not, strictly speaking, possible.”¹³ On this score, reading philosophy

¹¹ “In dieser rhetorischen Lektüre wird von der Frage nach der Wahrheit abgesehen. Das, wonach gefragt wird, ist das, was ein Text tatsächlich ausrichtet, und was zu diesem Zweck erforderlich ist.” Samuel IJsseling, “Philosophie und Textualität. Über eine rhetorische Lektüre philosophischer Texte,” *Phänomenologische Forschungen* 12 (1982): 75, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24360247>.

¹² “Denn die öffentliche Berufung des Neosophisten auf die faktische *Evidenz der Nicht-Evidenz* ist ebenso rhetorisch kontingent wie die von ihm kritisierte Berufung des Metaphysikers auf das Faktum ‘reiner’ Evidenz.” Peter L. Oesterreich, “Thesen zum homo rhetoricus und zur Neugestaltung der Philosophie im 21 Jahrhundert,” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 20, no. 3 (August 2002): 296; <https://doi.org/10.1525/rh.2002.20.3.289>.

¹³ “Das heißt auch, dass eine klare Trennung zwischen Inhalt und Form philosophischer Texte, zwischen ihrem propositionalen Gehalt und der stilistischen Form,

rhetorically—at least in terms of a methodological approach—becomes as simple as reading politics rhetorically: both the logical treatise and the stump speech can be questioned in terms of truth or in terms of structure. Or both. One does not exclude the other.

If you insist upon heavyweight rhetoric—that “all” is (somehow) rhetorical—then philosophy, *a fortiori*, is included in this “all.” You are committed to the belief that philosophy must be investigated in terms of its figuration and persuasion. However, if you begin with the dull fact that philosophy is language (that is, if you are a lightweight), then you can (instead of must) read philosophy rhetorically (just as much as you could read it semantically, syntactically, phonetically, etc.). The difference here lies in the modal shift from “must” to “can.” Lightweights merely exercise their option to read philosophical texts as rhetoric; they do not commit to whether or not philosophy can express truth.

This essay is lightweight. It suspends but does not negate the truth value question about the practice of philosophizing—it takes no stance on whether or not certain arguments, to speak like Theodore Sider, do, in fact, carve better at the joints than others.¹⁴ The suspension here is mostly pragmatic. Solely to get a grip on *how* Kusch, Vieira Pinto, and Freire reappropriate Heidegger’s *Sein* lexicon with *ser* and *estar* requires in-depth exegesis before we argue about *whether* their words do, indeed, precisify Heidegger’s. However, lightweight rhetoric does imply that concepts have a history and that telling their story is something more than recounting a teleological progression from “myth to logic,” but rather admitting to the possibility that concepts are metaphorical and are “also basic components of philosophical speech, ‘conveyances’ that cannot be brought back into the real, the logical.”¹⁵ While remaining cordial with possibilities of the analysis of the truth of philosophical texts, this approach does claim equal importance for the discursive construction of such texts: we need to understand *what* and *how* philosophical arguments speak as much as we need to test *if* such arguments are true.

die sie annehmen, streng genommen nicht möglich ist.” Gerald Posselt and Andreas Hetzel, “Rhetorisches Philosophieren,” in *Handbuch Rhetorik und Philosophie*, ed. Andreas Hetzel and Gerald Posselt (Berlin, DE: De Gruyter 2017), 11.

¹⁴Theodore Sider, *Writing the Book of the World* (Oxford, GB: Clarendon Press, 2011).

¹⁵“... auch *Grundbestände* der philosophischen Sprache sein, ‘Übertragungen’, die sich nicht ins Eigentliche, in die Logizität zurückholen lassen.” Hans Blumenberg, “Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie,” *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 6 (1960): 9, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24355810>.

HEIDEGGER AND THE SENSE OF *SEIN*

Whatever else Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* might amount to, we might be compelled to take Heidegger at his word when he writes in the epigraph to *Sein und Zeit*:

Und so gilt es denn, *die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein* erneut zu stellen. Sind wir denn heute auch nur in der Verlegenheit, den Ausdruck "Sein" nicht zu verstehen? Keineswegs. Und so gilt es denn vordem, allererst wieder ein Verständnis für den Sinn dieser Frage zu wecken. Die konkrete Ausarbeitung der Frage nach dem Sinn von "Sein" ist die Absicht der folgenden Abhandlung.¹⁶

So it is fitting that we should raise anew *the question of the meaning of Being*. But are we nowadays even perplexed at our inability to understand the expression 'Being'? Not at all. So first of all we must reawaken an understanding for the meaning of this question. Our aim in the following treatise is to work out the question of the meaning of *Being* and to do so concretely.¹⁷

The goal of Heidegger's treatise is to concretely work out *Die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein* or as Macquairre and Robinson translate it, "the question of the meaning of Being." However, as Hubert L. Dreyfus reminds us, the problem with Macquairre and Robinson's translation of *Sein* as "Being" with a capital "B" is that it suggests "a supreme Being, the ultimate entity."¹⁸ This is compounded by the fact that the word *meaning* (Macquairre and Robinson's translation for *Sinn*) in English so often resembles words like *purpose* or *plan*. As such, the phrase "the question of the meaning of Being" treads dangerously close to something like "the question of the meaning of life" or "the question of the meaning of *being* alive, *being* on earth, *being* born instead of not, etc." However, this is not our only route into interpreting Heidegger's intention. We could quite readily (and more-or-less literally) read *Die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein* as "The question after the sense of *to be*" keeping *sense* for *Sinn* and writing *Sein* out as the infinitive of *to be* instead of the gerund *being*.

To ask after the sense of *to be* (the word) is something that we might not be used to in the same way that we are used to asking after the senses of other words. If, for example, a friend laments, "I had a difficult day at work!" we might rightfully wonder in what

¹⁶Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 1.

¹⁷Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 19.

¹⁸Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's "Being and Time," Division I* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1995), 11.

sense our friend means *difficult*: a dispute with colleagues? A bad commute? Layoffs? The senses of the word *difficult* in this case are manifold and admit to clarification.

However, the same might be said for the word *to be*. Consider an example Heideggerian in flavor. A carpenter in a workshop sets down a hammer and states, "This hammer is too heavy," while a physicist in a lab puts the same hammer on a scale and notes, "This hammer is two kilograms."¹⁹ Although analogous, the sense of *to be* in each example might, indeed, be different. In the sense of *Unzuhandenheit*, the carpenter means that the hammer "is" too heavy as a piece of equipment for the job. And, in the sense of *Vorhandenheit*, the physicist means that the hammer "is" a certain weight as an object with properties.²⁰ As Daniel O. Dahlstrom suggests, we can productively read Heidegger's method in the *Sein und Zeit* period as an attempt to point out the basic modes of comportment that condition what *to be* means respectively in each mode.²¹ Accordingly, we might, again, take Heidegger at his word in the epigraph: we should investigate what the sense of *to be* in each case is.

That Spanish and Portuguese have two such *be* words, *ser* and *estar*, force the hand of those interpreters of Heidegger whose idiolects include *ser* and *estar*. In reading *Sein und Zeit*, they must investigate what the sense of *Sein* is, before picking *ser* or *estar*.²² For example, the Gaos translation of *Sein und Zeit* gives *ser* "in the world" for *in-der-Welt-sein* ("being-in-the-world"), while the Rivera translation gives *estar* "in the world."²³ The existence of *ser* and *estar* can also provide greater leeway in the creative reappropriation of Heidegger's *Sein* lexicon. Senses of *to be* can be readily brought out and contrasted in interesting ways because *ser* and *estar* lexicalize aspects of "being" that might be left implicit in single *be* words. Before turning to an exegesis of how Kusch, Vieira Pinto, and Freire

¹⁹ See Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 154.

