

Transcript - Short

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Bert, if we had to come up with the ultimate question. It's that fundamental concept why is there anything at all? Why is there something rather than nothing?

Hubert Dreyfus:

Heidegger thought that was the fundamental question too, but he thought that that way of putting the question was wrong. Heidegger's got a whole book about the principle of sufficient reason, which is about 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. 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. 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. 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... Sense this question....

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.