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Heidegger's Critique of Certainty

According to Heidegger, the equation of truth with certainty is the hallmark of a metaphysical legacy that can be traced from scholastic appropriations of Aristotle through Descartes' conviction that because the *cogito* is the most secure and indubitable fact, it is the only sound basis from which philosophical enquiry can begin.

In this paper, I look at Heidegger's thematic interpretation of truth as *unconcealment* in the context of his later essays and lectures on Nietzsche and metaphysics. Following an analysis of Heidegger's critique of truth as certainty, I offer an application of his understanding of truth for an ethic of *listening*, thought not as passivity, but as responsiveness. An ethics of responsiveness is thoroughly marked by "undecidability" in that it raises, rather than resolves, the question of who we are responsible to and for. It pays tribute to our sense of disjuncture in the face of the multiple and fractious horizons that constitute us. The inability to fully resolve the tension between the near and the far, the neighbor and the stranger, however, is also the condition for the possibility of any ethic at all. Heidegger's readings of Nietzsche attempt to show that the oft-cited but rarely contemplated "death of God" offers not a critique of religious language or practice as such, but rather of metaphysical thinking at large, characterized by desire for objectivity and certainty, a method of calculative rather than contemplative thinking, and an ethics of domination. A Nietzschean-Heideggerian critique of truth as certainty does not simply follow the skeptical line of asking, "how is truth possible?" but the meta-skeptical question, "why is truth valuable?" Heidegger thus stands up, contra Levinas, not as a thinker who privileges ontology over ethics, but as a thinker for whom ontology and ethics are the same.