²⁰ See Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 73.

²¹ Daniel O. Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Method: Philosophical Concepts as Formal Indications," *Review of Metaphysics* 47, no. 4 (June 1994): 781, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20129578>.

²² I follow Claudia Maienborn, "A discourse-based account of Spanish *ser/estar*," *Linguistics* 43, no. 1 (2005): 157, <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling.2005.43.1.155>, in the belief that both *ser* and *estar* have the same lexical properties of *to be* and *Sein*. Hence, one can speak of *be* words when speaking of *ser* and *estar*.

²³ Martin Heidegger, *El ser y el tiempo*, intro. and trans. José Gaos, Sección de obras de filosofía (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1951); Martin Heidegger, *Ser y tiempo*, intro., trans., and notes, Jorge Eduardo Rivera, Colección Estructuras y Processos, Serie Filosofía (Madrid, ES: Trotta Editorial, 2003).

develop and deploy *ser* and *estar* in response to Heidegger, I review the semantics and usages of *ser* and *estar*.

THE SENSES OF *SER* AND *ESTAR*

For those not used to the *ser-estar* difference getting the knack for it is difficult. From an observer's perspective, *ser* and *estar* split up senses of other European languages' single *be* word (*to be*, *être*, *Sein*, for example). I suspect that part of the difficulty lies in the fact that *ser* and *estar* lexicalize senses of the *be* word that speakers of other European languages often convey through implicature. To illustrate this point, take the following examples of the English *to be*, all of which, seemingly, convey a different sense of *to be* given what the sentences typically imply. For current purposes, *to be* in all of these examples except for (7) could be readily substituted with the German *Sein*. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive of the senses of *to be* (or *Sein*) nor of much interest to the linguist. Rather, they are only meant as heuristics for our discussion of how Kusch, Vieira Pinto, and Freire creatively translate Heidegger. Consider:

- 1: The logos is.
- 2: ? Juan is [here].
- 3: The lecture is in the atrium.
- 4: The bar is on the corner.
- 5: Cheetahs are fast.
- 6: The pizza is delicious.
- 7: The crows are flying.

Although (1-7) all use the word *to be*, *to be* in each case looks to mean something different. What makes the case of *ser* and *estar* so interesting is that both the interpreter and the language learner—without needing to have read Heidegger—must work out the *Seinsfrage*; they need to ask themselves what they mean by *to be*. That is, the implied senses of *to be* in (1-7) need to be clarified, so that they can pick between *ser* and *estar* in everyday situations. Accordingly, the list below might be thought of as a pragmatic cypher with a short gloss of the implied senses of *to be* in (1-7) that *ser* and *estar* lexicalize in (1'-7') below.²⁴

²⁴ In the rest of what follows, I write the corresponding form of *to be* with a capital 'S' or 'E' hyphenated to the *to be* form to indicate whether it would be *ser* or *estar*.

Existence

1: The logos is-S.

In its absolute usage, *ser* can assert that something “is” (instead of “is not”), viz., to assert something’s actuality, reality, existence, etc. For example, the “*ego eimi*” of John 8:28 is translated as “*Yo Soy*” and “*Eu sou*” of the Spanish and Portuguese Bibles, respectively.

Presence

2: Juan is-E.

In its absolute usage, *estar* can assert that someone or something is present. For example, if you want to formalize some documents, you might be disappointed to find out, “The notary is-E not [present].”

Occurrence

3: The lecture is-S in the atrium.

With other sentence elements, *ser* can indicate where an action occurs. For example, “Where is-S the exit?” asks after where the act of exiting takes place.²⁵

Location

4: The bar is-E on the corner.

With other sentence elements, *estar* can indicate where something is located. For example, “Where is-E the exit?” asks after *where* the exit door is.

Definitional

5: Cheetahs are-S fast.

With attributes, *ser* can express generally agreed-upon facts about the sentence’s grammatical subject. For example, “Juan Domingo Perón is-S Argentine” expresses such facts.

Factive

6: The pizza is-E delicious.

With attributes, *estar* can express things about the grammatical subject that are vividly encounterable as such. For example, a botanist, upon discovering a new species of leaves, might declare, “the leaves

²⁵ The exit examples come from George de Mello, “The Semantic Values of *ser* and *estar*,” *Hispania* 62, no. 3 (September 1979): 338, <https://doi.org/10.2307/340597>.

are-E yellow!" because the botanist is struck by the leaves' vivid yellow color.²⁶

Happening

7': The crows are-E flying.

Grammatically entailed, *estar* is the auxiliary verb for progressive tense constructions. As commonly known, there is no exact equivalence for (7) in German as there is in Spanish and Portuguese.

As a pragmatic cipher, (1'-7') pick out obvious cases. In these examples, our gains and losses are few when moving from a single *be* word to *ser* and *estar* (and vice versa). However, it gets tricky when context allows for nuanced choices. These are also the moments where Kusch, Vieira Pinto, and Freire can employ the *ser-estar* difference to pick apart what might be considered the possible ambiguities of Heidegger's *Sein* lexicon. With this in mind, we can imperfectly regroup (1'-7') as three pairs to express such places where interpreters could pick between *ser* and *estar*, depending on the sense of *to be* meant. Later on, these three pairs will also provide inroads for reading the differing strategies that Kusch, Vieira Pinto, and Freire employ in remaking Heidegger's German. Kusch focuses on the definitional/factive pair; Vieira Pinto, the occurrence/location pair; and Freire, the absolute/happening pair.

DEFINITIONAL/FACTIVE

This pair indexes the *ser-estar* difference in attributive usage—the usage by far the most debated in linguistics.²⁷ The textbook account says that *ser* indicates permanent attributes of the sentence's subject; *estar* temporary attributes. On this score, one would say, "the bicycle is-S is gray" because it is painted as such, but "the bicycle is-E gray" because it is covered in chalky dust. However, the "permanent-temporary" rule does not seem to cover all cases. "One is-E

²⁶ The yellow leaf example comes from Antonio Querido, "The Semantics of Copulative Constructions in Portuguese" in *Current Studies in Romance Linguistics*, ed. Marta Luján and Frederick Gerald Hensey (Georgetown, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1976), 354.

²⁷ There is a substantial amount written on *ser* and *estar*, especially in the attributive usage. As an introduction to some of the general ideas, see Rafael Marín, "Ser y estar," in *Enciclopedia de lingüística hispánica*, ed. Javier Gutiérrez-Rexach (London, GB: Routledge, 2016), 13–24.

dead” and “One is-S conscious of a fact,” even though the former, indeed, is permanent, and the latter certainly seems situational.

In contrast, my view of the *ser-estar* difference in attributive use follows basically Maienborn’s. Maienborn challenges the “permanent-temporary” rule for *ser* and *estar* in attributive usage by claiming that both *ser* and *estar* share the same “lexical semantics properties that “are identical to those of the English *be*, German *Sein*, etc.” This means that *ser* and *estar* can be used with both “accidental” and “temporary” attributes in the same way that *to be* and *Sein* are. The important difference rather is that with *estar* speakers “restrict” their claims to a “specific discourse situation” whereas when speakers use *ser* they make no such restriction.²⁸

Analogous to Maienborn’s account, Spanish philosopher Julian Marías eloquently challenges to the “accidental-essential” rule for *ser* and *estar* in attributive usage, when he writes:

[Q]uizá Ofelia “es” pálida, pero no puede ser sino real la mujer que “está” pálida. Y, sobre todo, el verbo “estar” significa también inequívocamente la inclusión—todo lo constitutiva y permanente y esencial e intrínseca que se quiera—en todo lo que es un lugar, un ámbito, un dónde.²⁹

Perhaps Ophelia is-S pale, but it can only be but real the woman that is-E pale. And, more than anything, *estar* signifies unequivocally the inclusion—everything that is constitutive, permanent, and essential, and the like—in everything that is a place, a field, a “where.”

