This excellent book makes a notable addition to recent scholarship in hermeneutics, phenomenology, and contemporary continental thought. In particular, it enriches existing perspectives on Heidegger but also broaches new and unexplored lines of research by showing how “facticity,” a term coined by the young Heidegger, plays an important role in his early and late philosophy. More than a dozen original essays, some by foremost scholars in the area, trace the significance of facticity back to Dilthey and Husserl and forward to Sartre, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty, but also to Fanon and race theory, and current feminist, gender and post-colonial theory. As the editors put it, rethinking facticity means taking up a dimension of our being that “resists appropriation and reduction, whether theoretical or practical,” a region of experience that attests to an “alterity and passivity (i.e., finitude)” that is not constituted by, but challenges, transcendental subjectivity. “Rethinking facticity” is thus a way of rethinking the very notion of experience in order to explore a wide range of ideas concerning language, history, birth and death, and the opacity and transparency of ethical being-in-the-world.

Readers familiar with Being and Time will recognise the term facticity (Faktizität) from the first division of the book, where it is understood as the thrownness of our existence in its three figures: moods, birth and ontological guilt. From Gadamer and Taminiaux to Habermas and Dreyfus, commentators have claimed that Heidegger privileges death over birth and mortality over natality, and that Dasein’s existence is oriented by its death. Contrary to such claims, this collection shows that Dasein’s facticity, as both self-explicating and as a “form of a habitual deep forgetting” (7), implies something far more ambiguous than aiming at one’s death as one’s own “end.” In facticity, “Dasein exists toward death, and Dasein exists toward birth”; “Dasein exists as stretching itself between birth and death such that it is the between of birth and death.” (8) In facticity, Dasein thus finds its life flowing outside of itself in birth and death, so facticity proves to be “the secret resource of appropria-
tion” even as it “indicates the impossibility and radical expropriation of the human being.” (8) The genuine contribution of this collection is its way of encouraging new work on Heidegger, by revealing facticity as a “veritable challenge to the very possibility of [identitarian] responsible agency and a free self-assumption of subjectivity in responsibility.” (7) This invites a revision to, and more in depth engagement with, Heidegger as a thinker of ethics.

The essays in this volume benefit from an excellent introduction by Raffoul and Nelson that surveys the problematic of facticity, showing its contemporary relevance and how it emerges as a philosophical idea of key importance for twentieth-century continental thought. The collection is divided into four parts, each offering an unique angle on Heidegger while engaging aspects of the multilayered notion of facticity. In the first part, “Phenomenology and Facticity,” Anthony J. Steinbock, Theodore Kisiel and François Raffoul defend Heidegger’s novel phenomenological concept of facticity. Steinbock’s detailed and careful work illuminates the late Husserl’s “tremendous preliminary work” on facticity, particularly the analysis of passive synthesis with its related emphasis on natality. Kisiel connects early Heidegger’s notion of facticity and formal indication to the later “formally indicative hermeneutics” of facticity that Heidegger develops in 1941, showing how Heidegger develops the latter against Fichte’s idealistic account of the “fact of consciousness.” Raffoul’s rich exegetical essay focuses on Heidegger’s course of 1928, Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle, emphasizing the radical immanence of philosophy to life in the early Heidegger. Because of the immanence of philosophy to life, philosophy is not an external reflection on life but rather is immanent in life’s own movement outside of itself.

