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Agent-Relative Knowledge in Heidegger

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

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in

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by

Kevin Allen Gin

September 2017

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Agent-Relative Knowledge in Heidegger

by

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Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Philosophy
University of California, Riverside, September 2017
Dr. Mark Wrathall, Chairperson

When an agent "loses herself" in a project, or becomes completely absorbed in an activity, she has what Heidegger calls "reflected self-understanding". This kind of *reflected* understanding allows the agent to find herself out in the world, "in things", without ever holding any *reflexive* attitudes about herself. In my dissertation, I develop and defend Heidegger's account of *reflected self-understanding*, which constitutes – for Heidegger – the most basic grip an agent has on *who she is*. I suggest that Heidegger's account of *reflected self-understanding* is not only a significant contribution to the history of philosophy, but also the central kernel that structures Heidegger's thought on the topics of understanding, interpretation, truth, and authenticity in *Being and Time*.

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Introduction

A.   Overview of Project

The topic of my dissertation is self-knowledge, and in particular, the kind of self-knowledge had by an agent when she "loses herself" in an activity (GA 2: 76), becoming completely absorbed in what she is doing. This kind of phenomenon comes under focus in Division I of *Being and Time*, where Heidegger seeks to analyze the grip an agent has on the things around her when she is skillfully engaged in the world. When a carpenter is at work, she views all the things around her as wrapped up in her current project. And when she's absorbed in the world in this way, any belief *about* herself would be a belief that gets in the way. As Heidegger put it, "the self must forget itself" (GA 2: 354) in order for the agent to be skillfully absorbed in her project or activity.

Yet there's a widespread belief in the philosophy of action that self-consciousness is the mark of human agency, or that self-awareness is what makes bodily movement an *action* in contrast to a mere "happening". There's an intuitive difference, for example, between a mere movement of my limbs and an *action* (e.g. throwing a ball) that involves this kind of movement. In the latter case, I'm considered the *author* of the movement. A widespread view in the philosophy of action is that a certain kind of self-awareness is necessary for a movement to be *mine*, or for that movement to count as human action. Christine Korsgaard, for example, suggests "The capacity for self-conscious reflection about our own actions confers on us a kind of authority over ourselves" ([1992], 19-20).

But it's precisely self-conscious reflection that seems to be *absent* in our absorbed coping. When an athlete is in the "flow", as it were, she is able to concentrate on the

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things around her *without* being self-conscious in any straightforward way. As the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi explains, being in the flow involves "the loss of the sense of a self separate from the world around it" ([1990], 63). Because of this, the phenomenon of absorbed coping raises serious questions theories of agency that draw a tight connection between self-consciousness and human action.

As I read Heidegger, the central claim of Division I of *Being and Time* is that human action in its paradigmatic form requires a specific kind of *self-forgetfulness*. By this, I mean that paradigm cases of human agency take place *without* the presence of attitudes that are "about" the self – and this precludes even "implicit" or "unconscious" belief about oneself. Instead, human action is guided by what Heidegger calls "non-reflexive self-understanding", which, put broadly, is a way of having a grip on oneself *though* the grip that one has on the world. As Heidegger sums up his view: "the human agent [*Dasein*] always finds itself *in things*". Heidegger's central claim – and the one that I explore in my dissertation – is that we can *reduce* the attitudes that we typically take to be reflexive, or directed toward oneself, to attitudes that are directed toward the world. Because the human agent is *reflected* or "mirrored back" back from her world, she has a grip on herself that is *non-reflexive*, without any special attitudes directed back at herself.

My goal in this dissertation is to interpret and develop Heidegger's account of *reflected self-understanding*, while arguing that this account is: a) Heidegger's main contribution to the history of philosophy, and b) the central kernel that structures Heidegger's thought on the topics of understanding, interpretation, truth, and authenticity in *Being and Time*.

B.   *Outline of Chapters*

In Chapter 1, I introduce Heidegger's concept of *reflected self-understanding* largely independent from Heidegger's texts. To get at the structure of reflected self-understanding and motivate Heidegger's general picture, I borrow distinctions from John Perry's recent work on agent-relative knowledge and rely heavily on Hubert Dreyfus's phenomenology of absorbed agency. I suggest that circumspection, for Heidegger, is akin to what we might call *knowledge from a practical perspective*, which I distinguish from other kinds of closely related varieties of "agent-relative" knowledge. And I suggest that *reflected self-understanding* plays out in the agent's circumspective grip on the world, or her grip on things from a practical perspective.

In Chapter 2, I bring these issues closer to Heidegger and offer a more comprehensive account of understanding and interpretation in *Being and Time*. Equipped with distinctions from Chapter 1, I show how we can defend two central claims that Heidegger makes about human understanding (which I call the "Grounding Claim" and the "Primacy of Practice"), and preserve the two motivations that Dreyfus offers on behalf of these two claims (which I call the "motivation from the nature of human agency", and the "motivation from the nature of intentionality").

In Chapter 3, I show how *reflected self-understanding* plays a central role in Heidegger's account of truth. Critics of Heidegger have often failed to recognize the way Heidegger's account of truth is motivated by his rejection of the typical approach to the problem of the unity of judgment (or what is today often called the "problem of the unity of the proposition"). I suggest that in response to this problem, Heidegger proposed that

we shift the typical order of explanation: *intentionality is explained in terms of human agency, rather than the other way around*. Rather than positing purely intentional objects (e.g. Fregean thoughts or propositions) and explaining human agency in terms of how we relate to them, Heidegger thought intentional acts were to be explained in terms of the kind of entity that we are. According to Heidegger, human agents are not, at bottom, *predicators*, but we are instead *sense-makers*. And the basic way we make sense of ourselves and the world involves *reflected self-understanding*. In his account of truth, Heidegger is wrestling with the consequences of taking *reflected self-understanding* to be foundational for any account of intentionality.

In the early chapters of my dissertation, I focus on reflected self-understanding, as it appears in the *inauthentic* agent. So in Chapter 4, my focus shifts to reflected self-understanding as it appears in the agent who is *authentic*. My thesis is that neither the inauthentic agent, *nor the authentic agent*, needs to have any kind of "reflexive" grasp on who she is. This makes my reading of Heidegger on authenticity quite different from the standard alternatives, which either require the agent to make some kind of reflexive choice about *who she is*, or come to reflexively realize the *type* of entity that she is. One virtue of my reading is that it allows us to see a deep continuity between the two Divisions of *Being and Time*.

C.   *The Project of Being and Time*

The focus of my dissertation is Heidegger's analysis of the human agent, or what Heidegger calls his "existential analytic of Dasein". Heidegger's analysis of the human

agent comprises the bulk of the published version of *Being and Time*, but Heidegger didn't always intend for that to be the case. The two published divisions of *Being and Time* were supposed to lay the foundation for a much broader project (containing six divisions total), but much of Heidegger's broader project was never completed. Before turning my attention toward the completed divisions, I'll provide a general orientation to Heidegger's broader project, which will help put Heidegger's analysis of the human agent into context.

The stated aim of *Being and Time* is "to work out the question of the sense of *being* [*Sinn von 'Sein'*] and to do so concretely", which brings both ontological and phenomenological dimensions to Heidegger's project (GA 2: 1). The project is ontological in that it's asking about *being.* But it's phenomenological insofar as it asks about the *sense* of being, or what makes possible our understanding of being [*Seinsverständnis*], or what allows being to be *meaningful*.

Somewhat paradoxically, Heidegger's stated aim makes his project at once both ambitious and modest. It's *ambitious*, because Heidegger places himself squarely in the tradition of the greatest philosophers of Ancient Greece, who asked the deepest ontological questions. On Heidegger's story, "the question of being" had been one that "provided a stimulus for the researches of Plato and Aristotle, only to subside from then on *as a theme for actual investigation*" (GA 2: 2). While the Greeks had made an "initial contribution toward an interpretation of being", Heidegger believed the question to have

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been largely forgotten over the last two millennia.[1] Heidegger's goal was to get philosophy back on track, by reawakening our sensitivity to the question of being, so we could then pick up where Plato and Aristotle had left off.

But while Heidegger pitches his project in this lofty way, Heidegger was actually quite modest in what he took himself to be able to accomplish. That's because the goal of Heidegger's treatise is to articulate a *question*. The problem is that we don't even know what we are asking when we ask about *being* – and the concept of 'being' itself seems to blur together several different notions. So the goal of Heidegger's project is to articulate the *problem* that ontology should attempt to solve, rather than provide a solution. Heidegger needs to work out the *question* of the sense of being.

Of course, in order to articulate the question of the sense of being [*die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein*], Heidegger would need to get clear about the the two key terms: 'sense' [*Sinn*] and 'being' [*Sein*]. And with 'being' in particular, a worry naturally arises for the contemporary reader, namely, that Heidegger's confusion about *being* might rest on what Carnap calls "gross logical errors" associated with the verb '*sein*' or '*to be*'. According to Carnap, the metaphysical "pseudo-statements" that we find in Heidegger rest on two logical mistakes:

> "The first fault is the ambiguity of the word 'to be'. It is sometimes used
> as a copula prefixed to a predicate ('I am hungry'), sometimes to
> designate existence ('I am'). This mistake is aggravated by the fact that

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[1] Heidegger does, however, change his reading of the history of philosophy over time. For example, he later includes Kant (GA 33:33) and Hegel (GA 32: 205) among those who broached the question of being. Heidegger's basic line is that while several philosophers approached the question, they backed off at a critical point in asking the question of being.

metaphysicians often are not clear about this ambiguity. The second fault lies in the form of the verb in its second meaning, the meaning of *existence*. The verbal form feigns a predicate where there is none. To be sure, it has been known for a long time that existence is not a property… But it was not until the advent of modern logic that full consistency on this point was reached" ([1931], 73-74)

Heidegger does little to assuage the reader's worries in his introduction to *Being and Time*, as he seemingly switches between predicative and existential uses of the *to be* verb (i.e., between 'being-that' and 'being-thus'):

"But there are many things which we designate as 'is-ing' [*'seiend'*], and we do so in various senses [*Sinne*]. Everything we talk about, everything we have in view, everything toward which we comport ourselves in any way, has been [*ist seiend*]; what we are has been [*ist seiend*], and so is how we are. Being [*Sein*] lies in being-that and being-thus [*Daß-und Sosein*]; in reality; in presence-at-hand; in subsistence; in validity; in existence [*Dasein*]; in the 'there is' [*es gibt*]." (GA 2: 6-7, translation modified).

So did Heidegger's project – as Carnap contends – rest upon a logical mistake?

If Heidegger's project did rest on this kind of mistake, the story can't be as straightforward as the one told by Carnap. Given that Heidegger's early work was on theories of judgment, it would have been inconceivable to straightforwardly equivocate between these two uses of the verb '*to be*'. And in fact, at times Heidegger would distinguish between *four* uses of the verb: *predication*, *existence*, *essence* (or *definition*), and *being true*.[2] The trend in traditional theories of judgment was to *reduce* each of these meanings to one single use (e.g., Lotze thought we could reduce all judgments to

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[2] Examples of each use include (respectively): a) The board is black, b) There is a queen of England, c) A square is a four-sided regular polygon, d) It is the case that the board is black. See, for example, GA 24: 285-6.

existence claims). But that's exactly the trend that Heidegger wanted to resist, as he found

such theories to all be "one-sided". Instead, Heidegger suggested that the "equivocality of

the copula" raises the "question of where this polysemy comes from" (GA 29/30: 480).

Like Carnap, Heidegger insisted that we need to distinguish between these

meanings of 'to be' (and thus not *reduce* all to a single meaning, as was the trend in

theories of judgment). But unlike Carnap, Heidegger thought that each of these meanings

had a kind of *unity* with the rest. And it's this latter claim that would put Heidegger at

radical odds with Carnap. Heidegger's broader project was to look at what accounts for

the *unity* in all these meanings: "More precisely, we must ask why there is this polysemy

of the copula, and where the ground of its unity is to be found" (GA 29/30: 490). And

that's just what it means to ask about the *sense of being*. According to Heidegger, *being*

has a multiplicity of meanings (or as Aristotle would put it, "being is said in many

ways"). The *sense* of being will be that which is responsible for the *unity* in the

multiplicity of ways that being is said.

It's not immediately obvious (to me at least) whether Heidegger was right that

these meanings having a kind of unity. But it's worth taking a brief look at Heidegger's

initial suggestion, which is that *time* (or more specifically, *human temporality*) makes it

possible for being to be said in many ways. Whether or not one agrees with Heidegger,

there is at least some initial plausibility to Heidegger's suggestion. As Heidegger

indicates, philosophers have frequently used time to distinguish between kinds of entities

(e.g., abstract entities are said to be "outside of time"):

> "'Time' has long functioned as an ontological—or rather an ontical—
> criterion for naively discriminating various realms of entities. A

distinction has been made between 'temporal' entities (natural processes
an historical happenings) and 'non-temporal' entities (spatial and
numerical relationships). We are accustomed to contrasting the
'timeless' meaning of propositions with the 'temporal' course of
propositional assertions" (GA 2: 18)

Furthermore, there seems to be at least some connection between time and predication.

The difference between a mere naming (e.g. 'Sam, running') and an assertion (e.g., 'Sam

is running') is that the latter makes a claim, and it does so by indicating something that

holds *at a time*. That's why Aristotle called verbs *time determinations* when they are used

in an assertion.

Hence the title of *Being and Time*. Heidegger's initial goal was to articulate the

question of the sense of being. And in doing so, Heidegger sought to give a preliminary

sketch of time as the sense of being (i.e., time as that which gives unity to various

meanings of being).

It's through this general project that Heidegger found himself providing an

"existential analytic of the human agent". In fact, Heidegger thought that articulating the

question of the sense of being *requires* an analysis of the human agent: "an analytic of the

human agent must remain our first requirement in the question of being" (GA 2: 16). For

Heidegger, his existential analytic lies at the foundation of all ontological work:

"Therefore, *fundamental ontology*, from which alone all other ontologies
can take their rise, must be sought in the *existential analytic of the
human agent*." (GA 2: 13)

"The ontological analytic of the human agent in general is what makes
up fundamental ontology" (GA 2: 14)

The goal of Heidegger's project is to get a grip on that in terms of which being (in its

various meanings) makes sense. But when being *makes sense*, it always makes sense *to*

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somebody. Heidegger wants to wants to provide an analysis of the person to whom being make sense. *Being and Time* starts with an analysis of the human agent because "an understanding of being belongs to the human agent" (GA 2: 16).

D.   *Heidegger's Existential Analytic: Three Themes*

As it turns out, Heidegger's analysis of the human agent comprises the bulk of the published version of *Being and Time*. And Heidegger's analysis of the human agent is geared toward the question of how the human agent can understand, or make sense of something like *being*. But this makes the *Being and Time* sections on *understanding* the central kernel of Heidegger's entire ontological project. Heidegger needs to get clear about the structure and nature of human understanding in general in order to articulate what it even means to have an understanding of being.