Whereas *ser* attributions are not restricted to any particular reality, *estar* attributions are restricted to a factive one. *Estar* indicates something as it is in a vivid confrontation with the speaker. Clearly, this type of vivid confrontation might map frequently onto traits that are, by definition, temporary. But it does not have to. For example, Victoria Escandell-Vidal gives “That day Juan was-E democratic” and “Pedro is-E today very French!” as well-formed sentences.³⁰ Although “being a democrat” and “being French” indeed appear “permanent,” *estar* can still be used to indicate that the speaker encounters Juan’s “being a democrat” and Pedro’s “being French” factively. Conversely, the sentences “Juan was-S democratic” or “Pedro is-S very French!” would make no such factive reference.

²⁸ Maienborn, “A discourse-based account of Spanish *ser/estar*,” 153.

²⁹ Julian Marías Aguilera, “Estar a la muerte,” in *Obras de Julian Marías*, vol. 3 (Madrid, ES: Revista de Occidente, 1959), 173.

³⁰ Victoria Escandell-Vidal, “Evidential Commitment and Feature Mismatch in Spanish *estar* Constructions,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 128 (April 2018): 115, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2017.10.004>.

OCCURRENCE/LOCATION

Although not contested like *ser* and *estar* in attributive usage, this pair still allows for a nuanced shade of meaning especially when the interrogative *where* is involved. As shown above, “Where is-S the exit?” and “where is-E the exit?” ask after two different things. The *ser* interrogative here asks after where the act of exiting takes place; the *estar* interrogative where the exit door is located. Clearly allied with the absolute usages (1’-2’), this pair differentiates between the existence of an event (that it “is,” exists) and its presence (its concrete availability). Hence, for example, when Juan Tonto mistakes a butcher shop for a church, the butcher rebukes him by saying “Mass is-S in church” and not by saying “Mass is-E in church” because the butcher means that the event of mass takes place in the church and not that a particular mass is located at a particular church.³¹

Perhaps the respective etymologies of *ser* and *estar* best illustrate the occurrence/location pair. *Ser* is derived from a combination of the Latin *sedere* (to sit) and *esse* (to be), and *estar* is derived from the Latin *stare* (to stand). With this in mind, Luis Crespo reminds us that somewhat antiquated usages of the English *to stand* can often convey senses of *estar*.³² Accordingly, we could say, “Mass is in church” to mean that mass takes place in church, and we could say that “the church stands on the corner” to mean where mass is located, and, in so doing, keep, more or less, the basic difference between *ser* and *estar* intact for this pair.

EXISTENCE/HAPPENING

Unlike the first two pairs, which have everyday applications, the existence/happening pair is here designed entirely to interpret philosophical usages. As demonstrated in example (1’), *ser* in its absolute usage can assert that something “is” in terms of existence or actuality. But there is a linguistic plot twist. As demonstrated in (7’), *estar* is the auxiliary verb for progressive aspect constructions in Spanish and Portuguese. The sentence “we are speaking” would, hence, take an inflected form of *estar* as the auxiliary and the corresponding

³¹ Aurelio M. Espinosa, *Cuentos populares españoles recogidos de la tradición oral de España y publicados con una introducción y notas comparativas*, tomo I, Stanford University Publications, University Series, Language and Literature, 3, no. 1 (Stanford, CA: Published by the University, 1923), 403.

³² Luis Crespo, “Los Verbos ser Y estar Explicados por un Nativo,” *Hispania* 29, no. 1 (Febrero1946): 45–55, <https://doi.org/10.2307/333126>.

form for *speaking*. Certainly, this construction applies to progressive aspect constructions of *ser* as well. In English one can hear hints of such a construction in statements like, “You’re being foolish,” a statement that does not mean you are (always) a fool but that you are (currently) being one.

However, in Spanish and Portuguese the absolute usage of *ser* in asserting existence can be readily switched over to a progressive tense construction in a philosophically compelling way. For example, consider Enrique del Percio’s gnomic use of *ser* and *estar*, which avails itself of what I call the existence/happening pair:

Las cosas no *son*, sino que *están siendo*.³³

? Things are-S not, ?? but rather are-E being-S.

As the question marks indicate, it is very difficult to render Del Percio’s thought here with a single *be* word. We might try out a less literal interpretation instead:

Las cosas no *son*, sino que *están siendo*.³⁴

Things do not *simply* exist, but rather they are *continually* existing.

However, this also does a poor job. This is mostly because *estar*, even in its auxiliary usage here, retains some of its semantic value of facticity and location. To assert that something “is-E being-S” is to mean that its “isness” (i.e., its existence or actuality) is *happening* in a concrete time and place, a doubled sense of *being*—as a happening—that cannot be easily captured by doubling up on a single *be* word. With an eye towards how the existence/happening pair of *ser* and *estar* might catalyze readings of Heidegger’s *Sein*, consider how we might attempt to render Del Percio’s maxim in German:

Las cosas no *son*, sino que *están siendo*. (131)

? Die Dinge sind nicht, sondern ??

Again, the question marks indicate difficulty especially when we consider that German, strictly speaking, does not have a progressive tense analogous with Spanish (or Portuguese) construction under discussion here. We might be better off with:

Las cosas no *son*, sino que *están siendo*. (131)

Die Dinge *sind* nicht, sondern *werden*.

³³ Enrique del Percio, “Motivaciones políticas y sociales del renovado interés por la filosofía de la liberación y otras concepciones afines,” *Tendencias Sociales. Revista de Sociología*, núm. 1 (Febrero 2018): 131, <https://doi.org/10.5944/ts.1.2018.21360>.

³⁴ Del Percio, “Motivaciones políticas y sociales,” 131.

This last example seems to get closer, but the temporal-ontological connection between concrete occurrence and general existence that is indexed by a finite form of *estar* and the progressive participle of *ser* is also covered up or lost here. In both the English and the German, we have to recourse to different words to attempt to capture the aspectual shift. However, this ruins the point. In del Percio's formula, a *single* concept of *being* is represented here with its different senses of facticity/location and essence set off and contrasted with one another.

To move from a single *be* word like *Sein* to *ser* and *estar* forces us to clarify what sense of *to be* we mean before we choose between the two. What is fascinating about *ser* and *estar* is that these words lexicalize meanings of *to be* that are often conveyed through implicature in other European languages. This linguistic consideration, in and of itself, is not remarkable. That certain languages lexicalize certain meanings and other languages imply them is a truism. *Hoja* in Spanish can mean *plant leaf*, *knife blade*, or *paper sheet* depending on context. However, that *ser* and *estar* mark off lexically different senses of *to be* offers thinkers an impressive rhetorical resource: it allows them to use the semantics of *ser* and *estar* as foils to discuss ontological matters in ways that might be difficult with a single *be* word.

With this in mind, my discussion now turns to how Kusch, Vieira Pinto, and Freire use the lexical material of *ser* and *estar* to critique and repurpose Heidegger's *Sein* lexicon.