The second part, consisting of essays by Giorgio Agamben, Jean-Luc Nancy, Eric Sean Nelson and Rudi Visker, demonstrates how the hermeneutics of facticity in Heidegger’s thought of the 1920s influenced Being and Time. Agamben’s outstanding contribution draws a parallel between Dasein’s inauthentic and authentic being-toward-death and the disclosure and openness of what he calls the “passion of facticity.” (105) Notably, Agamben thus shows how, for Heidegger, finitude, fallenness and thrownness are not to be understood negatively, but positively as a distance from transcendence. Agamben does this by going back to the 1921–22 lecture course on Augustine to study the experience of existence’s movement of radical, “improper” expropriation, in which
Dasein thrusts itself outside of itself. Nancy’s essay draws on *Being and Time*’s key formulation that for Dasein, to be does not mean to become what it is, but to be exposed to its having “to be.” Nancy stresses Dasein as a “singular, unique possibility of forming/letting a proper meaning of the world…open.” (114) Both Agamben and Nancy broach the question of originary ethics in Heidegger; the two concluding essays, by Nelson and Visker, further explore this possibility in relation to ethics in Levinas. Against Levinas’ critique of the primacy of one’s own death and the attack on the relationality of representational thinking in Heidegger, both Nelson and Visker go back to the structure of care to develop different arguments defending a non-normative ethics in Heidegger. For Nelson, *contra* Levinas, death is not “another relation,” but a break that discloses an ethics of individuation and facticity: death as a “non-relational” possibility “cannot be ordered in the relationality of the world but places relationality itself into question.” (136) For Visker, the key to Heidegger’s response to Levinas is the questionability of Being, the “intransitive facticity” of Dasein that “‘does not signify a what, (but) the way to be’ of the being that it designates.” (153–4)

Parts three and four explore facticity in ways that reveal its contemporary significance and offer a related critique of Heidegger. Robert Bernasconi’s far reaching essay, which opens part three, thinks race in terms of facticity and reconsiders Sartre’s and Fanon’s existential theories of race, arguing that Sartre’s concept of facticity is thicker and more encompassing than Heidegger’s. Bernard Flynn’s exegetical essay is devoted to the “fold” of the visible in Merleau-Ponty, arguing that the intertwining between “fact” and existence in his phenomenology of the visible resists the mastery of being that is still residual in Heidegger. Focusing further on Merleau-Ponty, Jacob Rogozinski argues that an “archifacticity” that inaugurates the intertwining of the body and the world is crucial to the phenomenology of perception. This intertwining is further elaborated as a universal tactile chiasm, a touch touching itself. In an excellent essay, David Pettigrew, following Lacanian psychoanalyst David Nasio, proposes that facticity connects the “unconscious body” with desire, *jouissance* and the *objet a*. Facticity, as immanent to the unattainability of the psychoanalytic “lost” object, limits desire and transforms the objects relating to the *objet a* into semantic figures. Yet, *contra* Lacan, these are not semblances of being, but involve an “unconscious
psychical tension,” which much like life itself, as a self-explicating fundamental fact, involves hermeneutics of facticity.

In Part four, “Contemporary Perspectives,” Ed Casey, Namita Goswami, Patricia Huntington and Gregory Schufreider offer phenomenological reflections on facticity in critically responding to various dangers of epistemological objectification. Casey’s creative work on edges dwells on modes of facticity in art and aesthetics to show that an alternative temporality, which by its very nature obstructs “what is coming and to come”—the sudden, the surprising, the new—also constitutes artworks as edge-work: much like “cutting-edges,” artworks disturb set classifications. (274) Goswami’s careful and complex discussion of what she calls the “existence authoritarian” offers a strong parallel between Adorno and Heidegger on facticity. It opens new perspectives for exploring the facticity of Dasein, which not only provide a way of responding to Adorno’s critique of Heidegger but also permit a substantive critique of various strands of feminist and post-colonial constructivist theories that uncritically accept views of authentic representation (Spivak, Varadharajan, and Suleri). In a similar vein, Huntington’s intriguing essay turns to the practical aspects of living the hermeneutics of facticity as “life-embracing.” (325) Facticity is the indication of “life itself as something suffered,” for instance, the “facticity of being-thrown into a body, a sex, a family.” (324) Women’s responsibility for “imparting the shadowy legacy of irresolute bearing to children” (330) therefore opens Dasein’s existence as “being-exposed.” (325) Finally, Schufreider offers a lively discussion of the facticity of the sign and the facticity of writing itself showing how facticity depends on acts such as writing.

By showing how facticity is a positive resource for philosophy, this collection of works succeeds remarkably well in placing in a rich, new, and challenging context the much-debated Heideggerian problematic of inauthentic being and the lostness of the “they.” This is a lucid, intelligent and fruitful read for those interested in twentieth-century continental philosophy and Heidegger’s influence on it.

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