What Heidegger wanted to resist were the "traditional" ways of understanding the human agent, e.g. as a rational animal or as a "thinking thing". And in fact, Heidegger wanted to resist appealing to *any* preexisting theories about what it means to be a human agent. For Heidegger – in accordance with the phenomenological tradition – any claim about human agency needed to be demonstrated in the "things themselves". Because of this, Heidegger wanted to look at how the human agent interacts with the world in its "everydayness", *before* the person starts theorizing about herself.

Several themes emerge in Heidegger's discussion of the human agent. I'll highlight three below (each of which will be developed in subsequent chapters):

i)   *Primacy of the practical*

According to Heidegger, the most basic relation we have to the world comes through our *dealings* [*Umgang*]. And these *dealings*, as Heidegger explains, are practical: "The kind of dealing which is closest to us is as we have shown, not a bare perceptual cognition, but rather that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use" (GA 2: 67). When the agent is absorbed in a project, she needn't hold attitudes *about* the entities that she deals with because her practical comportments are in a sense more basic than their theoretical counterparts.[3] As Heidegger explains with one of his favorite examples: "the less we just stare at the hammer-thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become" (GA 2: 69).

According to Heidegger, it's a myth to think that the human agent first encounters bare objects, only to later throw values over them by way of judgment. Instead, we encounter things from *within* a practical concern: we encounter things that are ready to be *used*. Heidegger calls the things that we encounter in our practical dealings *equipment* or the *available* (or the *ready-to-hand*). On Heidegger's story, it's our practical grip on equipment that constitutes our basic *familiarity* with the world around us; things show up as familiar because we know how to use them. We find our practical bearings with regard to equipment *prior* to judgment, and it's only when we "hold back from manipulation"

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[3] There are several ideas being woven together here, which I tease out especially in Chapter 2. After looking at several attempts to capture the priority that Heidegger gives to the practical, I provide my own account of how this plays out in Heidegger in Chapter 2.7.

that we encounter bare objects of cognition, about which we take properties to hold independent of our practical context.

Of course, this doesn't mean that the *theoretical* agent, who thinks of the world independent of her projects, isn't important to Heidegger. After all, Heidegger's initial goal in *Being and Time* is to provide an analysis of the agent who does ontology, or asks about *being*, which can be as theoretical of an activity as it gets. But Heidegger wanted to resist the motive to take deliberative, thinking cases of human agency as the paradigm case through which to view the human agent in its "everyday" mode. Instead, Heidegger wanted to *start* his analysis with the everyday practical case, describing this case in its own terms before showing how our more theoretical activities can grow out from there.

ii)   Holistic view of understanding

When an agent is practically engaged with the world, she assigns things around her to specific roles that allow her to carry out her activity. When the carpenter is at work, she recruits the equipment around her by taking these things to have specific functions (hammering, measuring, etc.) in light of the activity that she is engaged in. This allows the carpenter's environment to show up with a normative orientation, or as a *practical whole*. When an agent is practically engaged with the world, things hang together in terms of her activity or practical aim. A carpenter steps into her workshop and encounters her *equipment*, or things to be used together in building a house. Each piece of equipment "belongs somewhere" and has a function (GA 2: 102). But as Heidegger puts it, there is no such thing as "an equipment". Equipment always shows up "in terms of

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[*aus*] its belonging to other equipment" (GA 2: 68). So the carpenter doesn't just encounter a hammer to be used, but a hammer that is to be used *with* nails and boards *for* some particular task. She has a certain familiarity with the way equipment hangs together around her practical aim.

The totality of equipment that hangs together is what Heidegger calls an "equipmental context." The German for context [*Zussamenhang*] suggests quite literally that things are hanging together. Everything can be taken together as a *whole* [*Ganzen*]—which has a kind of unity to it—rather than just as a domain [*All*] of entities that happen to add up to a sum [*Summe*] (GA 2: 64, 72). When an agent looks around, she understands all of the things around her in terms of how they fit into a practical whole.

Heidegger insists that we encounter this whole prior to the parts: "What is given to us primarily us the unity of an equipmental whole." And from out of this whole, "each individual piece of equipment is by its own nature *equipment-for*: for traveling, for writing, for flying. Each one has its immanent reference to that *for which* it is what it is… Every entity that we discover *as* equipment has with it a *specific functionality or affordance* [*Bewandtnis*]." (GA 17: 163-164). So we don't "progressively [take] the single things together, in order to finally establish a coherent interconnection of them." The problem with this picture is that it fails to capture how we encounter things that seem to have a kind of unity to them: "As long as we move on this level, it is almost literally true to say that we cannot see the forest for the trees. More precisely, [this picture] *cannot see the world for entities*" (GA 29/30: 347).

iii)   *Non-reflexive self-knowledge*

According to Heidegger, the basic grip that a human agent has on *herself* comes from looking out into the world, rather than by looking inward at the "ego" or the "self". In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger says this kind of self-knowledge involves "reflection [*Reflexion*]", in the optical sense, in which there is a "mirroring back of the self from things" (GA 24: 247). According to Heidegger, the self is mirrored back from things because we identify with our projects, or with the things we find meaningful out in the world. As Heidegger puts it, "I am what I pursue and have concern for", i.e., "The human agent is its world" (GA 24: 226, GA 2: 322). William Blattner sums this up in the phrase, "I am what matters to me" ([2006], 41).

This is why, in *Being and Time,* Heidegger eventually identifies *care* as the being of the human agent. To answer the deep, existential question of "Who am I?", it doesn't help to reflexively think about *myself*. Instead, I think about my projects and all the things I care deeply about. For Heidegger, the question of *who I am* is already captured in the question of what it is that I care for, or what it is that I find meaningful. And this allows for my grip on *myself* to be nothing other than the grip I have on the world in all of its meaningfulness.

Heidegger never settled on a consistent vocabulary to describe the kind of understanding that allows the human agent to be reflected back from things, but he clearly wanted to make a distinction between two senses of the term 'reflection' [*Reflexion*]'. Heidegger insisted that the human agent is "there for itself without reflection… in the sense of a turning back" (GA 24: 226). Reflection, in the first sense of

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the term, amounts to a kind of inner perception where the "ego" or self directs attitudes

back at *itself*. It's in this sense of the term that the human agent finds itself "without

reflection and without inner perception, *before* all reflection" (GA 24: 226).

Nevertheless, Heidegger recognized a second, "optical" sense of the term that

captures the way the human agent can find herself out in the world:

> "The way in which the self is unveiled to itself in the factical human
> agent can nevertheless be fittingly called reflection, except that we must
> not take this expression to mean what is commonly meant by it – the ego
> bent around backward and starting at itself – but an interconnection such
> as is manifested in the optical meaning of the term 'reflection'. To reflect
> means, in the optical context, to break at something, to radiate back from
> there, to show itself in a reflection from something" (GA 24: 226).

This second sense of 'reflection' involves a kind of "self-understanding by way of the

things themselves" (GA 24: 247). Heidegger's early term for this was "relucence

[*Reluzenz*]", from the Latin *reluceo*, to stress how life is illuminated precisely when "life

looks away from itself" (GA 61: 123).[4] A major goal of Heidegger's existential analytic

is to show exactly how reflection in this second sense is possible.

I'll use the terms 'reflexive' and 'reflected' to mark Heidegger's distinction. A

reflexive understanding of oneself involves what Heidegger would describe as "an ego

bent around backward staring at itself", or a kind of "espionage on the ego" (GA 24:

225). While it's certainly possible to have a *reflexive* grip on oneself, Heidegger takes

this to be an abstraction from a more basic kind of understanding that is *reflected*, or

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[4] Thanks to Pierre Keller for directing me toward Heidegger's early use of the term 'relucence'.

where the self is allowed to "radiate back" or be reflected by the world. To show that *reflected* self-understanding is more basic than one that is *reflexive*, Heidegger provided an analysis of human agency that did not appeal to the agent's capacity to hold *reflexive* attitudes about herself. In other words, I take Heidegger's existential analytic to show that we can explain the central features of human agency without appealing to attitudes that are *reflexive*.

There are two kinds of attitudes in particular that I am calling "reflexive", each of which Heidegger rejected as central to his analysis of human agency. The first kind of reflexive attitudes involve an *I*-notion, or a conception of oneself in a privileged, first-personal way.[5] What Heidegger rejected was the view that the human agent first finds itself in the "givenness of the 'I'" (GA 2: 115), and in doing so, Heidegger rejected the view that an *I*-notion is an ineliminable feature of human agency. In contrast, Heidegger appealed to the 'there' [*da*] as the indexical notion central to the human agent. It's for this reason that Heidegger was not being "terminologically arbitrary" when he designated the human agent as '*Dasein*' rather than as an ego or 'I' (GA 2: 46).

Second, Heidegger rejected the notion that the capacity to hold attitudes about one's own mental life is an essential feature of human agency. We find this view in Korsgaard, for example, who suggests that "our capacity to turn our attention on to our own mental activities is also a capacity to distance ourselves from them, and to call them

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[5] This kind of reflexive awareness of oneself come under focus in Castenada [1966] and Perry ([1977], [1979]). For more on this topic, see Chapter 1.

into question" ([1992], 93). According to Korsgaard, it's our capacity to turn our attention to our mental activities that "confers on us a kind of authority over ourselves" ([1992], 19-20). The notion of *authority*, or ownership, becomes important to Heidegger in Division II of *Being and Time*. I suggest in Chapter 4 that what accounts for authenticity is not the capacity to hold attitudes about my own mental activities, but is instead the capacity to hold attitudes about the activities in which I am engaged, which constitute for Heidegger my "equipmental" or practical context.

iv)   Priority of these Themes

My discussion of the three themes above should be uncontroversial; everything above should just be standard Heidegger. But what I hope to contribute is a better understanding of the way that these three themes relate to one another, and in particular, of the priority of these three themes. On my reading, non-reflexive self-knowledge is *the central issue* for Heidegger: an "existential analytic" of the human agent is successful only when it is able to show how it is that the human agent finds itself out in the world. Because of this, on my reading, the other two themes are just steps along the way to answering the question about non-reflexive self knowledge is possible.

Heidegger's basic story is that the most basic grip an agent has on herself comes from looking at the world *from the perspective* of the activity in which she is engaged. So a teacher, for example, might walk into a classroom and see everything around her as equipment to be used for teaching. In order to have a grip on *who she is*, she doesn't need to reflexively think "I'm a teacher", or have any kind of description under which she

values herself. Instead, she can just let the things around her be equipment to be used in the activity of teaching: when the teacher sees things for teaching, those things *reflect* who she is.

This, in turn, will allow things to show up to the agent as a normatively-oriented, practical whole. When the agent becomes absorbed in an activity, *everything* she encounters will hang together in light of that activity. The writer, for example, doesn't first encounter bare objects which she can then judge to be 'tables' or 'chairs'. Instead, she walks into a classroom and encounters something like an *equipmental whole*, or a context for teaching, where her practical activity provides a kind of *unity* among the things she encounters. And it's only out of this unified context that she then encounters individual items of equipment, such as tables or chairs.

One advantage of giving priority to the theme of *non-reflexive self knowledge* is the way this coheres with several "forks and knives" passages that we find shortly after the publication of *Being and Time*. One such passage comes in the 1929-30 lecture course *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*:

> "I attempted in *Being and Time* to provide a preliminary characterization of the *phenomenon of world* by interpreting the *way in which we at first and for the most part move about in our everyday world*. There I took my departure from what lies to hand in the everyday realm, from those things that we use and pursue, indeed in such a way that we do not really know of the peculiar character proper to such activity at all… It never occurred to me, however, to try and claim or prove with this interpretation that the essence of man consists in the fact that he knows how to handle knives and forks or uses the tram" (262).

According to Heidegger, the essence of "man" [*Mensch*] doesn't lie in the fact that he manipulates tools, but is rather in the way that he "has" a world. As we'll see below,

Heidegger takes the phenomenon of *world-disclosure* to explain what allows the agent to be reflected back by the things it encounters. So the "practical" is important for Heidegger, but only because the practical grip we have on the things around us constitutes the reflected grip we have on ourselves.

E.   *The Metaphor of Vision*

Mark Wrathall once mentioned in conversation that many of the differences between analytic and continental philosophers stem from the lens through which they approach human understanding. Analytic philosophers tend to model the human understanding after language, while Continental philosophers tend to lean on perception, and visual perception in particular. When reading Heidegger, it's difficult to ignore the metaphor of vision. References to vision or sight are woven throughout almost every section of *Being and Time*, but the imagery is featured most prominently in Heidegger's sections on human understanding. Heidegger explains that understanding is a kind of fore-sight [*Vorsicht*], which provides a point-of-view [*Hinsicht*] with regard to which [*im Hinblick worauf*] something is to be interpreted (150). Understanding offers what Heidegger calls a "pre-view" [*Hinblick*] for an interpretive act. All of this visual imagery – which I'll unpack in the first two chapters – is central to my reading of Heidegger. What makes my reading of Heidegger distinct is the way that I put Heidegger's metaphor of vision up front, along with the particular way that I put the metaphor to use.

That's not to say that the secondary literature on Heidegger has ignored this visual imagery. But the main way the visual imagery has played out is with a concept of a

"background".[6] Although the concept of a "background" has been used for various purposes by those reading Heidegger, the general consensus is that Heidegger takes practical abilities and social roles (among other things) to constitute a "background" against which our intentional attitudes or interpretive acts can take place. Because of this, the social and practical "background" is said to be required in order for our intentional attitudes to be meaningful. On this general line, one might say that Heidegger's contribution to the philosophy of mind lies in the way he draws attention to this "background".

There's no doubt that the "background" metaphor has been used to explain Heidegger in fruitful ways. But the "background" is only *one* aspect of Heidegger's visual metaphor, and because of this, it's limited in what it can explain. Consider, for example, various ways that something can fail to be *thematic* (to borrow one of Heidegger's terms) in visual perception. When I hear a bird's chip, I turn around to find a warbler. Of course, there are lots of things in my visual field, but it's only the warbler that becomes *thematic* or *salient* in the perceptual act. Everything else in my visual field (e.g. trees, other people, the sun) fails to be thematic because of the way they fade into the *background*. In this situation, things that are *unthematic* are simply those things that fail to be the focus of my attention.

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[6] No doubt, this is in large part due to the way that Merleau-Ponty and Dreyfus interpret Heidegger and develop his key ideas.