RODOLFO KUSCH

Born Gunther Rodolfo Kusch in Buenos Aires in 1922, Kusch was the son of German parents who moved to Argentina shortly after the end of the First World War. Kusch grew up speaking German and Spanish, and there is good reason to believe that he would have read Heidegger in German.³⁵ Beyond the scholarship

³⁵Walter D. Mignolo, "Immigrant Consciousness," intro. to *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América* by Rodolfo Kusch, trans. Maria Lugones and Joshua M. Price, Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2010), xiii. Originally published as Rudolfo Kusch, *El pensamiento indígena americano* (Puebla, MX: Editorial José M. Cajica, 1970); followed by *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América*, 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires, AR: Instituto de Cultura Americana, 1973), and *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América*, 3rd ed. (Buenos Aires, AR: Hachette, 1977). Citations refer to the Hachette edition.

of Walter D. Mignolo, Kusch is virtually unheard-of in North America.³⁶ Throughout his entire writing career, Kusch uses the senses of being indexed by *ser* and *estar* to tackle, mostly, Heidegger's philosophy. *Ser* and *estar* are major leitmotifs of Kusch's writing and the words appear so frequently as catalysts for reflection in Kusch's collected works that Carlos Cullen claims that the *ser-estar* difference for Kusch is "truly an obsession."³⁷

Given its breadth and depth, it is clearly out of the comparative scope of this paper to try to canvass the entirety of Kusch's use of *ser* and *estar*. However, what I label above as the definitional/factive pair is a productive way into understanding one element of how Kusch critiques Heidegger and begins to creatively reappropriate Heidegger's *Sein* lexicon.

Remember that a sentence like "Bariloche is beautiful" (or, for current purposes, *Bariloche ist schön*) can take either *ser* or *estar*, depending on what is meant. If it is meant that Bariloche classes as one of the beautiful cities of the world, i.e., an agreed-upon fact, then *ser* is used; if it is meant that Bariloche is encountered in the here-and-now as beautiful, then *estar* is used. It is clearly this difference between *ser* and *estar*, between the "definitional" and "factive," that Kusch has in mind, when he describes the words' meanings:

Ambos verbos tienen gramaticalmente una diferenciación clara: el "ser" define, el "estar" señala. Si hiciéramos además una enumeración de las posibles determinaciones, obtenidas *a priori* en un plano filosófico, hallaríamos que "ser" hace referencia a esencia, o sea a lo lleno del entre, y "estar," a la ubicación de un entre. Lo que "está" no dice nada de su interioridad, sino sólo de su condición, la de señalar un modo exterior de darse.³⁸

Both verbs have a clear grammatical difference: *ser* defines; *estar* signals. Moreover, if we were to enumerate the possible determinations of the pair, obtained *a priori* in a philosophical plane, then we would find out that *ser* refers to essence, that is, the fullness of an entity, whereas *estar* refers to the location of an entity. What is-E does not say anything about its interiority; rather, it only speaks of its condition, a condition that signals an exterior mode of occurring.

³⁶ For example, see Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press 1995).

³⁷ Carlos A. Cullen, *Fenomenología de la crisis moral: sabiduría de la experiencia de los pueblos* (Buenos Aires, AR: Ediciones Castañeda, 1978), 11n2.

³⁸ Rodolfo Kusch, "El 'estar-siendo' como estructura existencial y como decisión cultural americana," in *Geocultura del hombre americano* (Buenos Aires, AR: Fernando García Cambeiro, 1976), 153.

Certainly, overtones of Marías come through here. *Ser* tells us what something generally “is” no matter how we currently encounter it; *estar* tells us how we currently encounter something no matter what it generally “is.” Going forward, Kusch can generalize from this difference to claim that *estar* indicates a sense of being that, in its facticity, is prior to the definitional sense of being suggested by *ser*. An argument of priority starts up. *Estar’s* facticity is both, somehow, prior to and the background for *ser’s* definitions. Or, along with Bordas de Rojas, we might say:

El *estar* constituye un paso previo, un estado de preocupación por las significación de las cosas en el contexto de la marcha del mundo. Se da antes que la necesidad de la investigación de las esencias. No es que resulten negadas, sino que se trata de establecer prioridades ontológicas; ese nivel pre-ontico apunta al *sentido* antes que al *ser*.³⁹

Estar constitutes a prior step, a state of concern with the meaning of things in the context of the course of the world. This occurs before the necessity of investigating essences. It is not that essences are negated, but rather what is sought after is the establishment of ontological priorities. This *pre-ontological* level points to *sense* prior to *ser*.

For Kusch, *estar* points to a sense of *to be* that so factively “is” that it is felt or encountered prior to any structuration, even if this structuration is pre-thematic or embodied.⁴⁰ Accordingly, Kusch begins to wonder if *Sein* without *estar* to balance it out tends to get stuck in *ser’s* definitional sense of *to be*. If this is the case, then Heidegger’s plan of fundamental ontology in *Sein und Zeit* might be off the mark from the start. When Heidegger elects to begin his study with *Da-sein*, Heidegger might, unknowingly, leave the definitional/factive senses of *to be* ambiguous, because, as Kusch might argue, Heidegger does not have the lexical resources to keep the senses apart. Hence, Kusch can claim that Heidegger:

Prefiere el *Da-sein* y descarta lo referente a la vida, o *Leben*, porque ésta no podía ser objeto de una ontología. Esta decisión convierte el carácter pre-ontológico del análisis de Heidegger en otro proto-ontológico, de tal modo que una descripción de lo pre-ontológico habrá de ser más propia de un análisis del “estar.”⁴¹

³⁹ Nerva Bordas de Rojas Paz, *Filosofía a la intemperie: Kusch: ontología desde América*, Colección Filosofía (Buenos Aires, AR: Editorial Biblos, 1997), 53.

⁴⁰ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, 18, is emblematic of the Heideggerian idea that our practices contain a pre-reflective articulation of what “it is to be a person, an object, a society.” However, Kusch often seems to suggest that *estar* is a kind of being that is prior to any kind of articulation, even if pre-reflective.

⁴¹ Kusch, “El ‘estar-siendo,’” 153.

Prefers Dasein and rules out any reference to life or *Leben* because this could not be the object of an ontology. This decision converts the pre-ontological character of Heidegger's analysis into a proto-ontological one, such that a description of the pre-ontological would be more appropriate as an analysis of *estar*.

Kusch's remark seems to track section (§6) of *Sein und Zeit*, the so-called "ontological destruction."⁴² Painting very broadly, Heidegger here reviews how different epochs in European philosophical history assume already interpreted definitions of *to be* without working out from where these interpretations authentically spring; for Heidegger, these epochs are mired in a limited or homogenous senses of *to be* that prevents their thinkers from seeing the diverse factive or phenomenal origins of what it means *to be*. However, Kusch denies Heidegger the possibility of ever escaping the definitional cul-de-sac of *to be* because, as Kusch would claim, *Sein* as *ser* remains within the definitional realm. Hence, Kusch stresses that *estar* points to:

. . . un campo pre-ontológico desde el cual las consideraciones de Heidegger correspondían posiblemente a una proto-ontología; o sea a un ser ya constituido que se fundamenta en el corpus de las especulaciones sobre el ser constituido tradicionalmente en Occidente. . . . Pero esto abre una problemática que pertenece a un pre-recinto o hueco pre-filosófico que podríamos llamar del *estar*, en donde no cabe tanto la reflexión sobre un ser constituido, sino más bien, sobre la previa *experiencia originadora del ser*.⁴³

A pre-ontological field from which Heidegger's consideration would possibly correspond to a proto-ontology; that is, to an already constituted *ser* that is grounded in the corpus of speculations over the *ser* traditionally constituted in the west. . . . However, this opens up a problem that belongs to the pre-enclosure or space that we could call *estar*, in which the reflection over a constituted *ser* is not fitting, but rather where a reflection over the prior *originating experience of ser* is.

We might say that Kusch radicalizes the factive sense of *estar* to indicate an encounter with reality that defies conceptuality. As such, *estar* picks out what absolutely "is" prior to *ser* as much as this absolute "isness" of *estar* animates the structuring, definitional sense of *to be* that is indexed in *ser*. The deconstruction of the history of ontology would then need to focus on how *estar* animates *ser*, how

⁴²Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 19.

