

Transcript - Long

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Bert, if we had to come up with the ultimate question, it's not about the universe, creation, ourselves, consciousness. It's that fundamental concept why is there anything at all? Why is there something rather than nothing?

Hubert Dreyfus:

Ok. Well that's...Heidegger thought that was the fundamental question too, but he thought that that way of putting the question was wrong, I think similar to Kant who thought you could ask why is this chair here and not an empty space. But about the whole universe to ask why is there that is to ask like something like a causal question, and he's written...Heidegger's got a whole book about the principle of sufficient reason which is about why there must be a reason for it, why there must be a reason why there's something rather than nothing. And he says it's part of metaphysics, it's a wrong-headed question, you can't ask that question expecting a kind of rational answer to it. And it sounds like Kant. I mean you can't ask about...there's no...it's not something that has a reason or a cause.

Hubert Dreyfus:

So there is the question that the principle of sufficient reason, and that's this...in German there's Zats Funghunt, and zats means leap. And I think why would he want to make a big deal about where his principle [unintelligible] the usual translation? I think what Heidegger's thinking is that we're always already in it, the meaning, the universe, the world, things that are. And it's only from within it that we can deal with it and so forth, and it's...and that's the leap. Instead of getting an answer, you sort of switch the position. And instead of looking like a philosopher and a metaphysician standing outside and looking at being and saying why is there being rather than nothing?, – you see that you could never be in that position.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Because you're in it.

Hubert Dreyfus:

Because you're in it. And that's I think what is the right thing for him to say. And then you can have a kind of mystical awe in there being something rather than nothing, a feeling somehow about it that Heidegger seems to have. But you can't ask this kind of traditional philosophical question...

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Because I feel, I feel that emotion about that question.

Hubert Dreyfus:

Well and Heidegger does to. He thinks it's...

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

So that's legitimate?

Hubert Dreyfus:

Yeah, what poets and painters... Since this question, Heidegger went and sat at the place where Cezanne sat and he painted Mont Sainte-Victoire, and said Cezanne could experience being shining through. And so being is there and it's shining in Heidegger, and but it's just wrong to ask why is being there shining? We just have to accept it and be grateful for it, and open to it.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

And the core reason we can't make progress is because we're in it and we can't get out of it to look at it as a third person.

Hubert Dreyfus:

That's right. That would be the philosophical mistake. Philosophers have always thought that they could be, as Plato put it, friends of God standing on the outside looking in. But if you don't do that, then you have Heidegger.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

So to Heidegger, it's impossible to do that.

Hubert Dreyfus:

Yes.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

You can appreciate it, but you can't analyze it.

Hubert Dreyfus:

Yes, exactly. You put it perfectly.