But that's altogether different from the way that *I myself* fail to become thematic when I look at the warbler. When I look at the warbler, I don't see myself; but that's not because I'm somehow part of the *background* of the perceptual act, like the trees or the sun. Rather, it's because I'm looking *away* from myself: I'm what's giving the perceptual act its *perspective*. On my reading of Heidegger, it's the *perspectival* aspect of visual perception that draws Heidegger to the metaphor of vision. In particular, the notion of a perspective can help explain the phenomenon of "self-projection", where I project myself onto a possibility, or onto an "ability-to-be". On my reading of Heidegger, I project onto a possibility or activity by allowing that activity to constitute the perspective from which I encounter the things around me. As we'll see, the phenomenon of "self-projection" will play an important role in Heidegger's story of what allows for the possibility of *reflected self-knowledge*.

But even on the surface, visual perception provides an immediate model of something akin to non-reflexive self-knowledge. When Heidegger introduces "reflected self-knowledge" in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, he describes it as reflected in the "optical" sense, where there's a "mirroring back of the self from things". Heidegger is interested in the metaphor of vision because this "mirroring back" already takes in *ordinary* perception as well. When I bike down the streets of San Jose, I track my blazing speed through the buildings moving in the opposite direction. I'm able to pick up

information that in some sense *concerns* me, without reflexively turning toward *me*.[7]
Heidegger wanted to explore how a comportment could be *mine*, even when an "I"
doesn't appear at all in a comportment.

But this also highlights the need to expand Heidegger's visual metaphor beyond
the notion of a "background". When something is in the "background" of my visual field,
it's unthematic because I'm not paying attention to it. The problem with the
"background" metaphor is that it runs the risk of just pushing things back to the level of
unconscious mental states. On the issue of self-knowledge in particular, we risk
attributing to Heidegger the claim that the human agent simply fails to pay attention to its
conception of itself, or fails to make this conception salient by lifting it from out of the
background. My suggestion is that Heidegger had a much more radical project, namely,
to provide an analysis of human agency that doesn't rely on *any* attitudes directed at
oneself – including those attitudes that might be "unconscious" or in the background in
the sense that one simply fails to pay attention to them. To do this, Heidegger had to
rethink the *structure* of the most basic grip an agent has on who she is.

That's not to say there's no role for something like a "background" in *Being and
Time*.[8] But the concept of a "background" becomes more interesting when we draw on

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[7] We find this kind of motivation in Heidegger dating back all the way to 1919. The question for Heidegger
is how a perception of a lectern can in some sense be *mine*, even though it's a perception of the lectern,
rather than *me*. (GA 56/57, 71ff). The language of the perception "concerning" me comes from Perry, not
Heidegger.
[8] For example, I take the notion of a "background" to be particularly helpful in explaining how individuated
items of equipment fail to become thematic when we simply deal with things or put them to use. When an

other aspects of the metaphor of vision. Consider, for example, how it is that we *change* a background in ordinary perception (e.g., when I can't make out a figure in the distance, because a bright light is in the background). In order to change a background, I would need to adopt a new perspective, or quite literally move into a different position. And this ushers in one of the most important questions of Division I of *Being and Time*: How is it that the human agent *takes on* a perspective? How does the human agent *move into* an activity, or "dwell" in a possibility that constitutes its perspective?

As I'll outline below, the most basic kind of self-knowledge for Heidegger is one in which I view the world from the perspective of an *activity*, or from the perspective of what Heidegger calls a "for-the-sake-of-which". The agent views the world *in terms of* and activity, which needn't require thinking *about* that activity. Instead, Heidegger suggests that it involves "living in", "dwelling in" or "keeping oneself in" a possibility (GA 21: 288; GA 24: 392): the agent *moves into* the activity, such that the activity constitutes her perspective. So the question, for Heidegger, is how agents tend to *appropriate* activities as their perspective. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger often calls this "projecting oneself onto possibilities", where projecting oneself involves *moving into* a possibility and viewing the world *from* it, rather than thinking *about* it.

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item of equipment breaks, for example, I come to realize the way that item of equipment had been playing a role in the background of my dealings with other things.

Chapter 1: Heidegger on Non-Reflexive Self-Knowledge

1.0   Introduction

In his 1927 lecture course *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger argued that human agents have a special kind of self-knowledge that doesn't require any kind of reflexive turning toward oneself. This kind of self-knowledge involves "reflection [*Reflexion*]", in the optical sense, in which there is a "mirroring back of the self from things" (GA 24: 247). Because the human agent finds itself by looking out into the world, she needn't look inward at the "ego" or the "self". As Heidegger puts it, the human agent "never finds itself otherwise than in the things themselves" (GA 24: 159).

This kind of *reflected* understanding of oneself should be distinguished from one that's *reflexive*, or turned back toward itself. As Heidegger describes it, reflexive self-knowledge involves "an ego bent around backward staring at itself", or a kind of "espionage on the ego" (GA 24: 225). In contrast to *reflexive* self-knowledge, a *reflected* understanding of oneself is one that allows the self to "radiate back" or be reflected from the world.

According to Heidegger, the philosophical tradition had largely failed to recognize the role of *reflected* self-understanding. The problem, as described by Heidegger, is that "since Descartes and above all in German idealism the ontological constitution of the person, the ego, the subject, is determined by way of self-consciousness" (GA 24: 247). But all too often, self-consciousness had been explored only in the "formal sense of reflection on the ego" (GA 24: 247). To counter this, Heidegger thought it was necessary to give something like a *taxonomy of self-knowledge*:

"It is not sufficient to take the concept of self-consciousness in the formal sense of reflection on the ego. Rather, it is necessary to exhibit diverse forms of the human agent's self-understanding" (GA 24: 247-248).

In this chapter, I follow Heidegger's lead in giving a taxonomy of self-knowledge (or as I prefer to call it—borrowing a term from John Perry—"agent-relative knowledge"). I begin with some of Perry's distinctions in his work on "Thought Without Representation", since those distinctions help to introduce reflected self-knowledge in Heidegger. I suggest that reflected self-knowledge, for Heidegger, involves interpreting the world *from the perspective of a practical aim*. When we become completely absorbed in an activity, we encounter the things around us from the perspective of that activity. This allows a person's environment to reflect *who they are* as an agent.

1.1   Taxonomy of Agent Relative Knowledge

Let's begin with an analogy: consider two GPS applications that I can use on my phone to display my location.

On Google Maps, my phone uses a blue dot to represent *me*. As I bike throughout San Jose, I can watch the blue dot move across an otherwise ordinary map of the city. I'll call this the "first-personal" way of representing my location, since it makes use of a special way of indicating *me*, much like the first person in language.

On Google Street View, my phone displays San Jose *from my perspective*. When I move, the phone shows all of the buildings moving in the opposite direction. The phone tracks my location without the use of a blue dot, and it does this by displaying the city *in*

terms of my location. I'll call this the "perspectival" setting, since it displays the city *from my perspective*.

The two applications convey the same information, but each privileges "the self" in a different way. While Google Maps has a special way of representing *me*, Google Street View has a special way of representing *everything else*. The latter privileges the self by displaying everything else *in terms of* the self or me. Heidegger coined a new term, the "in-terms-of-which" [*das Woraufhin*], to track just this kind of distinction.[9] On the perspectival setting, the self is the "in-terms-of-which" of the representation: the world is displayed *in terms of* me. This allows the phone to carry information that in

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[9] It is difficult to overstate just how important the "in-terms-of-which" of human understanding is to Heidegger, especially in the era of *Being and* Time. One can get a sense of the "in-terms-of-which" to Heidegger's project from even a quick scan of some of the most important definitions in *Being and Time*:

Being -
 "that which determines entities as entities, that in terms of which [*woraufhin*] entities are already understood" (6).

World -
   "the in-terms-of-which [*das Woraufhin*] letting entities have affordances beforehand" (86)
   "the in-terms-of-which [*das Woraufhin*] of letting entities be encountered in the kind of being that belongs to affordances" (86).

Significance [*Bedeutsamkeit*] -
   "that in terms of which [*woraufhin*] the world is disclosed as such" (143).

Sense or **Meaning** [*Sinn*] -
   "the 'upon-which' [*das Woraufhin*] of a projection in terms of which [*aus*] something becomes intelligible as something" (151).
   "the 'upon-which' [*das Woraufhin*] of a primary projection in terms of which [*aus*] something can be conceived in its possibility as that which it is" (324).
   "the 'upon-which' [*das Woraufhin*] of the primary projection of the understanding of being" (324).

some sense "concerns" me, without making "*me*" salient or thematic, as it would through a blue dot in Google Maps.[10]

But when we see the world *from* a perspective, we needn't hold attitudes *about* that perspective. Thus it will become important to Heidegger that the perspective or *Woraufhin* from which we interpret the world need not become salient [*ausdrücklich*] or thematic [*thematisch*] in a perspectival interpretive act (e.g., GA 2: 145). This feature of perspectival knowledge is what will allow us – later in this section – to distinguish between four modes of agent-relative knowledge. But before moving away from the GPS analogy, it will be helpful to highlight a few other terminological and phenomenological distinctions.

Philosophers often talk about the "first-person perspective", and the phrase is especially relied upon in phenomenology, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind. Within Heidegger scholarship, in particular, we can find debates over the place that Heidegger gives to the "first-person perspective" in *Being and Time*.[11] But the basic problem with this kind of debate, as I see it, is that the very phrase runs together two

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[10] I'm treating the *Woraufhin* of human understanding as one's *practical perspective*, at least in cases of absorbed agency. One advantage of the notion of a "perspective" is that it captures some of Heidegger's world-play when *das Woraufhin* is introduced alongside the structure of "projecting oneself onto possibilities". When the agent projects herself onto a possibility, that possibility is the whereupon [*das Woraufhin*] of her projection, and that in terms of which [*woraufhin*] she grasps the things around her. For more on "projection", see Chapter 2.2 and 2.6. For more on Heidegger's use of '*Woraufhin*', see my Heidegger Lexicon entry in Wrathall [forthcoming].
[11] See, for example, Crowell's article "Subjectivity: locating the first-person in *Being and Time*" ([2013], 169-190). The 'first-person perspective' also plays an important role in Carman [2003], esp. pp. 264-313.

types of attitudes that are phenomenologically (and structurally) distinct: our *first-personal* attitudes, and our *perspectival* attitudes.

The "first person" is primarily a *linguistic* distinction. A speaker can refer to herself in the first person using terms like 'I' or 'me'. Since Castenada [1966], and Perry ([1977], [1979]), it's been widely recognized in the Analytic tradition that a speaker can also *think* of herself in a privileged, reflexive way as well. Thus what was first a *linguistic* distinction was taken to also apply at the *cognitive* level: just as there are first- or third-personal ways to refer to oneself in language, there are first- or third-personal ways to hold a belief about oneself.

The notion of a "perspective" comes from *perception*, and from visual perception in particular. The Grand Canyon can appear differently from the North and South Rims because each Rim offers a different perspective, or point of view, from which to the canyon can be viewed. When we talk about perspectival attitudes, we extend this feature of perception to cognition. When I believe that the couch is to the left of the chair, for example, it might be said that I hold an attitude that is perspectival.

The upshot of the GPS analogy is that we should keep a distinction between our *first-personal* attitudes on the one hand, and our *perspectival* attitudes on the other. I suggest below that we have *both* first-personal knowledge and perspectival knowledge, but that these two kinds of attitudes are structurally distinct. To keep from running them together, I'll avoid the phrase 'first-person perspective' throughout the dissertation.

One final terminological point: Heidegger himself calls 'circumspection' – or the sight that guides our practical dealings – a kind of 'knowledge' (GA 2: 67). This might

sound very un-Heideggerian of Heidegger, but it's worth noting that Heidegger puts "knowledge [*Erkenntnis*]" in quotes, so as to indicate that the term extends beyond Heidegger's narrow discussion of theoretical "knowing" [*Erkennen*] in *Being and Time*. I intend to use the term 'knowledge' in this broader sense, where it covers *all* types of interpretive acts, including those that Heidegger calls "circumspective". If we wanted to keep things in more traditional Heideggerian vocabulary, we could say that I'm giving a taxonomy of *interpretation*, distinguishing between four different kinds of agent-relative interpretive acts.

The four types of agent-relative knowledge that I wish to distinguish are what I call:

a) *first-personal knowledge*

b) *perspectival knowledge*

c) *knowledge about the practical*

d) *knowledge from a practical perspective (i.e. "circumspection")*

These types of knowledge differ in the senses in which they are "about" the practical or "about" the self. And it's the forth type of agent-relative knowledge (*knowledge from a practical perspective*) that I take to be what Heidegger calls "circumspection". But before we get there, let's take a closer look at the first two:

A.   First-personal vs perspectival knowledge

A tourist in Iceland recently joined her own search party without realizing that *she herself* was the person presumed to be lost. She had a third-personal description of the

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missing tourist, but continued to search until she came to hold the belief that she would

express by saying "*I* am the person we are looking for". It seems the tourist came to hold

first-personal knowledge, since she came to believe something *about* herself in a special,

reflexive way. And it was the belief that she held about herself in the first-person that

lead her to finally call off the search.[12]

One reason philosophers are interested in *typing* beliefs is because of the

connection between belief and action. In particular, it's important to get clear about

which types of belief are capable of *explaining* human action. The case above indicates

that a person's action can often be explained through an appeal to a *first-personal*

knowledge. Why did the woman call off the search at 3am? It's not because she believed

something like *the woman in blue* was reported as missing – she held this belief all along.

It's the woman's belief that *she herself* was reported as missing that explains why she

called off the search.

This example might give rise to the impression that *only* first-personal knowledge

has this special link to human action. To borrow an example from Perry, suppose that

while on a hike, I see a bear, and I run. It's not the absolute location of the bear that leads

me to run away, but instead the location of the bear in relation to *me*. Of course, I am not

among the objects in my perceptual field, but there's a temptation to think that I must be

represented by the belief that the perception gives rise to. After all, when the bear enters

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[12] Iceland Review Online [2012]. This type of case mirrors Perry's "messy shopper" in Perry [1979]. See also Castenada [1966] and Perry [1977].

into my perceptual field, I come to believe something about *myself*: that *I* am close to the bear. As Perry puts this line of thought: "without a component [of the belief] standing for me, how could this knowledge guide my action", which in this case would lead me to run away? ([1986], 137).

However, Perry rejects this line of reasoning and defends the view that our most primitive self-knowledge is "intrinsically selfless". In other words, "there is a kind of self-knowledge, the most basic kind, that requires no concept or idea of oneself" ([1986], 138). This is what I'm calling *perspectival*, in contrast to *first-personal* knowledge.

This kind of *perspectival* knowledge is on display in what Perry [2012], [2014] calls "animal cognition" or "proto-cognition". A chicken, for example, "sees a kernel of corn, approaches it, pecks at it, and eats it" ([2012], 402). In order for the chicken's perception to be veridical, the chicken itself needs to be in front of a kernel. And it's in this sense that the perception gives rise to a belief that—using Perry's terminology—is '*self-locating*' (or that '*concerns*' the chicken): the chicken forms a belief, the truth of which puts a condition on the chicken. But the chicken *itself* need not be a constituent of the belief that it forms about the kernel. So the chicken's belief is incomplete, in the Fregean sense. It can only be evaluated for truth relative to the chicken holding the belief.

