192.

STEADFASTNESS (INSTÄNDIGKEIT)

Steadfastness is an attitude or stance that relates affirmatively to the fact that we can understand neither ourselves nor the world as objects seen from a totalizing, ontological point of view. Instead, we have to understand ourselves as being part of an incomprehensible adaptation (Ereignis), in which we are somehow standing: we are steadfast (inständig) in adaptation. It is one of the central concerns of Heidegger’s philosophy to evoke such an attitude. In his early lectures he advocates a turn (Umwendungs), in Being and Time he argues for a self-understanding as being-in-the-world in the stance of resoluteness (Entschlossenheit), and in his later texts he invites us to dwell in the fourfold (Wohnen im Geviert), a dwelling that is related to the mood of releaseament (Gelassenheit). In his private texts from the late 1930s and early 1940s (GA 65–71), he calls the attitude he is arguing for “steadfastness” (Inständigkeit).

The term steadfastness is rather enigmatic, however. It belongs to Heidegger’s artificial language and differs from the common use in German. The adjective inständig usually means “imploring,” “insistent,” or “emphatic” and is used in phrases like inständig bitten (“to plead with someone,” “to solicit someone”) or inständig hoffen (“to hope urgently”). The nominalized adjective Inständigkeit normally means something like “urgency,” and is very rarely used (most frequently to characterize the urgency with which one might, e.g., plead or hope). Obviously, this is not what Heidegger has in mind when he speaks, for example, about the Inständigkeit in the truth of beyng (Wahrheit des Seyns). Particularly, it is an attitude we take “in” the truth of beyng and not an attitude of it. Hence, this cannot be translated as “urgency” and rather has a spatial meaning, as in “standing in adaptation.”

Consequently, steadfastness can be understood in terms of a spatial metaphor and as a nominalized version of “standing in something” (in German one would say in etwas stehen or, when nominalized, Innestehen). In the Contributions to Philosophy and in the following private texts Heidegger uses Inständigkeit synonymously with Innestehen (GA 65:245, 467; GA 67:240; GA 69:197) and in his 1941 lecture on Schelling he explicitly explains that Inständigkeit has to be understood as Innestehen (GA 49:54). He repeats this explicit explanation in his 1949 introduction to Was ist Metaphysik? (GA 49: 374/283) and this spatial meaning of the term can also be found in the variations inständig or Inständigkeit. Here, the spatiality is more obvious, and Heidegger uses these variations synonymously with inständig and Inständigkeit too (GA 65:26, 69, 80, 342; GA 71:17, 211).

But steadfastness (Inständigkeit) should also be heard to have a temporal meaning, since the adjective ständig means “permanent,” “constant,” or “abiding.” This too is explicitly emphasized by Heidegger in the above-mentioned instances (GA 49:54; GA 49:374/283). The temporal meaning of Inständigkeit is reflected in the archaic term employed by many translators: “inabiding.” However, Heidegger uses the term far more often in its spatial meaning, which is only weakly reflected in the “in” of “inabiding.” In contrast, the translation as “steadfastness” captures both the spatial sense (standing fast in a place) and the temporal sense (enduring through change).
In his lecture on Schelling in 1941 Heidegger also claims that the term “steadfastness” is supposed to replace the term “existence” in Being and Time to avoid confusions with Jaspers’ philosophy of existence (GA49:54; cf. also GA6.2:434/EP 70–71, and GA9:374/283). However, steadfastness is an attitude that belongs to the right understanding of being and is related to the openness (Offenheit, GA49:68) and clearing (Lichtung, GA65:357) of being and to adaptation (GA65:233). This can only be understood with regard to an overall interpretation of these central Heideggerian concepts. They demonstrate the impossibility of an objective understanding of the world, and the ability to give up an objective understanding is directly connected to steadfastness (GA65:451). This failure of an objective understanding is expressed with the metaphor of the abyss, and it is steadfastness which is able to endure the ungroundedness of the abyss (GA67:62). As an attitude, steadfastness implies strength (Stärke), determination (Entscheideneinheit), mildness (Milde) and simplicity (Einfachheit, GA65:298–99) and is essential for an adequate human self-understanding (GA66:145). Furthermore, Heidegger connects the attitude of resoluteness (Entschlossenheit) to steadfastness (GA38:163/135; GA65:144–45). In addition, there also is a connection between steadfastness and the attitude of releasement (Gelassenheit, GA13:65, 68, 71; GA77:145, 148, 151).

The central idea here is that we need a shift in our attitude toward the world (to emphasize that this involves an active stance-taking on our part. Heidegger also calls it a “steadfasting,” an Inständigung; see GA70:107–09; GA71:140). This shift in attitude allows us to be “steadfast in the truth of being” (Wahrheit des Seyns), which is Heidegger’s most used phrase in this context (GA6.2:434/EP 70; GA46:45, 92, 221; GA49:58, 63; GA66:63, 138, 328, 341; GA67:9, 59; GA69:13, 15, 207; GA70:103, 137, 143, 150; GA71:213, 310, 314; GA76:73, 101). There are some variations on this, such as “steadfastness in the essence of the truth of byeing” (GA66:78, 120), “steadfastness in the truth of the essence of byeing” (GA66:103), “steadfastness in the open of the truth of being” (GA49:74), “steadfastness in the truth of entities” (GA66:174), “steadfastness in the truth of adaptation” (GA70:110), and “steadfastness in the essence of truth” (GA69:87). Moreover, according to Heidegger the human being has to become steadfast in the clearing (Lichtung, GA5:349/263; GA49:76; GA66:31, 217; GA67:62, 219; GA71:49, 174, 197, 254; GA85:8, 27, 93), in the openness (Offenheit, GA5:54/40; GA15:345/FS 47; GA70: 54; GA85:70), in the questionableness (Fragwürdigkeit, GA65:158, 432; GA71:306; GA85:110), in byeing (Seyn, GA66:113; GA70:82, 150; GA71:109; GA75:13), in adaptation (Ereignis, GA65:72; GA71:55) and in many other concepts which, basically, are all related to the impossibility of an objectifying understanding of the self and the world.

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REFERENCES IN HEIDEGGER

Heidegger elaborated the concept of steadfastness mainly in the years 1936–42; it is a crucial notion in GA49, GA65–67, GA 69–71, and GA85–87 (passim).