⁴³Rodolfo Kusch, "El estar como pre-recinto del ser," in *Rodolfo Kusch: obras completas*, vol. 3 (Rosario, AR: Fundación A. Ross, 2007), 537.

this absolute facticity catalyzes any definition. However, Heidegger seems to be up to the same thing in *Sein und Zeit*. No doubt, Heideggerians might parry that Heidegger's phenomenological method (§7) assuages any concerns that Kusch might raise via *ser* and *estar*. Yet Kusch's line of attack might not be through. Heidegger claims:

*Ontologie ist nur als Phänomenologie möglich. Der phänomenologische Begriff von Phänomen meint als das Sichzeigende das Sein des Seiende, seinen Sinn, seine Modifikationen und Derivate.*⁴⁴

Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible. In the phenomenological conception of "phenomenon" what one has in mind as that which shows itself is the Being of entities, its meaning, its modifications, and derivatives.⁴⁵

But even if the phenomenon is the "self-showing *Sein* of *Seiende*," Kusch might stubbornly press on and retort that *Sein* without the counterweight of *estar* might still fall into *ser*; that is, the self-showing *Sein* of *Seiende* still resides in the definitional realm and not the factive one. Kusch is willing to drive the "pre-enclosure" of *estar* as far down as it needs to go so that Kusch can mark off a sense of *to be* that has nothing to do with traditional senses of *to be* in European philosophy, including Heidegger's *Sein*. *Estar* creates:

. . . la posibilidad de connotar un mundo sin definiciones, en el que campea únicamente la circunstancia, esa que precisamente, según Aristóteles, no era objeto de filosofía, sino apenas un punto de partida que debía ser superado para llegar al ámbito de ser y pasarse así al de la definición. . . . Como el *estar* corresponde al ámbito de la antidefinición, queda segregado y adquiere con ello una honrosa autonomía, según la cual, legaliza y estabiliza su régimen.⁴⁶

The possibility of connoting a world without definitions in which only circumstance roams—circumstance, which, according to Aristotle, was not the object of philosophy, but rather barely a starting point that had to be overcome to arrive at the area of *ser* and to move into definition. . . . As *estar* corresponds to the area of anti-definition, it remains segregated and acquires an honorable autonomy, according to which it legalizes and establishes its regiment.

⁴⁴ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 35.

⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 60. It is interesting that Macquarrie and Robinson resort to Heidegger's text in a footnote (i.e., 60n1) to explain their translation of the second sentence in this passage.

⁴⁶ Rodolfo Kusch, "La encrucijada de estar no más," in *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América*, 252.

The word choice “connote” carries the weight here. Kusch codes *estar* as purely deictic; it points to, indicates, reveals something without truly denoting what that something “is.” For Kusch, it is the connotation of absolute factive presence that is the *sine qua non* background against which any kind of structured understanding, comportment, knowledge, etc. is possible. To get out of the articulation of *ser* is not to find oneself in “nothing,” but rather to find oneself in the “pre-enclosure” of *estar*. Hence, Kusch can say that:

El “es” son los episodios en el que se manifiestan las preferencias, pero éstas sólo sirven para restituir el “estar.” Son en este sentido las olas que caracterizan la superficie de mi vivir, pero cuyas raíces se dan en lo más profundo del no-ser, en suma, del “estar.”⁴⁷

The “is-S” are the episodes where preferences are manifested, but these preferences only serve to reconstitute *estar*. In this sense, they are the waves that characterize the surface of my life but whose roots occur at the deepest level of no-*ser*, in sum, that of *estar*.

It is at this “deepest level of no-*ser*,” that is, at the level of *estar*, that Kusch thinks it appropriate to talk about a pre-ontology without accidentally getting tangled up with a proto-ontology. Kusch might concede Heidegger’s thesis that ontology can only occur as phenomenology. However, in order to “do phenomenology truly” (haciendo realmente fenomenología) Kusch is resolute that the method needs to proceed from what first “Is-E and, incidentally, is-S” (pertenece a un margen de “estar,” que, de paso, “es”).⁴⁸ In other words, we might say that Kusch sustains that the definitional sense of *to be* (“Bari-loche is-S beautiful”) and the factive sense of *to be* (“Bari-loche is-E beautiful”) need to be disambiguated as the starting point of an authentic phenomenology.

ÁLVARO VIEIRA PINTO

Virtually unknown outside of Brazil, Vieira Pinto was a leading intellectual figure in 20th-century Brazil. An integral part of the *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros*, Vieira Pinto was a true public intellectual and polymath. Trained as a medical doctor, he often taught courses on mathematics and logic in addition to his work in

⁴⁷ Kusch, “el ‘estar-siendo,’” 154–155.

⁴⁸ Kusch, “el ‘estar-siendo,’” 157.

philosophy.⁴⁹ Vieira Pinto's principal philosophical work, *Consciência e realidade nacional*, is a two-volume epic that syncretically spans across European philosophical history and forgoes nearly every convention of academic philosophy. Vieira Pinto neither includes bibliographic references nor mentions thinkers' names whose ideas he uses. In a contemporary review, Michel Debrun laments, "it seems to deserve rather negative observations the philosophical cocktail that Professor Vieira Pinto offers us. Inspirations, decidedly antagonistic cross paths, creating unexpected combinations, the number of which only precise calculation could tell."⁵⁰ However, *Consciência e realidade* is a compelling work of 20th-century Brazilian philosophy. Many of its ideas form the backbone of Freire's philosophy, and Vieira Pinto's highly idiosyncratic synthesis of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger certainly merits more critical attention.

In *Consciência e realidade nacional*, one of Vieira Pinto's most prevalent argumentative strategies is to to reappropriate a well-known concept from European philosophy, reframing it for his own purposes. For example, elsewhere in *Consciência e realidade nacional*, Vieira Pinto reworks Karl Jaspers's notion of *Grenzsituation* ("limit-situation"), moving it away from its rather grim, existentialist meaning in Jaspers towards a meaning of collective historical change.⁵¹

For present purposes, Vieira Pinto notably performs the same procedure with Heidegger's *in-der-Welt-sein* ("being-in-the-world"). Evoking what I call the occurrence/location difference between *ser* and *estar*, Vieira Pinto uses the fact that *in-der-Welt-sein* could be interpreted as *ser* "in the world" or *estar* "in the world" (or both at the same time) as a staging ground to critique Heidegger and to articulate his own philosophy.

Recall that the example, "Where is the lecture?" can take either *ser* or *estar*, depending on the meaning. If we want to know where the event of the lecture takes place, we can use *ser*; if we want to

⁴⁹For an intellectual biography of Álvaro Vieira Pinto, see Norma Côrtes, *Esperança e Democracia: As idéias de Álvaro Vieira Pinto* (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2003).

⁵⁰"Parece merecer observações mais negativas o coquetel filosófico ao qual nos convida o Professor Vieira Pinto. Inspirações decididamente antagônicas se cruzam, dando combinações inesperadas cujo número só um cálculo logístico poderia avaliar." Michel Debrun, "O problema da ideologia do desenvolvimento," *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* 2, no. 2 (1962): 242.

⁵¹For a detailed discussion of Vieira Pinto's reappropriation of Jaspers, see Lucas Rossi Corcoran, "Paulo Freire's Situação-limite," *Rhetoric Review* 43, no. 1 (forthcoming).

know where the lecture is actually located, we can use *estar*. Closely allied with the words' absolute usages (1' and 2' above), *ser* in this case indicates that something is, exists, in a "somewhere" and *estar* indicates that something is present, available in a "somewhere."