As Perry explains, the temptation might be to find a way that the chicken represents itself in the "deep structure" of its thought ([1986], 143). In other words, one might think that the chicken augments its thought with a first-personal self-notion, so that an 'I' or 'me' attaches to each of it's thoughts. On this view, what the chicken really comes to believe is that she *herself* is in front of a kernel (rather than something like

'kernel in front'). But we should resist this temptation since it attributes to the chicken a cognitive capacity that the chicken does not have: namely the capacity to represent *itself* in thought. It's far from obvious that chickens — or other animals like chickens — have any sort of self-concept, or notion of *oneself.* But these animals are able to pick up information about the world, and act on this information just fine.

On Perry's view, the "function of the chicken's perception is to affect its action" ([2014], 138-9). Unlike a blind chicken that might peck at random, an ordinary chicken surveys its environment to see if there is a kernel, i.e., to see if its pecking would be successful. The chicken needs to keep track of the aspects of its environment that are changing, but one thing that never changes is that the chicken that does the perceiving is the *same chicken* that does the pecking. As Perry puts it, "The roles of being the perceiver, and being the one who pecks, are *linked* by nature… The chicken's way of picking up information about kernels in front of it is *normally self-informative*. Pecking is *normally self-effecting*. When nature links normally self-informative ways of picking up information to normally self-effecting ways of acting, no self-notion is needed to keep things coordinated" ([2014], 140).

In other words, it's *nature* that coordinates the chicken's perception and action. Because it's always the very same chicken that does both the perceiving and the pecking, this is not something the chicken needs to keep track of: *it's a cognitive burden that the*

chicken needn't bear.[13] Of course, there are times when a self-notion might be helpful to the chicken. A farmer might subject the chicken to an elaborate set-up, where the easiest way for the chicken to see that it's in front of a kernel would be to see this though a mirror. In order for this perception to give rise to pecking, the chicken would need to identify itself as *that* chicken being seen in the mirror. This would require keeping track of *itself*, because the role of being seen in a mirror isn't "normally self-informative". In other words, the role of being seen in a mirror isn't linked by nature to the role of being the chicken that pecks – so the chicken would be required to do the coordination on its own.

It seems accurate to attribute to the chicken knowledge that is *perspectival*. The chicken evolved the cognitive capacities to pick up information about where kernels are located *in relation to itself*. But the chicken can do this without ever picking out an object as *itself*. To borrow the earlier metaphor, a chicken's belief is structured like Google Street View, rather than Google Maps. It needn't pick out "itself" in thought, because it never needs to ask whether the chicken doing the perceiving will be the same chicken doing the pecking.

But what about a *human* agent? It's one thing to say that a perspectival thought can explain a chicken's behavior. But it's another leap to say that human agents have this

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[13] Describing people, Perry says: "The belief need only have the burden of registering differences in my environment, and not the burden of identifying the person about whose relation to the environment perception gives information with the person whose action it guides". ([1986], 151)

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type of thought as well. After all, unlike chickens, human agents actually *have* a self-concept, along with the capacity to make use of it in first-personal thought. So one might think that when I see a bear, for example, if my self-notion isn't in the *foreground* of my thought, it's at least somewhere in the *background*. On this line of thought, my perception of the bear gives rise to the belief that could be explicitly spelled out as '*I* am close to the bear' or 'the bear is in front of *me*' (rather than something closer to '*that's* a bear'), with *myself* somewhere in the *background* of thought.

There's a lot at stake here for the Heideggerian – perhaps more than what first appears. Heidegger's claim isn't simply that one's reflexive self-notion is in the *background* (rather than *foreground*) of our most basic forms of self-knowledge. Instead, Heidegger claims that there's a primitive kind of self-knowledge that does not require *any* reflexive turning toward oneself, and that has a different kind of structure altogether.[14] So the ultimate aim, for Heidegger, is to show how we can have a kind of "self-knowledge" without employing a reflexive self-notion at all.

I think there are several reasons to be leery about sneaking a reflexive self-notion into the background of human thought for these kinds of cases. One major drawback to this move is that it would require saying quite a bit more about what the *background*

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[14] To put this another way, according to Heidegger, the primary indexical notion is the *there* [*da*] of *Dasein*, rather than the *I*. The human agent, according to Heidegger, has a grip on itself through its "there", which is why her *I*-notion or self-notion needn't be present at all in her comportments.

consists in, and how *backgrounding* takes place.[15] But apart from these worries, it isn't

obvious what would *motivate* the view that we have a self-notion in the background of

the most basic beliefs that mediate perception and action. After all, humans share at least

one similarity with chickens, in that *nature* can play a coordinating role between

perception with action. When I see a bear and run away, I don't need to keep track of

whether the person who sees the bear will be the person who will be running – nature

does this for me. Unlike the chicken, humans have the *capacity* to reflect on whether the

person who sees the bear will be the same person who will be running. But it would be

wildly inefficient if the human agent were required to *exercise* this capacity between

seeing the bear and running – even if this capacity were exercised in the "background" of

thought. So even though we have this capacity, it isn't obvious that we need to appeal to

it to explain my action.

In addition, requiring the self to be in the background of my attitudes seems to get

the phenomenology backward in terms of what my belief is *about*. When I see a bear, my

perception gives rise to an attitude that I might naturally report with a demonstrative:

"*That's* a bear". This attitude privileges the self, but it's not because I think of myself in a

special, reflexive way. Instead, the self is privileged *in the way that I pick out the bear*.

My attitude is closer to Google Street View: it's not the way that I think of *myself* that

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[15] This is also a general problem for any Heideggerian who appeals to something like a "background" in explaining Heidegger's views. For an overview on ways a Heideggerians often speak of a "background", see Chapter 4 of McManus [2012].

makes my belief intimately connected with action, but rather the way I think of *everything else*.

B.   *Knowledge about the practical vs knowledge from a practical perspective*

The previous modes of agent-relative knowledge differ in the ways that they privilege the agent or the self. While first-personal knowledge has a special way of picking out *the self*, perspectival knowledge privileges the self in the way it picks out *everything else*. I take this to track Perry's central observation "Thought without Representation" where he argues that "basic self-knowledge is intrinsically selfless" ([1986], 137).

If we extend Perry's view a bit further, we end up with Heidegger's view that -- to borrow a line from Dreyfus -- skillful coping "can be purposive without the agent entertaining a *purpose*." ([1993], 28) When an agent is completely absorbed in an activity, she needn't think *about* the activity that she is engaged in. An agent can have what I'll call '*knowledge from a practical perspective*' when she allows a practical aim to constitute the perspective from which she interprets the world. When an agent interprets the world from a practical perspective, nothing in her cognitive life needs to represent her practical aims. Instead, she can think about *everything else* in her environment in light of these aims.

Knowledge from a practical perspective is paradigmatically on display when we "lose ourselves" in a task, becoming completely *absorbed* in what we are doing. To bring

this kind of knowledge into view, it's helpful to look at the way experiences are reported

by people who achieve what psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls "flow":

> "A rock climber explains how it feels when he is scaling a mountain:
> 'You are so involved in what you are doing [that] you aren't thinking of
> yourself as separate from the immediate activity… You don't see
> yourself as separate from what you are doing.'
>
> A mother who enjoys the time spent with her small daughter: '… She
> reads to me, and I read to her, and that's a time when I sort of lose touch
> with the rest of the world, I'm totally absorbed in what I'm doing.'
>
> A chess player tells of playing in a tournament: '… the concentration is
> like breathing—you never think of it. The roof could fall in and, if it
> missed you, you would be unaware of it'" ([1990], 53-54).

When a person is in the "flow", all of her cognitive capacities have the function of

guiding her action. As Csikszentmihalyi explains, "When all a person's relevant skills are

needed to cope with the challenges of a situation, that person's attention is completely

absorbed by the activity. There is no excess psychic energy left over to process any

information but what the activity offers. All the attention is concentrated on the relevant

stimuli" ([1990], 53). As the rock climber mentioned above describes, "One thing you're

after is the one-pointedness of mind" ([1990], 62).

In other words, staying in the "flow" requires a certain amount of *focus*: when the

climber is absorbed in her activity, all of her thoughts will relate to the activity of

climbing. Speaking loosely, we might say that the climber needs to stay focused on rock

climbing. But that's not entirely accurate, since the climber doesn't need to continually

remind herself of the activity in which she is engaged. Strictly speaking, the climber

needs to stay focused on *the rock* (and not on the activity of rock climbing as such): the

climber is focused *by* the activity of rock climbing, while being focused *on* the rock.

An agent can have what I'll call '*knowledge from a practical perspective*' when she allows a practical aim to constitute the perspective from which she interprets the world. When an agent interprets the world from a practical perspective, nothing in her cognitive life needs to represent her practical aims. We can contrast this with what I'll call '*knowledge about the practical*', which is the type of knowledge on display when we deliberate about *which* activity we should become engaged in. Suppose a storm rolls in, and the rock climber needs to decide whether to continue climbing or pack it in. In order to deliberate between these two options, she'll need to think *about* the activity that she is currently engaged in.

For many animals, knowledge from a practical perspective is the only kind of knowledge that is had. Over time, chickens developed the cognitive capacities needed to excel at pecking kernels: chickens can tell whether pecking would be successful, and they can tell what needs to be done in order to make pecking successful. The chicken's cognitive capacities have the *function* of facilitating successful pecking. But this doesn't require that the chicken develop the (second order) cognitive capacities to hold beliefs *about* the function of these (first order) cognitive capacities. The chicken can successfully peck without any conception of the activity that it's engaged in, and that's because it's *nature* that determines that the chicken's perception will be in the service of pecking. Nature gives the chicken certain *drives* (or certain drives in situations), and these drives bring the chicken into the activity of pecking. Because the drives do the work for the chicken, it isn't necessary for the chicken to have the activity of pecking somewhere in the "deep structure" of the attitudes it holds about the kernel. The chicken doesn't have

the *cognitive* burden of bringing perception into the service of pecking, because this burden is carried by the chicken's stomach.

When it comes to human agents, it's easy to start with the picture of a detached observer, picking up information about the world in a way that's detached from one's activities. But we shouldn't be too quick to ignore the connection between human perception and our practical aims. Human agents get into activities, and we look around the world in order to facilitate action. We aren't (usually) detached observers, but we instead navigate through the world while engaged in activities. These activities often form the perspective from which we view the world.

When a carpenter, for example, is fully absorbed in her project, *all* of her interpretive acts will characterize how things stand in relation to her project of building a house. She can interpret a hammer as "too heavy" or the nails as "too small", but these interpretive acts needn't be accompanied by an additional intention that specifies the person *for whom*, or the practical aim *for which* the hammer is too heavy. In other words, when a carpenter picks up a hammer that's too heavy, her attitude about the hammer would be more naturally expressed by an utterance of (i) rather than (ii):

(i) "The hammer is too heavy"

(ii) "The hammer is too heavy for *me* to use *in building that house*"

There are two obvious differences between these sentences. First, whereas sentence (ii) is *first-personal*, sentence (i) is *perspectival*. This difference lies in the ways that these sentences are *about* the self or me. And whereas sentence (ii) is *about the practical*,

sentence (i) is *from a practical perspective*. This difference lies in the way that these sentences are *about* my practical aims.

Just like before, the temptation might be to find a way that the agent has her practical aim in the "deep structure" of her thought when she expresses (i). Even if "the self must forget itself" (GA 2: 354) when an agent becomes skillfully engaged with the world, one might think that the agent doesn't completely *forget* about her practical aim. On this line of reasoning, the carpenter comes to hold a belief that would be similar to (ii), only with her practical aim somehow in the *background* or "deep structure" of her thought.

My suggestion here is that we should resist *requiring* the agent to have her practical aim somehow in the "background" of her attitudes about the hammer. In this chapter, I'll provide four reasons to think the agent's practical aim needn't be a constituent of her attitudes when she is practically engaged in her activity. I turn to three of these reasons now, while holding off on the fourth until after I unpack some of Heidegger's phenomenology in the next section.

First, by requiring the practical aim to be *part* of the agent's attitude, the "background" picture loses sight of the function of the attitudes *as a whole*. The agent's attitudes are tightly linked to the activity in which she is engaged – so tightly linked, that her attitudes have the *function* of allowing her to carry on with her activity. When the carpenter is at work, she looks at the world *for a reason*; namely, because she wants to build a house. When she picks up a hammer and surveys her equipment, her attitudes have the function of tracking how things stand in relation to her practical aim. No *part* of

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her attitude needs to be directed at her practical aim, because the entire attitude takes place *within* her activity of building the house: the entire attitude *as a whole* has the function of relating the world to her practical aim.

By requiring the activity to be located somewhere in the background of the agent's attitude, we sever the tight connection between her attitudes and her practical aim. Much like an utterance of (i), the agent's attitudes are *structured* by a practical aim – and that's because her attitudes have the function of facilitating action. In Chapter 2, I look at this picture in more detail, and suggest this kind of model helps to understand Heidegger on the primacy of practice. The main upshot for now is that if we require the agent's activity to be *part* of the attitude, we lose sight of the way the attitude as a whole can have the function of facilitating the practical.

Second, even if the agent has the *capacity* to reflect on the activity that she is engaged in, it would be inefficient if she were required to enact that capacity in each of her cognitive acts. When the rock climber is completely absorbed in her activity, she focuses all of her cognitive activity on those changing features of her environment that modify how she should act. But one thing that remains constant for the agent is the fact that she is engaged in rock climbing: that's not something that changes, as long as she remains absorbed in her activity. So it would be inefficient if the agent were required to continually keep in mind that she is rock climbing while she's engaged in the activity.

Third, there are times when a person takes up an activity – but not as a result of a cognitive process. There are cases where an agent is more like a chicken, being motivated to certain courses of action by their drives. When I get hungry, I start looking around to

see what's available to eat. The same thing happens to chickens or small children who don't have the cognitive capacity to reflect on the activity of "eating". Of course, I have the *capacity* to reflect on my drives and think about the activities they put me in. But there's no reason to think that this capacity must be enacted every time a drive guides me into a certain course of action. If the drive is strong enough, there can be the same automatic link between my drives and activities that are had by the chicken. My drives and goals needn't be linked by cognition, so I needn't have a concept of my activity hidden somewhere in the background of my thought.

There are also cases when adoption of goals can be automatically linked not just to an agent's drives, but to social factors external to the agent. As Bargh and Chartrand have noted, goals can "become automated in the same way that stereotypes and other perceptual structures do," and when this occurs, "the environment itself activates and puts the goal into motion" ([1999], 468). The authors suggest, for example, that a person can be attuned to their social environment in a way that allows them to adopt the same activities as the people around them (e.g., trying to impress each other), which can result in goal-oriented responses to the environment without an accompanying awareness of being engaged in that activity. In these types of cases, it seems that the agent doesn't think of the activity *as such*, even thought the activity structures the attitudes the agent holds about everything else in her environment.

