

Handout for “Heidegger’s Academic Parochialism and the Technological Age”  
Mark Wrathall

*Rorty on Heidegger:*

1. Heidegger’s work is “a toolbox containing some splendid things lying next to a lot of outdated junk” (“On Heidegger’s Nazism,” in *Philosophy and Social Hope*, p. 192).
2. Heidegger’s writings are “the receptacle in which Heidegger deposited the tools that he invented at various times to accomplish one or another project” (“On Heidegger’s Nazism,” in *Philosophy and Social Hope*, p. 191)
3. Rorty wants to “keep the plot outline of Heidegger’s history of metaphysics while rewriting its downbeat ending, keep selected items of Heidegger’s imagery and jargon while shrugging off his world-historical pretensions” (*Philosophy and Social Hope*, p. 191).
4. Heidegger shows that “metaphysics can only be explained by showing its history, by showing how people have thought to speak Being and wound up speaking of beings” (*Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 49)
5. “What is wrong with Heidegger is not . . . that he gives up ‘rational reflection,’ but that he insists on claiming that he is somehow in a position to do better what rational reflection failed to do” (*Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 59)
6. “All Heidegger can do to explain why th[e] tradition is of more than parochial academic interest is to say that it was where the question of Being got asked. All he can do to explain why we shouldn’t shrug off Being as a vapor and a fallacy is to say that our fate is somehow linked to that tradition” (*Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 53).
7. “Who but a philosophy professor, would think that the drama of twentieth-century Europe had some essential relation to the ‘Vollendung der Metaphysik?’” (*Consequences*, p. 47)
8. “Unless Heidegger connected the history of Being with that of men and nations through such phrases as ‘a nation’s (*eines Volkes*) relation to Being,’ and thus connected the history of philosophy with just plain history, he would be able to say only . . . that [after all the conceptual analysis], we shall still be as far as ever from that which is *strenger als das begriffliche*. Without the reference to the history of nations, we should obviously have only what Versényi suggests is all we get anyway: ‘an all too empty and formal, though often emotionally charged and mystically-religious, thinking of absolute unity’” (*Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 48).
9. “This would be to treat ‘forgetfulness of being’ as just a handy label for whatever it is that has been going wrong lately. Heidegger takes it much more seriously” (*Consequences*, p. 48).

*The Universal Grounds Thesis:* within each historical age, there is a particular understanding of being in terms of which entities show up as constitutively related to each other in particular ways. Being is universal, meaning it applies to every entity as such. It is total, meaning it also governs the whole coherence of entities as they relate to each other. And it is a ground in the sense that it is on the basis of the specific understanding of being that any particular entity play a role in the world.

*Some Heidegger quotes:*

1. “Metaphysics is the truth about entities as such and as a whole, a truth that has been accommodated to the words of thinkers” (GA48: 66).
2. “The questioning of reflection never becomes groundless or beyond all question, because it asks in advance about being. This, being, remains for it what is most deserving of questioning. Reflection finds in it the most extreme resistance, which resistance brings reflection to a stop and makes it take seriously the entities which are moved into the light of its being” (GA5: 137).

*Reconstruction of one of Feenberg’s and Belu’s arguments:*

1. Either all humans are enframed, or at least one human is not.
2. If humans are enframed, then Heidegger himself would be enframed too, and wouldn’t be in a position to formulate a theory of enframing.
3. Since Heidegger did formulate a theory of enframing, it is either the case that at least one human is not enframed (see 4), or the theory is false.
4. If at least one human is not enframed, then there is some entity which does not show up in terms of the unified understanding of being of the age. Therefore, UGT is false.