The claim that the senses of *to be* or *Sein* in Heidegger's *in-der-Welt-sein* are not adequately disambiguated is the first move of Vieira Pinto's attack. That one could see Portuguese as lexicalizing these different senses of *to be* allows Vieira Pinto to hold the "occurrence" sense and the "location" sense apart, framing his argument as a comparison of both meanings in relation to the single *be* word, *Sein*. Hence, Vieira Pinto can begin by stating:

A expressão alemã "*in der Welt sein*," em que foi originalmente pensado o conceito, presta-se a um desdobramento, que a língua portuguesa permite, distinguindo entre os dois sentidos, confundidos no idioma de origem, do verbo "*sein*," "*estar*" e "*ser*."⁵²

The German expression *in-der-Welt-sein*, in which the concept was originally thought of, lends itself to an unfolding in Portuguese of the verb *Sein*, in such a way that two senses can be distinguished, which are confused in the original verb, that of *estar* and *ser*.

Ser "in the world" and *estar* "in the world" could readily index two different senses of *to be* "in the world": *ser* "in the world" might mean that something exists "in the world," whereas *estar* in the world might mean that something is located "in the world." We have already seen this semantic difference between *ser* and *estar* in the examples "Mass is-S in church" and "Mass is-E in church." It is the difference between where an event happens and where an event is found. Building upon this everyday difference between *ser* and *estar*, Vieira Pinto can use the respective semantics of *ser* and *estar* "in the world" as models to help sketch differing modes of "being-in-the-world." *Estar* "in the world" can indicate where one is located—where one concretely finds oneself. And *ser* "in the world" can indicate where one enacts one's existence. Vieira Pinto begins to code *estar* "in the world" as such here. *Estar* "in the world" is:

O achar-se o ente humano na convivência de outros entes, humanos e inanimados, que formam para êle o espaço circunstante, em parte social, em parte físico, onde se acha, onde lhe é dado existir, que o contém, envolvendo-o.⁵³

⁵² Álvaro Vieira Pinto, *Consciência e realidade nacional: Volume II: A consciência crítica* (Rio de Janeiro, BR: Contraponto, 2021), 165.

⁵³ Vieira Pinto, *Consciência e realidade nacional II*, 166.

The finding of the human being in the interaction of other entities, both human and inanimate, that form for the human being the surrounding space, in part social, in part physical, where we find ourselves, where we are given over to exist, what contains us, enveloping us.

Vieira Pinto existentializes the location sense of *estar* “in the world.” *Estar* “in the world” illustrates one’s most real “where.” It is the concrete reality of being a person. An illuminating heuristic for Vieira Pinto’s use of *estar* “in the world” (as well as his use of *ser* “in the world” discussed below) might be found in Jean Paul Sartre’s well-known difference between being-in-itself and being-for-itself.⁵⁴ *Estar* “in the world” implies one’s brute being—one’s givenness in an historical moment, that is, being-in-itself. Hence, the notion *estar* “in the world” pertains to the concrete conditions that one must work within and against. In this sense, we might also find Karl Jaspers’s notion of situational being in the background of Vieira Pinto’s *estar* “in the world” as well. Jaspers’s writes:

Weil Dasein ein Sein in Situationen ist, so kann ich niemals aus der Situation heraus, ohne in *eine andere einzutreten*. Alles Situationensbegreifen bedeutet, daß ich mir Ansätze schaffe, Situationen zu verwandeln, nicht aber, daß ich das In-Situation-Sein überhaupt aufheben kann.⁵⁵

Because Dasein is a being-in-situation, I can, thus, never get out of a situation, without stepping into another one. All conceptualizing of situations signifies that I only create approaches to alter the situation on hand. However, I can never revoke in-situation-being.

Jaspers’s *In-Situation-Sein* and Vieira Pinto’s *estar* “in the world,” clearly, are conceptual analogs. Both portray a concrete, locative sense of being that constitutively sets the stage for one’s existence. In contrast, Vieira Pinto’s *ser* “in the world” highlights the other side of the occurrence/location pairing for the semantics of *ser* and *estar*. The notion *ser* “in the world” exhibits how one manifests existence—how one *is* in its fullest sense—within “the world” Accordingly, Vieira Pinto codes *ser* “in the world” as such:

Dizer que o homem “é no mundo,” é dizer que apresenta ao mundo um ser constituído, o que ele “é,” mas ao mesmo tempo implica afirmar que isso que êle “é,” só o “é” graças à condição expressa pelo termo: “no mundo.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ For a concise summary of this difference, see Luna Dolezal, “Reconsidering the Look in Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*,” *Sartre Studies International* 18, no. 1 (2012): 11.

⁵⁵ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophie* (Berlin, DE: Springer-Verlag, 1948), 469.

⁵⁶ Vieira Pinto, *Consciência e realidade nacional II*, 166.

To say that a human “is-S in the world” is to say that a constituted being is presented to the world, what the human “is-S.” But, at the same time, this implies the affirmation that what the human “is-S,” is-S as such only because of the condition expressed by the term “in the world.”

Whereas *estar* “in the world” might designate where one is located, one’s in-situation-being, *ser* “in the world” specifies where one “is” — where one exists as an event. Similarly to how *estar* “in the world” relates to Sartre’s being-in-itself, *ser* “in the world” traces the idea of being-for-itself, the kind of being that can negate and transcend its givenness in the act of constituting itself. As such, we can see a frame of existential freedom taking shape: Vieira Pinto establishes the relationship between *ser* “in the world” and *estar* “in the world” as a dialectic. *Estar* “in the world” displays our basic givenness, and *ser* “in the world” sketches the being that we constitute in our actions. To use a Sartrean gloss, Vieira Pinto carves *ser* “in the world” and *estar* “in the world” as representative mockups for being-for-itself and being-in-itself, respectively. As Vieira Pinto sees it, the advantage of interpreting *In-der-Welt-sein* in Portuguese is that it allows us to explicate the dialectic between being-in-itself and being-for-itself, the dialectic between *estar* “in the world” and *ser* “in the world.” Vieira Pinto develops the dialectic between the two modes of being-in-the-world in the following:

Deste modo, é lícito afirmar que no íntimo da expressão “*In der Welt sein*” se dá o que se deve admitir como essência da realidade humana, o conjunto das suas relações sociais, porquanto significa, simultânea e identicamente, “estar no mundo” como condição para “ser no mundo.” “*Ich Bin*,” da mesma maneira que “*sum*,” quer dizer tanto “*estou*” como “*sou*.” O que o pensamento alemão contemporâneo viu com clareza é que “*estou*” e “*sou*” implicam ambos o complemento “*in der Welt*,” “no mundo” . . . ao compreender que só estou no mundo para ser, revela-se-me com insuspeitada luminosidade uma relação complementar: só sou porque estou, ou, noutras palavras, sou o que sou porque estou no mundo onde estou.⁵⁷

Hence, it is legitimate to affirm that in the heart of the expression *In-der-Welt-sein* what ought to be admitted as the essence of human reality, the set of its social relations, occurs. This is because *in-der-Welt-sein* signifies simultaneously and identically *estar* “in the world” as the condition for *ser* “in the world.” The German *ich bin* in the same way as the Latin *sum* means “I am-E” as much as it means “I am-S.” What contemporary German thought saw with clarity is that both “I am-E”

⁵⁷ Vieira Pinto, *Consciência e realidade nacional II*, 167.

and "I am-S" imply the compliment "*in der Welt*," "in the world." Upon understanding that I am-E in the world in order to be-S, a complementary relationship is revealed to me with unusual brightness: I am-S only because I am-E, or, in other words, I am-S what I am-S because I am-E in the world where I am-E.