So far, I've provided three reasons against requiring the human agent to have their activity or practical aim somewhere in the "background" of their cognitive life. Each of reasons supports the view that *knowledge from a practical perspective* is irreducible to,

and perhaps more basic than *knowledge about the practical*. In the next section, I'll look at a fourth reason, which I take to be more directly inspired by Heidegger.

1.2   Heidegger on Circumspection

It would be worth stepping back for a moment – both to take stock of the claims made above and to situate this discussion within Heidegger. In the previous section, I distinguished between four types of "agent-relative knowledge":

a) *first-personal knowledge*

b) *perspectival knowledge*

c) *knowledge about the practical*

d) *knowledge from a practical perspective (i.e. "circumspection")*

The first two privilege "the self", but they do so in different ways. Whereas first-personal attitudes have a special way of picking out *me*, perspectival attitudes privilege the self in the way they pick out *everything else* in terms of me. The other two types of agent-relative knowledge follow a similar distinction with respect to our activities or practical aims. When I have knowledge about the practical, I hold an attitude *about* an activity – the activity itself is in some sense represented in my cognitive life. In contrast, when I have knowledge from a practical perspective, the activity in which I am engaged needn't be a constituent of any of my cognitive attitudes. Instead, the activity is privileged in the way I view *everything around me* in terms of that activity.

I also suggested above that "knowledge from a practical perspective" is close to what Heidegger had in mind with "circumspection"; and in this section, I bring this claim

closer to the text. In doing so, I provide a very broad picture of the way agent-relative

knowledge brings together several other important concepts in Heidegger (e.g.

understanding, care), each of which is spelled out in more detail in subsequent chapters.

The purpose of this section is not only to introduce Heidegger's notion of

"circumspection", but also to indicate several of the questions or challenges that will be

of concern in the remaining chapters.

At the very beginning of *Being and Time*, Heidegger asks the reader to consider

"everyday Dasein", which means (among other things) that he wants to consider the

practically engaged agent, rather than the disengaged agent that thinks about the world

independent from its activities. The way the practically engaged agent comes across

things in the world is through its practical "dealings" [*Umgang*]. As Heidegger explains,

"the kind of dealing which is closest to us is not a bare perceptual cognition, but rather

that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use" (67).

According to Heidegger, these practical dealings with the world are accompanied

by their "own kind of knowledge" (67), which Heidegger typically describes as a kind of

sight that guides our practical activities. When we deal with things "by using them and

manipulating them, this activity is not a blind one; it has its own kind of sight, by which

our manipulation is guided" (69). In other words, "action has its own kind of sight",

which Heidegger calls *circumspection* [*Umsicht*] (69).

As a kind of sight, circumspection involves both *understanding* and *interpretation*.[16] Understanding, for Heidegger, is characterized most formally by the structure of *projection onto possibilities*, which importantly does *not* require holding an attitude *about* the possibility: "the character of understanding as projection is such that the understanding does not grasp thematically that upon which [*woraufhin*] it projects (GA 2: 145). Instead, Heidegger describes projection as a way in which an agent "dwells in" or "keeps oneself in" a possibility (GA 24: 392). There's a sense in which understanding allows the agent to *occupy* the perspective that some possibility affords. Just as visual perception takes place *from* a perspective, understanding allows the agent to look "*circum*spectively *away* from the possible and looking at that for which it is possible" (GA 2: 261). An agent adopts a practical perspective when she becomes completely absorbed in her project, and looks *away* from her project in a way that allows everything around her to show up in light of it.

Interpretation, for Heidegger, is tantamount to any act of 'taking-as'. And at the basic level, when we are practically engaged with the world, this means finding roles for things to play in our practical activity. When the carpenter is at work, she recruits the equipment around her by taking these things to have specific functions (hammering,

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[16] There are certain places in *Being and Time* Heidegger talks as if sight *just is* what he calls 'understanding' (146). Sometimes, however, Heidegger states that all sight is *grounded in* understanding (146, 336). This latter claim fits well with Heidegger's "circumspection discovers" passage, which makes circumspection a kind of interpretation, since interpretation has the function of discovery (148).

measuring, etc.). She takes each item of equipment to have a certain role to play in light of the activity that she is engaged in.

As we saw earlier, this allows the carpenter's environment to show up with a normative orientation, or as a *practical whole*.[17] Prior to encountering any item of equipment in isolation, she has an understanding of the way things can be used together in service of building a house. By letting the things around her be involved in carpentry, she allows the perspective of her activity to provide a kind of unity to the things that she encounters: she encounters her equipment from *within* the context of her activity. And this allows the carpenter to encounter equipment that she is familiar with, or that *makes sense* to her in terms of the activity in which she is engaged.

It's worth looking at this in detail, because I take this to be Heidegger's most explicit argument against reducing *knowledge from a practical perspective* to a kind of *knowledge about the practical* (which is the "fourth" reason that I mentioned in the previous section, where I discussed the other three). What Heidegger wants to resist is the view that we first encounter individual entities that are merely "occurrent" or "present-at-hand", without any kind of function or use. On this view, we start with a purely theoretical grip on things, but then come to a practical grasp of the world by dumping values on them like a kind of special sauce. The problem with this view is that it cannot account for the practical *unity* exhibited by the things we first encounter.

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[17] See part D of my Introduction, above.

Instead, Heidegger suggests the human agent first encounters things which *make sense*, and that's because the agent has a *familiarity* with things in terms of her activity. What the activity provides is the *unity* that allows the agent to have a grip on things *as a whole*. When the carpenter enters her workshop, what she first encounters is *equipment* that hangs together in light of the activity of her current project. Even if the agent comes across a completely new object, she is familiar with the meaningful roles things might have in service of her activity, and she can make sense of such an object in terms of the actions it may (or may not) afford. But in order for the carpenter to encounter *equipment*, with a kind of unity to it, the carpenter needs to do more than see "values" that might hold of these objects. Instead, the carpenter needs to see everything *in terms of* her current project, or from the *perspective* of her activity. To borrow some of Heidegger's language, the carpenter needs to "project herself" onto her activity, or move into the activity, *prior* to encountering the things around her. By taking on the perspective of an activity, the carpenter allows her environment to show up *in terms of* that activity, which allows the thing around her to have the *unity* of a practical whole.

When Heidegger spells this out, he describes our most basic encounter with entities as a back-and-forth motion (or more accurately, a "forth-and-back" motion), and these two motions constitute what I'm calling *knowledge from a practical perspective*. In the first motion, we adopt a perspective by getting involved in an activity. And in the second motion, we recruit the things around us by finding roles for things to play in service of that activity, i.e., we subordinate things "to the manifold assignments of the

'in-order-to'" (GA 2: 69).[18] As Heidegger would put it, the first motion is a way of getting *ahead* of things. And the second motion is a *return* to things from our activities or practical aims.[19]

This two-fold movement (getting ahead of, returning to things) is what Heidegger would later call 'care'. Heidegger describes care as the "primary human comportment" (GA 21: 148) and the "being" of the human agent in general (e.g., GA 2: 121, 131, 192). This means the central claim of Division I of *Being and Time* is that the human agent is fundamentally characterized by the forth-and-back movement described above, and it's in terms of this movement that every human activity can be explained. Heidegger's notion of care will become a theme again below, but what I hope to have shown is the advantage of putting the metaphor of vision at the center of reading Heidegger.[20] When an agent is absorbed in an activity, she views the world from the perspective of that activity. Just as I adopt a visual perspective by switching positions, so do I adopt a practical perspective by "moving into" certain activities. Appropriating an activity as a perspective needn't require thinking *about* that activity – so the question Heidegger needs to answer is *how*

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[18] It's important to not hear these two "motions" as occurring *sequentially*. Instead, they should be better understood as two structural elements in knowledge from the practical perspective. I elaborate on this in Chapter 2.6.

[19] The forth-and-back motion is described well in Sheehan [2015], 144ff. One of his examples helps to illustrate: "Say I'm camping and need to pound in tent pegs to set up some shelter against the coming rain. I live 'ahead' in the need of shelter—and then, coming 'back' from that need, I look around for my mallet… and realize I have forgotten it. So, instead, I 'come back' from my purpose ('gotta hammer in those tent pegs') to that stone over there, which I can use for that purpose and which I therefore 'make meaningfully present' as an ersatz mallet" (147).

[20] For an analysis of care, see Chapter 3.3c below.

the human agents typically moves into activities, or adopt a practical perspective whereby she interprets the world.

1.3   Circumspection as *Self*-Knowledge

At the beginning of this paper, we looked at Heidegger's claim that our most basic kind of self-knowledge involves what he calls a "mirroring back of the self from things". We went from there to Heidegger's account of circumspection, which involves adopting an activity, and then looking at things in the world from the perspective of that activity. But we still need to make good on the claim that circumspection yields a kind of *self*-knowledge. So far we've seen how things in the world might reflect the activities in which I'm engaged by showing up *in terms of* those activities. But in what sense might things in the world mirror back *me*?

This question becomes especially pressing when we accept that agents often adopt activities without any cognitive grasp on those activities. As mentioned earlier, a person can often adopt the activities of those around her (e.g. trying to impress others), without any cognitive recognition of her goals or the activity that she has adopted. Because of this *automatic* link between an agent's activity and features external to the agent, in what sense might the agent's activities reflect *her* – rather than things external to the agent, like her environment or culture?

This, in fact, is one of the very questions that puzzles Heidegger in Division I. In some of his most memorable prose, Heidegger describes what he calls "the real dictatorship of *das Man*":

> "We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *one* [*man*] takes pleasure; we
> read, see, and judge about literature and art as *one* sees and judges;
> …and we find 'shocking' what *one* finds shocking" (GA 2: 126-127).

Which leads Heidegger to conclude:

> "Everyone is the other, and no one is himself." (GA 2: 128)

To step back for a moment: the question that Heidegger needs to answer is how circumspection is a kind of *self*-knowledge. And the question is especially pressing because in certain occasions, it's not always *me* that makes a decision about the practical activity from which I view the world.

I'll develop Heidegger's answer to this question over the next two chapters, but Heidegger's basic response is that in allowing entities to be wrapped up in an activity, we allow *ourselves* to be wrapped up in that activity as well.[21] As Heidegger puts it, "in understanding a context of relations such as we have mentioned, the human agent has assigned itself to an 'in-order-to' [*Um-zu*], and it has done so in terms of an ability to be [*Seinkönnen*] for the sake of which it itself is – one which it may have seized upon either expressly or not expressly, and which may be either authentic or inauthentic" (GA 2: 86). In allowing the things around us to be wrapped up in an activity, we make sense of *ourselves* as having a role to play in sustaining the activity as well.

To put this point differently, in adopting the perspective of an activity, the human agent "assigns itself" to carrying out certain tasks with the equipment it encounters,

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[21] See especially the analysis of 'care' in Chapter 3.3c.

which requires "submitting" to the activity that constitutes its perspective: "Dasein, in so far as it *is*, has always submitted [*angewiesen*] itself already to a 'world' which it encounters, and this *submission* [*Angewiesenheit*] belongs essentially to its being" (GA 2: 87).[22] Projecting oneself onto possibilities – or adopting the perspective of some activity – "compels" us, or "binds us" to carrying out what which the "possibility demands" (GA 29/30: 528). This holds true even when our culture or social setting is responsible for getting me into these activities. Even when it's the "one-self" that "articulates the referential context of significance" (GA 2: 169), this articulation gives me a practical orientation, or assigns me to certain roles in sustaining the practical significance that things in the world have. And the grip I have on *myself* is constituted by the roles to which I have submitted in making sense of the things around me.

Of course, this isn't the end of the story for Heidegger, and that's because there are different ways that the human agent can "submit" to a practical context. According to Heidegger, a there are both *authentic* and *inauthentic* (or *owned* and *unowned*) ways of submitting to a practical context. A very popular view in Heidegger scholarship is that becoming *authentic,* or submitting to a practical context in an *authentic* way, requires a new, special kind of (reflexive) self-knowledge. Crowell articulates this view well when he attributes the breakdown of the "one-self" that occurs in anxiety and death to be the result of a "radical form of first-person self-awareness". As Crowell explains, "this

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[22] See also: "In understanding significance, the concernful agent submits itself circumspectively to what it encounters as available" (GA 2: 297).

requires that I be able to grasp myself as 'I-myself,' independent of the roles I occupy and the practices I engage in." ([2013], 217).

In Chapter 4, I'll argue that this is a misreading of Heidegger: reflected self-understanding is characteristic of *both* the authentic and the inauthentic human agent. Division II isn't a story about how the human agent *overcomes* reflected self-understanding to arrive at a new kind of first-personal, reflexive knowledge. Instead, Heidegger's aim in Division II is to show how we might come to have ownership over our lives *without* reflexively holding attitudes about ourselves. In other words, Heidegger wants to show how the human agent can *be* a self, without ever holding a concept of "oneself". This reading of *Being and Time* has the advantage of allowing the two divisions of *Being and Time* to stand in a kind of unity, while making sense of Heidegger's claim that the human agent "never finds itself otherwise than in things themselves" (GA 24: 159).

Chapter 2: Understanding and Interpretation

2.0   Introduction

In Chapter 1, I outlined what I called "knowledge from a practical perspective",

where an agent interprets the world in terms of a practical aim, without holding any

attitudes about that aim. This kind of knowledge has two "moments". In the first moment,

the agent "gets ahead" of things by adopting an activity. And in the second moment, the

agent "returns" to things in terms of that activity. I take these two moments to correspond

to instances of *understanding* and *interpretation* in Heidegger. In the case of absorbed,

practical agency, understanding amounts to adopting a practical perspective by becoming

engaged in an activity (which can happen with or without thinking about the activity in

which we are engaged). Heidegger calls this *disclosing a world* – and it allows the things

around us to show up as a normatively-oriented practical whole. The world is then

interpreted when we discover entities in terms of the activity, or as part of the practical

whole.

To put this more generally, for Heidegger, *having understanding* amounts to

having the capacity to grasp things as a whole. By 'whole', I mean what Heidegger

would call a totality [*Ganzheit*], where the parts have a certain "fit", rather than what

Heidegger would call a domain [*All*] or a mere aggregate. As we saw in Chapter 1, what

allows things to show up as a practical whole is the adoption of an activity as one's

practical perspective. But the capacity to engage with things as parts of a whole is present

in all human interactions, which includes both our practical dealing with equipment and

our theoretical comportment toward the occurrent. To offer an example of the latter,

Heidegger suggests that "even the 'unity' of the manifold that is occurrent, nature, can be discovered only if a *possibility* of it has been disclosed" (GA 2: 144-145).