The point here is somewhat clear. We are not better off taking *in-der-welt-Sein* as exclusively *estar* "in the world" or *ser* "in the world." Rather, *In-der-Welt-sein* can express "the essence of human reality" because it contains *both* modes of being-in-the-world—that is, *estar* "in the world" and *ser* "in the world." Vieira Pinto sees human reality as constitutive, dialectical outcome of *estar* "in the world" and *ser* "in the world" coordinating with one another: the concrete situations that precipitate action that create new concrete situations and so on. For Vieira Pinto, the essential element in this dialectic progression is the complement "in the world." The concept of "world" confers onto the dialectic of *estar* (givenness) and *ser* (action) an ultimately historically and geographically situated frame of reference.

Vieira Pinto challenges Heidegger (although without ever mentioning Heidegger's name) by focusing his argument on how *ser* and *estar* might be able to pick apart lexically senses of *to be* that remain implicit in Heidegger's well-known notion *in-der-Welt-sein*. Analogous to Kusch's critique and creative reappropriation of Heidegger's *Sein* lexicon, Vieira Pinto questions whether Heidegger might leave senses of *to be* ambiguous. Developing the everyday difference in the occurrence/location pair, Vieira Pinto approves of *in-der-Welt-sein* only because Vieira Pinto can read what I call above the *ser/estar* "in the world" dialectic into it. The *Sein* of Heidegger's *in-der-welt-Sein* expresses simultaneously the differing modes of being-in-the-world that *ser* "in the world" and *estar* "in the world" can so succinctly depict, that of being "in the world" as an event, as the constitution of what is, and that of being "in the world" as a given, the concrete historical "where" that conditions our possibilities.

PAULO FREIRE

Dissimilar to the cases of Kusch and Vieira Pinto, it, indeed, might be difficult to overstate Freire's influence in Anglophone academic circles in the 20th century. However, there has been practically no effort in North America to attend to Freire's Portuguese texts outside of their English translations. As I argue elsewhere, this

is a glaring oversight.⁵⁸ Freire is a skilled writer and his works are filled with philosophical allusions and complex examples of paronomasia, which often draw on the Latin etymologies of Portuguese.

Perhaps, the most notable problem in reading Freire solely in English is that Freire's constant figuration of *ser* and *estar* is completely lost. Far from stylistic ornament, I stress that it is Freire's use of *ser* and *estar* that establishes the basic philosophical background against which all other concepts from Freire must be understood.

Although Freire's use of *ser* and *estar* is not directly keyed into Heidegger's *Sein* lexicon, there is sufficient evidence to think that Heidegger is present in Freire's work. Most of this evidence comes from the conceptual debt that Freire owes to Vieira Pinto.⁵⁹ Although the task of documenting it would be the work for another paper, it is clear that the ontological basis of *Pedagogia do oprimido* is taken from Vieira Pinto's use of *ser* and *estar* to reappropriate Heidegger's *in-der-Welt-sein*. The possibilities of Heidegger's implicit influence in *pedagogia do oprimido* are also bolstered both by the fact that any discussion of being in the 20th century most likely has Heidegger in background and by the ubiquitous presence of other "existentialist" writers in Freire's work.⁶⁰

Akin to Kusch and Vieira Pinto, Freire deploys different usages of *ser* and *estar* to contrast and discuss different modes of being in such a way that would be difficult to do with a single *be* word. However, unlike Kusch and Pinto who build out of from everyday pairings of *ser* and *estar*, Freire focuses on what I consider an artificial pairing between the words, found nearly exclusively in philosophical usage. This pair is what I call the "existence/happening" one and it contrasts *ser* in its existence sense—that something is—with *ser* in a progressive aspect form—that something is being. A brief reminder: *estar* is the auxiliary verb for progressive tense constructions in Portuguese. Hence, to switch from a sentence like "we speak" to "we are speaking" needs the conjugated form of *estar* combined with the

⁵⁸ Lucas Rossi Corcoran, "Rethinking an 'English Only' Freire," *enculturation: a journal of rhetoric, writing, and culture* (January 2023), https://enculturation.net/rethinking_freire.

⁵⁹ For an account of Vieira Pinto's influence on Freire, see José Ernesto de Fávéri *Álvaro Vieira Pinto: contribuições à educação libertadora de Paulo Freire* (São Paulo, BR: Editora LiberArs, 2014).

⁶⁰ For an overview of the philosophical influences in Freire's writings, see Carlos Alberto Torres, "Las Corrientes filosóficas que secundan la filosofía de Paulo Freire," *Colección pedagógica universitaria: Revista de Investigación Educativa* 9 (1980): 7–26.

progressive participle of *to speak*. For this reason, Freire can tease out nuanced ontological shades of meaning by applying the semantics of *ser* and *estar*. For one can readily redirect from the claim “*F is*” to “*F is being*” in a philosophically compelling way—while, for example, this shift, in English, is, at the very least, hardly euphonious, and, in German, it is, strictly speaking, not possible.

What is important to keep in mind when moving from the claim “*F is-S*” to “*F is-E being-S*” is that we can still pull out of *estar* the semantic content of facticity and location that is better displayed in the other pairs herein discussed. Hence, we might—with great lack of art—paraphrase the aspectual shift from “we play tennis” to “we are playing tennis” to something like “we play tennis. It is a general fact about us” to “we are factively encounterable as playing tennis in this actual location.” However, this remake certainly lessens the punch of the trope.

But our paraphrase might help us capture some of the meaning of Freire’s existence/happening pairing of *ser* and *estar*, even if it comes at the cost of eloquence. If we wanted to be sure to bring out some of these semantic flavors, we might try out a paraphrase that stresses the difference between “We are. It is a general fact about us that we exist” and “we are factively encounterable in this actual place realizing our existence.” What these paraphrases attempt to show is that Freire can readily say something analogous about being and existence by *merely* shifting aspects, going from *ser* in simple aspect to *ser* in progressive aspect—a form, which as we know, entails a finite form of *estar*.

However, before turning to some examples where Freire wields the existence/happening pair as a trope, it is worthwhile to examine a statement of Freire’s *ser/estar* ontology taken nearly conceptually verbatim from Vieira Pinto’s use of *ser/estar* “in the world” in *Consciência e realidade nacional*. Note the similarities between Vieira Pinto’s use of *ser* and *estar* to critique Heidegger and Freire’s use of *ser* and *estar* to cast an ontology in the following:

Sendo os homens seres em “situação,” se encontram enraizados em condições tempo-espaciais que os marcam e a que eles igualmente marcam. Sua tendência é refletir sobre sua própria *situacionalidade*, na medida em que, desafiados por ela, agem sobre ela. Esta reflexão implica, por isto mesmo, algo mais que estar em *situacionalidade*, que é a sua posição fundamental. Os homens *são* porque *estão* em situação. E serão tanto mais quanto não só pensem criticamente sobre sua forma de *estar*, mas criticamente atuem sobre a situação em que *estão*.⁶¹

⁶¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia do oprimido*, 54a ed. (São Paulo, BR: Paz e Terra, 2013), 125.

As beings in “situation,” humans find themselves rooted in spatio-temporal conditions that mark them as much as they mark these conditions. Humans tend to reflect over their own *situationality* to the degree that, challenged by it, they act upon it. This reflection implies something more than *estar* in *situationality*, which is their fundamental position. Humans *are-S* because they *are-E* in situation. And they will be-S more by the degree to which they do not only think critically over their form of *estar*, but also act critically upon the situation in which they are-E.

A complex passage to render with just the English *to be*, Vieira Pinto’s influence clearly shines through. For Freire, humans are, basically, to borrow from Jaspers once again, “in-situation-being.” However, such in-situation-being—what Freire here calls “situationality”—does not perfect their essence. Rather, their essence, so to speak, is their *ontological imperfection*. The first step for humans to achieve their being is that they apprehend their givenness *and* that they apprehend the fact that such givenness is not completely determining. The second step is that they act upon their givenness in order to change it. As Vieira Pinto does, Freire sketches the total concept of “being” as a dialectic between *estar* and *ser* “in the world,” between our givenness (in its factive and locative sense) and our actions to negate and overcome such givenness—our *estar* and our *ser*, respectively, so to speak.

We should take Freire’s ontological diorama of *ser* and *estar* in this passage from *Pedagogia do oprimido* as a guiding thread to interpret the existence/happening pair of *ser* and *estar* found elsewhere in Freire’s writings: *ser* in simple aspect stands for finished-off being and *ser* in progressive aspect, i.e., a form of *estar sendo*, stands in for the *ser/estar* “in the world” dialectic. Let’s turn to some illustrative examples of how Freire spins the pairing in *Pedagogia da autonomia*. Consider:

Só somos porque estamos sendo. Estar sendo é a condição, entre nós, para ser.⁶²

We only are-S because we are-E being-S. To be-E being-S is the condition, between us, in order to be-S.

O mundo não é. O mundo está sendo.⁶³

The world is-S not. The world is-E being-S.

⁶² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia da autonomia: saberes necessários à prática educativa*, 6a. ed. (São Paulo, BR: Paz e Terra, 1996), sec. 1.5.

⁶³ Freire, *Pedagogia da autonomia*, sec. 2.8.

Hence, Freire in such pithy aphorisms challenges the idea that being is a static trait that can be attributed to something. This challenge seems to speak a bit of Heideggerian. In the opening pages of *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger worries about the tendency to attribute “being” to anything that exists, under the assumption that “being” is the most general of all concepts.⁶⁴ Likewise, Freire interrogates if “is-ness” can be thought of as the most general attribute of anything. Rather than the most abstract and bland concept that everything that “is” falls under, Freire, with the aspectual shift, re-codes “being” as an *event*, on-going, incomplete, and happening in an actual locale.

Given the shorthand nature of the existence/happening pair of *ser* and *estar*—Freire merely needs to shift verbal aspect to evoke it—Freire can apply the trope easily to any concept. From *Pedagogia do oprimido*, consider how Freire tinges other important ideas with this ontology:

Desta maneira, a educação se re-faz constantemente na práxis. Para *ser* tem que *estar sendo*.⁶⁵

Hence, education constantly remakes itself in praxis. In order for it to be-S, it has to be-S being-S.

É preciso que nos convençamos de que as aspirações, os motivos, as finalidades que se encontram implicados na temática significativa são aspirações, finalidades, motivos humanos. Por isto não estão aí, num certo espaço, como coisas petrificadas, mas *estão sendo*.⁶⁶

We need to convince ourselves that the aspiration, motives, and goals that are implied in significant themes are human aspirations, motives, goals. Hence, they are-E not merely there in a certain space as putrefied things, but rather they *are-E being-S*.

O investigador de temática significativa que, em nome da objetividade científica, transforma o orgânico em inorgânico, o que *está sendo* no que é, o vivo no morto, teme a mudança.⁶⁷

The investigator of significant themes, who, in the name of scientific objectivity, transforms the organic into the inorganic, that which *is-E being-S* into that which *is-S*, the alive into the dead, fears change.

We find Freire here continually sounding out the assumption that “being” is “isness” and, henceforth, can be unproblematically

⁶⁴ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 3.

⁶⁵ Freire, *Pedagogia do oprimido*, 90.

⁶⁶ Freire, *Pedagogia do oprimido*, 122.

⁶⁷ Freire, *Pedagogia do oprimido*, 124.

attributed to something. The “being” of important Freirean concepts like “education” and “generative themes” are to be seen as realizing their existence in an actual here-and-now in the same way that people do.

Although in these examples, Freire does not reference Heidegger’s *Sein* lexicon, we can still readily read them as an interrogation of Heidegger. Like Kusch and Vieira Pinto, Freire avails himself of the fact that *ser* and *estar* can lexicalize different senses of *to be*, so that Freire might also set these senses off from one another and compare them in a discussion of the total concept of “being.” In particular, Freire exploits the philosophical advantages of the fact that *estar* is the auxiliary verb for progressive tense constructions in Portuguese. This otherwise unremarkable aspect of Portuguese allows Freire to mine out of the existence/happening pair subtle shades of meaning that are difficult to render without *ser* and *estar*.

CONCLUSION

In many ways, there are as many versions of *Sein and Zeit* as there are readers of Heidegger’s magnum opus. However, we might—even if provisionally—suppose that Heidegger’s stated intention in the epigraph holds true: his goal is to reawaken the meaning of being or, as we might also say, the sense of *to be*.

That *to be* might have multiple senses that need to be clarified is a philosophical question. However, it is also a pragmatic one for language learners and interpreters moving between single *be* words and *ser* and *estar*. Most often, the sense of what we mean when we use *être*, *Sein*, *to be*, etc. is conveyed through implicature. When I exclaim, “these ravioli are delicious!” context clues us into the fact that I mean that these raviolis are factively encounterable as delicious and not that the concept of ravioli, in general, rank among the world’s delicious foods (even if they do).

That everyday circumstance forces us to clarify what we mean by *to be* before picking *ser* or *estar* also readily prompts the philosophical question about the different senses of *to be*—and this relationship between the pragmatic and the philosophical senses of *to be* perhaps explains the immense interest in linguistics and elsewhere over the *ser/estar* pair.

The philosophical issues that might be embedded in the semantics of *ser* and *estar* reach their fullest expression when we sit down to read Heidegger with *ser* and *estar* at our disposal. For we might

rightfully wonder about what Heidegger means in this or that sentence when he uses *Sein*—does he mean *ser* or does he mean *estar*? Although this is clearly a philosophical question that is highly compelling, I want to stress that it is also a basic question of interpretation. As already mentioned, the fact that the Gaos translation elects to interpret *in-der-Welt-sein* as *ser* “in the world” and the Rivera translation elections *estar* “in the world” is proof enough that *ser* and *estar* prompt from the onset the inquiry into what Heidegger means by *Sein* without having to read too much between the lines.

That *Sein* can be split up into *ser* and *estar* creates, truly, untold rhetorical potential. Throughout his career, Kusch never tires of attempting to undermine the Heidegger Cathedral by using *ser* and *estar* to chip away its semantic foundation stone *Sein*; Vieira Pinto takes on one of Heidegger’s central concepts, *in-der-Welt-sein*, to task by using *ser* and *estar* to clarify senses of the term that might remain ambiguous in the original formulation; and Freire is able to make a nuanced ontological point merely by shifting verbal aspects.

There is certainly more work to be done around *ser* and *estar* and how writers put them to use, especially in dialogue with central pillars of European philosophy. Much of this work, I believe, will center on what I call a lightweight approach to rhetoric. That is, rather than attempting to verify if *ser* and *estar* are more “accurate” concepts for “being,” we first need to understand how these words work in different discourses. Furthermore, the case of *ser* and *estar* teaches us that semantics and figuration, so often, are not accidental ornament to philosophical arguments but the very staging grounds upon which philosophical arguments occur. How Kusch, Vieira Pinto, and Freire use *ser* and *estar* shows clearly that semantics not only express claims but also license them: it seems impossible to imagine that these thinkers would be able to make their points within out the inferential structures that the semantics of *ser* and *estar* afford them. Investigating this relationship—between semantics, inferential structures, and hypotheses—does not mean that we revoke philosophy’s right to truth claims. It just means that we elevate the *how* of the structure of philosophy’s truth claims to the same status as their *what*. The rhetorician and the philosopher can work together.