Because of this, understanding has a structure that Heidegger calls "projecting onto possibilities." When we project onto a possibility, we allow things to show up in light of that possibility, which is what allows each thing to show up as part of a whole. How all of this plays out depends on what exactly it is that we understand, or what exactly it is that we are projecting. Of particular importance to Heidegger is what he calls "self-projection", which constitutes the (non-reflexive) understanding that an agent has on *herself*. My suggestion in this chapter is that *projecting oneself onto a possibility* amounts to *adopting an activity as a perspective*.

The primary goal of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive account of 'understanding' and 'interpretation' in Heidegger, with a particular focus on the role that each element plays in "knowledge from a practical perspective", which constitutes the most basic (non-reflexive) grip the agent has on herself.

In the course of this chapter, I highlight two claims that are closely related to Heidegger's accounts of understanding and interpretation:

i) *Primacy of Practice*

ii) *Heidegger's Grounding Claim*

Put broadly, the first claim is about the primacy of the practical over the theoretical, while the second is about the primacy of understanding over interpretation. Unfortunately, the secondary literature on Heidegger has a tendency to run these two claims together, which has lead to both philosophical and textual difficulties. Recently,

Wrathall [2013] has suggested that we need to keep these two claims distinct. I suggest below that doing so opens up new doors for defending each of Heidegger's claims, and also squares each of Heidegger's claims with previously difficult passages.

One of the most influential readings of Heidegger comes from Hubert Dreyfus, so I pay attention in particular to the way Dreyfus motivates these two claims. Over the years, Dreyfus has offered many different arguments in favor of Heidegger's general picture, but each of Dreyfus's arguments tends to fall into one of two categories, which I call:

i) *the motivation from the nature of human agency*

ii) *the motivation from the nature of intentionality*

Unfortunately, Dreyfus is among those who mistakenly lump together the Primacy of Practice with Heidegger's Grounding Claim. So from Dreyfus, we get the following picture:

Claim	Motivation
Primacy of Practice / Grounding Claim	Nature of human agency / Nature of intentionality

Figure 1

As shown in the sections that follow, this picture leads to problems (both exegetical problems for interpreting Heidegger, and philosophical problems arising from such an interpretation). Because Dreyfus lumps together Heidegger's two claims, Dreyfus is forced to prove too much with either of his motivations.

But all is not lost, since once we disambiguate each of Heidegger's claims, we can tease out exactly which claim is supported by each of Dreyfus's motivations. I suggest below that the Primacy of Practice is motivated by the nature of human agency, while the Grounding Claim is supported by the nature of intentionality. This allows us to keep each of Dreyfus's motivations—and respond to some of Dreyfus's recent critics—with a picture like this:

Claim	Motivation
Primacy of Practice	Nature of human agency
Grounding Claim	Nature of intentionality

Figure 2

So here's the plan for this chapter. First (2.1), I'll introduce the two of Heidegger's claims that have often been conflated: *Primacy of Practice* and the *Grounding Claim*. Then (2.2), I'll give a broad overview of the way Heidegger presents understanding and interpretation in *Being and Time.* These two sections are closely connected, since any account of understanding and interpretation in Heidegger should spell out Heidegger's two claims (in a way that makes each claims defensible, if possible).

Next (2.3), I'll look at the way Dreyfus spells out the Primacy of Practice in Heidegger (which he lumps together with the Grounding Claim), and I'll outline two broad ways that Dreyfus motivates the view he attributes to Heidegger (which I'll call the "motivation from the nature of human agency" and the "motivation from the nature of

intentionality"). I'll turn then to two recent challenges to Dreyfus: a philosophical

challenge to the *motivation from the nature of intentionality* from Denis McManus (2.4),

and a textual challenge to Dreyfus's reading of Heidegger from Wrathall (2.5). I suggest

that once we correct Dreyfus's reading in light of Wrathall [2013], we can keep each of

Dreyfus's general motivations, but for a reading of Heidegger that's in accordance with

Figure 2 (above). In Section 2.6, I return to Heidegger's notion of understanding and

provide an alternative to Dreyfus's reading that connects the dots from the general

overview in Section 2.2. Central to my reading of Heidegger is the notion of *self-

projection* as *adopting an activity as one's perspective* (which also played an important

role in Chapter 1). I conclude the chapter (2.7) by reconsidering the Primacy of Practice

in Heidegger, showing that when we keep Heidegger's two claims distinct, we can see

the Primacy of Practice motivated by *the nature of human agency*.[23]

2.1   Two Claims in *Being and Time*

A.   Primacy of Practice

When Heidegger introduces *Dasein*, or the human agent, he steers clear of the

traditional definition of a person as a "thinking thing", suggesting instead that the human

agent has the basic character of "being-in-the-world". This means the agent is typically

"absorbed" in the world of its concern (GA 2: 52), where she encounters everything

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[23] To round things off in Chapter 3, I'll return to this topic to show that Heidegger's Grounding Claim is supported by *the nature of intentionality*. Of particular importance is the claim that *discovery of entities* is grounded in a *disclosure of world*. See Chapter 3.3c.

around her as wrapped up in her projects or activities. The absorbed agent encounters her environment *in terms of* her activity, and it's only when things break down that the agent steps back to get a more theoretical grip on the things around her, considering these things independent from the roles they might play in her activities, or the actions they might afford. Thus in *Being and Time*, we find Heidegger putting forward the following claim:

> **Primacy of Practice:** The primary way the agent relates to the world isn't through *thought,* but rather through it's practical *dealings*.

I take this to be a quite general way to define the priority that Heidegger gives to the practical, since it captures a broad range of distinctions that Heidegger makes in *Being and Time*, including distinctions between *modes of comportment* (e.g. "circumspection" vs "knowing" or "cognition") and distinctions between *kinds of entities* (e.g., "available" vs "occurrent"). The following list shows the Primacy of Practice play out along each of these distinctions:

> a) Knowing the world [*Welterkennen*] is a founded mode of being-in [*In-Seins*] (GA 2: 59)
>
> b) "Knowing is a founded mode of being-in-the-world" (GA 2: 71)
>
> c) "Knowing is grounded beforehand in being-already-amidst-the-world [*Schon-sein-bei-der-welt*]" (GA 2: 61)
>
> d) Available entities are "closest to us" (GA 2: 66), and to lay bare what is merely occurrent we must "penetrate *beyond* what is available in our concern" (GA 2: 71)
>
> e) Hermeneutical 'as' of interpretation grounds the apophantic 'as' (GA 2: 158)

So the Primacy of Practice covers quite a few themes in Heidegger. While the statement above is quite general – and while the list above sticks to Heidegger's jargon – one major goal of this chapter is to spell out more precisely the priority that Heidegger gives to the practical.

B.   Grounding Claim

According to Heidegger, the goal of an interpretive act is the *discovery of entities*. But Heidegger suggests that we only discover entities on the background of a world from which these entities have been previously disclosed, and it's the function of understanding to provide this *world disclosure*. Because of this, Heidegger suggests that understanding provides interpretation with a kind of *grounding*, which for short, I'll call Heidegger's "Grounding Claim":

Grounding Claim: "All interpretation is grounded in understanding."[24]

It's difficult to overestimate the importance of the Grounding Claim to the project of BT. And *what we take Heidegger to mean* by the Grounding Claim depends on the way we spell out Heidegger's accounts of "understanding" and "interpretation". Before looking deeper at these two concepts, it's worth stepping back to recognize *why* the Grounding is so central to Heidegger's project. I'll briefly highlight three reasons:

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[24] "*Alle Auslegung gründet im Verstehen*" (GA 2: 148; see also 153).

First, Heidegger takes *understanding* to be the distinctive mark of the human agent. As Heidegger puts it: "To exist is essentially, even if not only, to understand" (GA 24: 391). Since the entire first Division of *Being and Time* is an analysis of the human agent, Heidegger's account of human understanding should be seen as foundational for the entire Division. Everything else in Heidegger's analysis of the human agent should be read in light of his account of understanding, so it's important to get clear on this essential feature of the human agent right at the start.

But of course, the first Division of *Being and Time* was part of a larger project, albeit one that Heidegger eventually abandoned. That broader project was to investigate the *sense of being*. In *Being and Time*, we find Heidegger introduce the notions of 'sense' and 'being' as technical terms *within* his account of human understanding. This gives a broader significance to Heidegger's account of understanding, since Heidegger's account of understanding is required in order for him to even *articulate* his own broader project. Thus we as readers need to get clear about Heidegger's notion of "understanding" – along with the *grounding* role that it plays – in order to articulate Heidegger's larger project about the *sense of being*.

Finally, Heidegger's Grounding Claim has played an important role in bringing Heidegger's work to bear on contemporary philosophy of language and philosophy of mind (even while often being conflated with Heidegger's other claim, the Primacy of Practice). No philosopher has played a more important role than Dreyfus in bringing Heidegger to bear on contemporary issues in analytic philosophy. In broad strokes, Dreyfus has argued that contemporary philosophers of language and mind tend to focus

on interpretive acts, or on *interpretation*, while failing to see the level of understanding in virtue of which interpretation is possible. Others applying Heidegger's work to contemporary problems – even if they disagree with Dreyfus's reading of Heidegger – have focused as well on Heidegger's claim that interpretation is grounded in understanding. Whether or not Heidegger has something to contribute to contemporary philosophy of language or mind depends in large part on whether Heidegger's Grounding Claim is successful.

Of course, the first step in defending Heidegger's Grounding Claim is to spell out what exactly is *meant* by it. In doing so, three important questions stand out: What does Heidegger mean by *understanding*? What does Heidegger mean by *interpretation*? And finally, what does it mean for interpretation to be *grounded* in understanding? To make some headway, I start by giving a broad overview of understanding and interpretation by introducing the *features* of understanding and interpretation that any reading of Heidegger needs to accommodate. I then turn to Dreyfus's influential attempt to accommodate each of these features, which as we'll see, provides some unnecessary hurdles in his attempt to defend his version of Heidegger's Grounding Claim. Near the end of this Chapter, in Section 2.6, I'll provide a more detailed analysis of "understanding" and "interpretation" that ties together each of the features of these two concepts introduced below.

2.2   Understanding and Interpretation: An Overview

A.   Understanding

a) 'Understanding' has a close connection to the practical.

When Heidegger introduces *understanding* in BT, he draws on idiomatic expressions that work in English just as well as in German. In ordinary discourse, we often use the word "understanding" to denote skillful know-how, or practical mastery over something. For example, one might say of a bike mechanic that she really understands bikes. This means, or at least implies, that the mechanic has the skill or practical ability to fix them: she knows how to deal with bikes. And Heidegger introduces his "existential" use of the word "understanding" through this everyday "ontic" use of the term:

> "When we are talking ontically we sometimes use the expression 'to understand something [*etwas verstehen*]' in the sense of 'to be able to manage a matter [*einer Sache vorstehen können*]', 'to be a match for it [*ihr gewachsen sein*]', 'to be capable of something [*etwas können*]. In the act of understanding [*Verstehen*] as an existentiale, that over which we have such competence [*Gekonnte*] is not a 'what', but being as existing." (GA 2: 143).

In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger motivates his account of understanding by noting the connection between the German verbs *vorstehen* and *verstehen*:

> "In German we say that someone can *vorstehen* something – literally, stand in front of or ahead of it, that is, stand at its head, administer, manage, preside over it. This is equivalent to saying that he *versteht sich darauf*, understanding in the sense of being skilled or expert at it [*or has the know-how of it*]. The meaning of the term 'understanding' [*Verstehen*] as defined above is intended to go back to this usage in ordinary language (GA 24: 392).

But the connection between understanding and the practical in Heidegger runs beyond mere word-play. In many places, Heidegger characterizes understanding as *projection onto possibilities* [*Moglichkeiten*]. In particular, Heidegger says that the human agent projects itself onto a *sein-können*, an ability to be. The German modal verb *können* has practical overtones: it means something like a capacity or ability. And Heidegger thinks this kind of practical ability captures the kind of modality of the possibilities onto which we project.

It's this close connection between understanding and the practical that leads many commentators on Heidegger to *identify* understanding with skill or practical know-how (which, in turn, makes it easy to view Heidegger's Grounding Claim as just a claim for the Primacy of Practice). For now, I want to resist this temptation while making only a general note of the way that Heidegger motivates his account of understanding through the practical. Any reconstruction of Heidegger's views will need to elucidate the connection between understanding and the practical.

b) Understanding has the structure of projection

Heidegger asks:

> "Why does the understanding, in conformity with all essential dimensions of that which can be disclosed in it, always penetrate into possibilities? It is because the understanding has in itself the existential structure which we call 'projection'" (GA 2: 145).[25]

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[25] Translation borrowed from Wrathall [2013], 189.

Understanding has a structure that Heidegger calls 'projection'. But unpacking this for

Heidegger requires a bit of care. When Heidegger introduced the term in *Being and Time*,

he went out of his way to be clear about what he does *not* mean by projection:

> "Projecting has nothing to do with comporting oneself towards a plan
> that has been thought out, and in accordance with which Dasein arranges
> its being... Furthermore, the character of understanding as projection is
> such that the understanding does not grasp thematically that upon which
> [*woraufhin*] it projects – that is to say, possibilities. Grasping it in such a
> manner would take away from what is projected its very character as a
> possibility, and would reduce it to the given contents which we have in
> mind" (GA 2: 145)

A project or projection [*Entwurf*] in German can be a plan or scheme, but Heidegger

wants the reader to guard against this reading of 'projection' in *Being and Time*.

According to Heidegger, projecting onto possibilities is *not* the same as developing or

carrying out a plan. And projecting onto possibilities doesn't require that we hold

attitudes *about* that possibility onto which we project.

The term 'projection' unfortunately invites other misinterpretations as well. For

example, it invites us to think of "projection" as a kind of intellectual achievement, where

we come across bare objects and later "project" them onto possibilities. That's why, in

his 1969 *Four Seminars*, Heidegger would ultimately express regret about naming the

structure 'projection'. According to Heidegger, this "makes it all too possible to

understand the 'projection' as a human performance." When understood this way,

"projection is then only taken to be a structure of subjectivity—which is how Sartre takes

it, by basing himself upon Descartes" (GA 15: 73). To put this point differently,

Heidegger wanted to emphasize that the world is *always already* projected. We don't

come across bare entities and then "project" them onto possibilities, and projection isn't

the result of any intellectual process. Rather, we encounter a world where things just *are* projected, prior to any interpretive act. Because of this, when we project onto some possibility, our relationship to that possibility is more intimate than one of thought. There is a sense in which I become *one* with that possibility: "projection is the way in which I *am* the possibility" (GA 24: 393). Heidegger also describes it as "dwelling in" or "keeping oneself in" a possibility (GA 24: 392), or even "submitting" [*Unterwerfen*] to it (GA 3: 159).

But what does it mean to say that understanding has the structure of projection? I take it that for Heidegger, to project something onto a possibility is to view that thing in light of, or in terms of the possibility. This definition is intentionally very formal, and that's because the exact manner in which projection takes place varies depending on the nature of that which we understand. To bring this out, consider just a sample of the things that Heidegger takes us to project. We can project:

> The being of the human agent upon "possibilities" (GA 2: 148)
>
> The being of the human agent upon its "for-the-sake-of-which" (GA 2: 145,147)
>
> The being of the human agent upon "significance" and upon "the world" (GA 2: 145,147)
>
> Oneself upon "possibilities" (GA 2: 270)
>
> Oneself upon a "for-the-sake-of-oneself" (GA 2: 327)
>
> Oneself upon a possibility or ability-to-be (GA 24: 392, 409)
>
> Being upon time (GA 24: 397)
>
> Our ability-to-be on what is "feasible, urgent, indispensable, expedient" (GA 24: 410)

To complicate things even further, Heidegger describes both "existentiell projection" (GA 2: 285, 336) and "existential projection" (GA 2: 325). An existentiell projection results in an understanding of *who I* am, or an understanding of the particular person that I am. An existential projection is what occurs when I understand the *kind* of entity that I am.[26]

To make the notion of "projection" more concrete, Wrathall [2013] suggests that projecting amounts to "apprehending *x* by looking at *y*." As Wrathall explains, "The '*x*' is the particular entity or event that we understand. The '*y*', Heidegger tells us, is a possibility. To be specific, the y-term of projection is the pattern of possibilities in terms of which the projector can incorporate the *x* into the world, thus making sense of it." Wrathall suggest the metaphor of a film projector: "One sees a film projected, not by looking *at* the film, but precisely by looking away from it to the pattern it makes when it is illuminated and thrown onto something else" (190).

One thing nice about the film metaphor is that it shows how the y-term (in this case the wall or screen onto which we project the film) can remain unthematic. As Heidegger explains, "the understanding does not grasp thematically that upon which it projects – that is to say, possibilities." Instead, the y-term of a projection is something that remains "hidden" (GA 2: 324). When we project entities onto the world, we could think that we look *at* the world, in the sense that the world serves as the background

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[26] The former kind of understanding is the primary topic of Division I, while the latter becomes the focus of Division II.

against which we find particular affordances for the entities we encounter. But just as the screen remains unthematic when we watch a film, so does the world remain unthematic when it serves as the 'upon-which' of a projection.

But this is not the only way for the y-term to remain unthematic. Another alternative – and the one closer to the view I'll suggest – is that projection for Heidegger amounts to 'apprehending *x* by looking *from y*'. On this alternative, the y-term fails to be thematic because it constitutes the agent's *perspective*, and the perspective is something that remains out of view. As Heidegger explains, when an agent projects onto possibilities, the agent "does not primarily grasp the projected possibility thematically just by having it in view, but it throws itself into it as a possibility" (GA 2: 336). The agent quite literally moves into the possibility, and allows the possibility to constitute its perspective. Because of this, the possibility fails to be "thematic" because it remains out of view.

The kind of projection most important to Division I of *Being and Time* is "self-projection" [*Sichentwerfen*], where the human agent projects *itself* onto possibilities. Nearly every time Heidegger discusses "projection" in *Being and Time*, the x-term, or what is projected, is *the human agent itself*. One advantage of the notion of a perspective is that it helps make sense of how the agent *moves* into possibilities. As Heidegger explains, "What is *most proper* to such an activity and occurrence is what is expressed in the prefix 'pro-' [*Ent-*], namely that in projecting [*Entwerfen*], this occurrence of projection *carries* whoever is projecting *out and away from themselves* in a certain way"

(GA 29/30: 527). Because the agent projects itself onto possibilities, the human agent is always "ahead of itself", looking at things from the "there" of its projection.

But my suggestion above doesn't capture the phenomenon of self-projection, and that's because the agent doesn't look at *herself* from the perspective of a possibility. Instead, the perspective captures the way the human agent looks out at the world, encountering things around it. Because of this, my suggestion is that self-projection involves 'apprehending *x* by looking at *z* from *y*'. To make this concrete, self-projection is a way of 'apprehending oneself by looking at what's available from the perspective of an activity'. When the human agent projects itself upon possibilities, the "upon-which" [*das Woraufhin*] of the projection is that in terms of which [*woraufhin*] entities in the world can be encountered (GA 2: 86).

To piece all of this together, I take the metaphor of vision to be helpful for thinking about Heidegger's concept of 'self-projection' [*Sichentwerfen*]. To project onto a possibility is akin to taking up a perspective in visual perception. When I look out the window, my perspective is not something I think about: I quite literally dwell in, or occupy that perspective. But neither is having a perspective some kind of achievement – I'm always already viewing the world from some perspective. My perspective is a structural moment in visual perception, not an action that I take prior to, or independent from a perceptual act. Likewise, an agent's self-projection onto possibilities is a structural moment in the grip she has on the world: it constitutes her practical perspective. Taking on a practical perspective is not something the agent does independent from gaining a grip on the things around her. Rather, her practical perspective – or her projection onto

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possibilities – is a structural element to the basic way she makes sense of the things around her.

c) Understanding has the function of world-disclosure

Understanding has the *structure* of projection and the *function* of world-disclosure, so it's by means of projection that understanding discloses a world. As Heidegger explains, when a human agent understands, this understanding discloses a world as it "holds in advance" the relations constitutive of the world (GA 2: 87). For the practically engaged agent, this means that understanding discloses an environment [*Umwelt*], which is a *teleologically-oriented whole*. Things hang together for the practically engaged agent in terms of her activity.

Heidegger motivates this view through a rich description of everyday experience. When an instructor enters a classroom, things *make sense* to her. She isn't first given objects "free of meaning", to which meaning can be "attached". But instead she at first encounters something like a network of affordances: "what is first of all 'given' – and we still have to determine what that word means – is the 'for-writing', the 'for-entering-and-exiting,' the 'for-illuminating,' the 'for-sitting" (GA 21: 144).

So when a teacher steps into her classroom, what she first encounters are *things for teaching*, or for short, her "equipment". Each item of equipment "belongs somewhere" and has a function (GA 2: 102), but the function of one item of equipment is always tied up with other things in the room: the teacher doesn't just encounter a board on which to write, but rather a board on which to write *with* some nearby chalk, or the

eraser, etc. As Heidegger puts it, there is not such thing as "an equipment"; equipment always shows up "in terms of [*aus*] its belonging to other equipment" (GA 2: 68). And the teacher has a kind of familiarity with the way her equipment hangs together around her practical aim.

The totality of equipment that hangs together is what Heidegger calls an "equipmental context." The German for context [*Zussamenhang*] suggests quite literally that things are hanging together. Everything can be taken together as a *whole* [*Ganzen*]—which has a kind of unity to it—rather than just as a domain [*All*] of entities that happen to add up to a sum [*Summe*] (GA 2: 64, 72). When an agent looks around, she understands all of the things around her in terms of how they fit into a practical whole. So it's not the case that we "progressively [take] the single things together, in order to finally establish a coherent interconnection of them." The problem with this picture is that it fails to capture how we see things as a *unity*, or as a whole. "As long as we move on this level, it is almost literally true to say that we cannot see the forest for the trees. More precisely, [this picture] *cannot see the world for beings*." (GA 29/30: 347)

So Heidegger argues "What is given to us primarily us the unity of an equipmental whole." And from out of this unity, "each individual piece of equipment is by its own nature *equipment-for*: for traveling, for writing, for flying. Each one has its immanent reference to that *for which* it is what it is" (GA 24: 163-164). So prior to encountering any item of equipment, the carpenter has an understanding of the way all of her equipment should fit together around the activity of carpentry.

There are actually two important aspects to Heidegger's phenomenology of worldhood. The first is that things are *practically* rather than *theoretically* disclosed to the agent. The second is that things are disclosed to the agent as a *whole*, rather than *atomistically*. Of course, these two aspects of worldhood are closely connected, since for the practically engaged agent, things show up as a norm-oriented, practical whole. But I'll suggest in Chapter 3 that it's Heidegger's holism, rather than his emphasis on the practical, that is essential to his thought on understanding and world-disclosure.

B.   Interpretation

a) Interpretation plays a complimentary role to understanding

Heidegger takes *interpretation* to be the "development [*Ausbildung*] of the understanding", which is the "working-out [*Ausarbeitung*] of the possibilities projected in the understanding" (GA 2: 148). These determinations seem to put understanding and interpretation in complementary roles. As Heidegger explains, "In [interpretation], the understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it. In interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself" (GA 2: 148).

Passages such as these suggest a certain kind of *fit* between understanding and interpretation, where each plays a role that's complementary to the other. On the one hand, "interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding" (GA 2: 148). But on the other, there's a sense in which an interpretive act is the *culmination* of understanding. Understanding discloses a world *so that* the world can then be interpreted.

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b) Interpretation makes things "express"

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger explains that in a practical interpretive act, "the 'world' which has already been understood comes to be interpreted. The available comes *expressly* into the sight which understands" (149).

'*Ausdruck*' is the German word for expression, which captures both linguistic and non-linguistic expressions (e.g., facial expressions). Etymologically, the verb 'to express' [*ausdrücken*] just means to "press out". And when Heidegger uses 'to express' as a technical term, he likely wants his reader to hear the prefix *aus*- [out-], since the prefix appears in many of the terms Heidegger associates with interpretation [*Auslegung*]. For Heidegger, interpretation is both the development or refinement [*Ausbildung*] of the understanding and the "working out" or appropriation [*Ausarbeitung*] of that which is understood (GA 2: 149). In the process of working out what we understand, certain parts of our understanding get "pressed-out" or become express or salient, while other parts of our understanding remain in the background.

c) But interpretation needn't be spoken out or 'explicit' [ausgesprochen]

One way to make something express is through a linguistic act. Linguistic expression [*Wortausdruck*], for Heidegger, is just one kind of interpretative act – the kind that involves language [*Sprache*]. But Heidegger also stresses that interpretation *needn't involve language*. In other words, something can become express [*ausdrücklich*] without being spoken out [*ausgesprochen*] or put into words. And in fact, Heidegger gives a kind of priority to our non-linguistic interpretive acts (GA 20: 74).

To stress just this point, Heidegger made a careful distinction between "*ausgesprochen*" and "*ausdrücklich*", but the literature on Heidegger has been inconsistent in translations of these terms.[27] The problem stems from the fact that either of these German terms (along with a third, '*explizit*') can be reasonably rendered as 'explicit' in English. These three terms have often been used interchangeably in the literature on Heidegger, which invites confusion by overlooking the distinctions Heidegger was careful to make.

Since it's important to track the same distinctions as Heidegger, I'll stick to the following:

ausdrücklich – express, expressly

ausgesprochen – spoken out, in a way that's spoken out

explizit – explicit, explicitly

In a footnote to their translation of *Being and Time*, Macquarrie and Robinson entertain just this translation scheme, but ultimately decide against it for somewhat cryptic reasons.[28] The translators suggest it's more convenient to render the two German terms with the same word in English, since the two German terms don't typically appear in

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[27] One notable exception is Wrathall, who for years has stressed the distinction between *ausgesprochen* and *ausdrücklich* in Heidegger.

[28] In a footnote, Macquarrie and Robinson explain, "While it would be possible to reserve 'express' for 'ausdrücken' and translate 'aussprechen' by some such phrase as 'speak out', it is more convenient to use 'express' for both verbs, especially since 'aussprechen' and its derivatives have occurred very seldom before the present chapter, in which 'ausdrucken' rarely appears. On the other hand, we can easily distinguish between the more frequent 'ausdrücklich' and 'ausgesprochen' by translating the latter as 'expressed' or 'expressly', and reserving 'explicit' for both 'ausdrücklich' and 'explizit'. (GA 2: 149fn).

close proximity. On occasions where they do appear together, the translators suggest the following:

ausdrücklich – explicit, explicitly

ausgesprochen – expressed, expressly

explizit – explicit, explicitly

As a whole, the secondary literature on Heidegger has followed M&R's translation patterns on this (both in adopting their preferred translations, and in following their preferred scheme only inconsistently). But the scheme that I'll follow has two distinct advantages over Macquarrie and Robinson's. The first is that it preserves the etymological connections that are in the German. This is especially important when it comes to translating Heidegger, because of Heidegger's penchant for choosing technical terms based on their etymology. With the verb 'ausdrucken', for example, Heidegger likely wanted his reader to hear 'to press out' or 'ex-press' (which is, to make it *salient*, not to put it into words).

Second, my suggestion does a better job ridding the German term '*ausdrücklich*' from it's linguistic connotations (which is the very reason Heidegger contrasted it with '*ausgesprochen*'). On it's own, the translation choice of 'explicit' over 'express' doesn't do much harm. But the problem appears when we come across it's opposite: *unausdrücklich*. Since M&R render '*ausdrucklich*' as 'explicit', they decide to render it's opposite as *tacit*, which invites just those linguistic connotations that Heidegger wanted to avoid, where interpretation is taken to be an act of "making explicit" or putting things into words.

d) Interpretation has the "as-structure"

Heidegger draws an important connection between expressness and the as-structure of interpretation. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger suggests, "The 'as' makes up the structure of the expressness of something that is understood. It constitutes the interpretation" (149). Similarly, in *History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger says that interpretation "brings to prominence [*bringt das zur Hebung*] the 'as-what'" (GA 20: 359).

So interpretation exhibits what Heidegger calls the "as-structure". An interpretive act makes something express or salient, and it does this through an act of taking-something-as. Any act of *taking-as* is interpretive, and any act of interpretation involves what Heidegger calls the "as-structure".

e) Interpretation has different modes

Not all interpretive acts display the as-structure in exactly the same way. The 'as-structure' takes on different modes, depending on whether we are practically absorbed in a task, or whether we are simply describing these entities as occurrent objects. When a carpenter is at work, she might describe a hammer as "Too heavy!", or interpret it as such by laying it aside "without wasting words" (GA 2: 157). These circumspective interpretive acts involve what Heidegger calls the "primordial" or "existential-hermeneutical 'as'", which "reaches out into a totality of involvements" (GA 2: 158). The 'as' of a circumspective interpretive act determines features of equipment that they have

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in a practical context. Borrowing a term from Merleau-Ponty, Dreyfus calls these *aspects* of the available, in contrast to context-independent *properties* of the occurrent.

It's what Heidegger calls the "apophantical 'as'" of assertion that lays down context-independent *properties.* The as-structure is modified such that it is "cut off" from a practical context. We interpret the hammer, for example, as "6kg", rather than as "too heavy". According to Heidegger, this has traditionally been the focus of theories of judgment: we start with an object, and interpret it *as something* by subsuming it under a context-independent property. As we'll see, Heidegger wanted to reverse this priority by showing how judgment, in this sense, is a derivative form of interpretation.

f) Interpretation discovers entities

Understanding is the disclosure of a *world*, and interpretation is the "discovery" of *entities* from out of that world. In an act of interpretation, we take what has been previously disclosed as a whole, and discover entities from out of that whole. As Heidegger puts it, "In terms of the significance which is disclosed in understanding the world, concernful being-alongside the available gives itself to understand whatever involvement that which is encountered can have. To say that 'circumspection discovers' means that the 'world' which has already been understood comes to be interpreted" (GA 2: 148).

One can sum up the relationship between understanding and interpretation with the following slogan: understanding *discloses,* interpretation *discovers.*[29] When we are absorbed in an activity, understanding discloses the world as a practical whole, or as a holistic network of affordances. And it's the role of interpretation to somehow *discover* entities by making particular affordances salient from out of that whole.

2.3   Dreyfus on Heidegger's Two Claims

I'll turn now to what has been the most influential treatment of Heidegger's two claims, coming from Dreyfus. On Dreyfus's reading of Heidegger, what do understanding and interpretation amount to? What kind of *grounding* does the former provide to the latter? And how are these issues related to the Primacy of Practice?

As seen above, Heidegger motivates his account of human understanding by appealing to the ordinary use of the term, where 'understanding' denotes something like skill or practical know-how. It's this close connection between understanding and practical skill that leads Dreyfus to *identify* understanding with know-how. As Dreyfus

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[29] Heidegger is fairly consistent with this vocabulary in *Being and Time*: understanding typically "discloses" a world, and interpretation "discovers" entities from out of the previous disclosure. A standard use of this pattern, for example, can be found in the following passage: "In terms of the significance which is disclosed in understanding the world, concernful being-alongside the available gives itself to understand whatever involvement that which is encountered can have. To say that 'circumspection discovers' means that the 'world' which has already been understood comes to be interpreted" (GA 2: 148). An example of Heidegger breaking this pattern comes in GA 2: 83, where Heidegger suggests that the world (rather than entities) had been previously *discovered*.

puts it, understanding is "skillful coping", "absorbed coping", or "holistic background

know-how" ([1991], 184; [2005], 59).[30]

A brief survey of secondary literature shows just how influential Dreyfus's

reading of Heidegger on this point has been:

> "Understanding is what Dreyfus calls 'absorbed coping,' and inexplicit
> mastery of one's world and oneself" (Blattner [2007], 17).

> "Understanding is, thus, a capacity or ability by means of which I
> manage or know how to do something" (Blattner [2007], 12).

> "Understanding means competence, skill, know-how" (Carman [2003],
> 19).

> "Understanding something is equated with competence or know-how"
> (Haugeland, [1982], 12).

> "Heidegger and Wittgenstein both characterize human understanding as
> an *ability*" (Schear, [2013b], 1).

> "Understanding is not a cognitive activity. Instead, Heidegger means
> know-how, as in the phrase 'understanding one's business'" (Käufer
> [2003], 84).

I'll follow Wrathall [2013b] in calling a "pragmatist" reading of Heidegger one that

attributes to Heidegger the view that understanding *just is* bodily skill or know-how.

Under this definition, each of the authors above hold a pragmatist reading of Heidegger.

What, then is *interpretation*? On Dreyfus's reading, interpretation is

"understanding made *explicit*" (following the M&R translation of '*ausdrücklich*').

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[30] Sometimes Dreyfus takes understanding *to be* absorbed coping, but at other times – perhaps when he is being more careful – Dreyfus takes understanding to be *just one element* in absorbed coping, which makes absorbed coping possible (Dreyfus [1991], 185).

Blattner takes a similar reading to Dreyfus, suggesting that to be *explicit* means "suffused with conceptuality", or capable of being "captured in propositions" ([2006], 96). According to Blattner, most of our everyday activities don't require this kind of conceptual grip on the world. But interpretation begins to emerge on the scene in breakdown cases, e.g., an item of equipment goes missing, breaks, or isn't suitable for a certain task: "When things are not functioning smoothly we have to pay attention to them and act deliberately" (Dreyfus [1991], 196). On this reading, we don't see a doorknob *as* a doorknob until it fails to work properly. And its only breakdown cases that require us to use concepts, e.g., the concept of a doorknob.

So 'interpretation', according to Dreyfus, "denotes any activity in which Dasein points out the 'as structure' already manifest in everyday Articulation" ([1991], 224). And this everyday articulation comes from our prior understanding of the world. Our skillful abilities organize the world into "distinguishable entities and actions which we can tell apart". But it's not until things fail to go smoothly that we "interpret" the world, or bring those entities into thematic focus *as* the kinds of things that they are.

There's two things worth highlighting about the pragmatist reading of Heidegger in general, and about Dreyfus's reading in particular. First, by taking understanding *to be* skillful know-how (which is just what I'm calling the "pragmatist" reading), the boundaries between the Grounding Claim and the Primacy of Practice begin to blur to the extent that it's easy for the former to collapse into the latter. Recall that Heidegger's Grounding Claim is the view that interpretation is grounded in understanding. If "interpretation" corresponds to our theoretical cognitive acts, while "understanding"

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corresponds to skillful know-how, then to establish Heidegger's Grounding Claim *just is* to establish that skillful coping practices have the right kind of priority over our theoretical engagement with the world (i.e., that non-cognitive skills or practices somehow *ground* our theoretical cognitive acts).

The second thing to highlight about the pragmatist position is the way it sets up what Wrathall calls a "vertical" relationship between understanding and interpretation. On a vertical account, understanding and interpretation are distinct modes of comportment, i.e., distinct kinds of intentional acts. When one mode of comportment breaks down, we move "down", as it were, to the next mode of comportment. The following table—modified from the the one found in Dreyfus ([1991], 210)—captures this kind of vertical reading of Heidegger:

Kind of Entity	Mode of Comportment
Available	Primary Understanding
Unavailable	Circumspective Interpretation (hermeneutic-as)
Occurrent	Theoretical Interpretation (apophantic-as)
Purely Occurrent	Pure intuition and abstract thinking; formal logic

Figure 3

At the foundational level is what Dreyfus calls "primary understanding", which is our skillful know-how. This is the type of bodily understanding that constitutes our grasp on the available. When things begin to break down, we form context-sensitive beliefs about the available (e.g., taking a hammer to be "too heavy"). This is what Dreyfus

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identifies as "circumspective interpretation", which is directed at the "unavailable". From there, upon further abstraction, we might make a theoretical assertion about the context-independent properties of an occurrent entity, which is what Dreyfus identifies as "theoretical interpretation". And finally, if we abstract further, we reach the "purely occurrent", which is a mode of "contemplating essences and expressing their 'logical form'" ([1991], 210).

One advantage of Dreyfus's vertical account is that it presents a clear parallel between kinds of entities, on the one hand, and modes of comportment (or "kinds of understanding", as Dreyfus calls it in [1991]) on the other. This parallel is the product of bringing the Grounding Claim and the Primacy of Practice together into a single thesis, since on the pragmatist view, understanding just amounts to the grip that we have on practical (i.e. available) entities. But as we'll see below, this clear parallel will make it difficult to exposit certain passages from Heidegger. In addition, I'll suggest that the parallel forces us to prove *too much* in defending each of Heidegger's claims. That's because the parallel requires interpretation to be grounded in understanding in the *very same way* that the occurrent is grounded in the available. But if we abandon the parallel, and thus keep Heidegger's two claims distinct, we open up the possibility of the practical having a different kind of priority than the grounding relation that holds between understanding and interpretation.

How then does Dreyfus *motivate* the priority claims that he attributes to Heidegger through his vertical reading of understanding and interpretation? One marquee feature of Dreyfus's work is that he sets out to establish Heidegger's priority claims in

novel ways, augmenting Heidegger's phenomenological description of the practically

engaged agent while providing arguments that go beyond what we can find in *Being and

Time*. Although these arguments are spread throughout several decades of writing, I'll

suggest two general patterns that capture the support Dreyfus offers to Heidegger. The

first is the *motivation from the nature of human agency*, which aims to show that there is

a broad range of human actions that can't be explained in terms of interpretive acts. In

particular, to make this claim a bit stronger, Dreyfus suggests that when we look at

paradigmatic cases of human agency – or human agency *at its best* – theoretical

interpretation is absent from these cases, so human agency at its best can only be

explained in terms of practical, skillful coping.

While the first motivation is more central to Dreyfus's work as a whole, we also

find in Dreyfus's work the *motivation from the nature of intentionality* (although it's just

as common to find this motivation offered by others in defense of Dreyfus as it is to be

offered by Dreyfus himself). On this second motivation, it's the nature of our interpretive

acts *themselves* that needs to be explained, and in order to explain intentionality of these

interpretive acts, we need to appeal to something like skillful coping. I'll look at these

two motivations in turn.

A.   *Motivation from the nature of human agency*

With a vertical account of interpretation and understanding, in order for Dreyfus

to establish Heidegger's Grounding Claim, he needs to show that there is a mode of

intentionality more basic than what Heidegger describes as "interpretation". In other

words, Dreyfus needs to show that there is a kind of *practical* intentionality that allows us

to get along in the world prior to the theoretical intentional acts that tend to be the focus

of traditional philosophy. And this practical form of intentionality needs to ground any

interpretive act of "taking-as".[31]

In order to establish this more basic, or "primordial" form of intentionality,

Dreyfus points to cases of what he calls "skillful coping", where an agent is completely

absorbed in an activity and able to fluidly deal with her surroundings. What's important

about these cases is that mental activities seem to take a back seat:

> "Experts experience periods of performance, variously called 'flow', 'in
> the groove' and 'in the zone', when everything becomes easier,
> confidence rises, time slows down, and the mind, which usually monitors
> performance, is quieted. Yet performance is at its peak. Something
> similar happens to each of us when any activity from taking a walk, to
> being absorbed in a conversation, to giving a lecture is going really well.
> That is, whenever we are successfully and effortlessly finding our way
> around in the world. Athletes in such situations say they are playing out
> of their heads, and in much of our everyday coping, so are we." (Dreyfus
> [2007b], 373)

Examples of experts in the "flow", as it were, offer a challenge to theories of action that

require some kind of mental event (e.g. representation of one's goal) to bridge the gap

between self and world. That's because these mental activities seem to be absent when

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[31] It's not uncommon for Dreyfus to call skillful coping a kind of "intentionality", albeit a kind of intentionality that is "non-conceptual" (e.g., [2005]: 55). More recently, however, Dreyfus follows Heidegger in dropping the language of intentionality to describe what guides the skillful agent. I find Dreyfus's earlier language more helpful, but if one finds the description of "intentionality" to have too much philosophical baggage, one could substitute the phrase "mode of comportment" to describe skillful coping. At times below, I employ the language of "comportments", although perhaps at the expense of relying more in Heidegger's jargon.

the expert fluidly copes with the things around her. According to Dreyfus, skillful coping requires a certain kind of "mindlessness" ([2007a], 343), where the agent is able to respond to a particular situation without stepping back to reflect on the general rules that might govern the activity in which she is engaged. On this picture, thinking is precisely what *gets in the way* of absorbed, fluid coping.

To support that skillful coping is in a certain sense "mindless", [32] Dreyfus often draws from descriptions of athletes who find themselves "in the zone". Dreyfus cites, for example, basketball player Larry Bird:

> "[A lot of the] things I do on the court are just reactions to situations… A lot of times, I've passed the basketball and not realized I've passed it until a moment or so later." (Levine [1988], 45; quoted in Dreyfus [1993], 28)

It's important to recognize, however, that skillful coping isn't limited to remote cases involving expert athletes. That's because each person is an "expert", so to speak, at many everyday tasks, like tying one's shoe or standing at the correct distance when having a conversation. According to Dreyfus, we carry out these activities without any kind of representation of rules for action. So this kind of *mindless* way of going about the world is quite ordinary: it's how we go about the world most of the time.

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[32] Dreyfus categorizes skillful coping as "mindless" only recently, in response to his debate with McDowell over what Dreyfus calls the "Myth of the Mental". In other places, when Dreyfus wants to distance skillful coping from merely "mechanical" or "zombie-like" behavior, Dreyfus is careful to deny that skillful coping is "mindless" ([1991], 68; [1993], 34). I don't take this to indicate an actual change in Dreyfus's view, but instead evidence for his claim that the dichotomies established by the traditional ways of describing human behavior (e.g., "mental" vs "non-mental") don't accurately capture the phenomenon that Heidegger was after.

But while skillful coping is in a sense "mindless", Dreyfus insists that we are not merely "zombies" when we skillfully cope with the world, nor is our behavior merely "mechanical" ([1991], 68; [1993], 34). While the skillful coping is distinct from *deliberative* forms of agency, Dreyfus insists that our skillful agency is still distinct from "the behavior of a robot or an insect" ([1991], 68). But the difference doesn't lie in the fact that we – in contrast to insects – have a mental representation of our goal, or of the rules for achieving that goal, since Dreyfus insists that each of these is absent from the skillful agent. To account for the difference between the fluid agent and a mere robot or zombie, Dreyfus posits another kind of agency that's doing the work, which involves a *bodily* form of intentionality.[33]

Dreyfus traces this kind of intentionality back to Aristotle's account of *phronesis* along with Heidegger's account of "primordial understanding". But more than anyone else, the vocabulary used by Dreyfus to describe skillful coping comes from Merleau-Ponty. Of particular influence on Dreyfus is Merleau-Ponty's work on *habit*. In a similar vein to the way Dreyfus describes skillful coping, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty introduces habit as "neither a form of knowledge nor an automatic reflex" ([2012], 145). Habits seem to be more than merely mechanical, yet at the same time, a habitual action doesn't seem to be the result of any cognitive achievement or judgment.

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[33] To distinguish human skillful coping from the behavior of animals such as insects, Dreyfus appeals to the *social* aspect of skill acquisition (e.g., human agents often pick up bodily know-how from mimicking others, rather than by representing rules for action).

According to Merleau-Ponty, this makes the topic of habit difficult for classical philosophies, "which are always inclined to conceive of synthesis as intellectual synthesis" (143).

To get clear about the nature of habit, Merleau-Ponty appeals to what he calls *motor intentionality*: "The acquisition of the habit is surely the grasping of a signification, but it is specifically the motor grasping of a motor signification" (143). Merleau-Ponty illustrates the concept by describing the fingers of a typist:

> "The question is often presented as if the perception of the letter written on the paper came to awaken the representation of the same letter, which in turn evoked the representation of the movement necessary to reach it on the keyboard. But this language is mythological. When I glance over the text offered to me, there are no perceptions awakening representations, but rather wholes that arrange themselves at the present moment" (145).

The power of habit is such that the keyboard can draw out certain movements from the typist, without the mediation of any kind of mental representation of the keyboard. The movements are still "guided by an intention", although the intention isn't one that can be spelled out in intellectualist terms. That's why Merleau-Ponty describes it as a kind of *bodily* intentionality: "in the acquisition of habit it is the body that 'understands'… The subject who learns to type literally incorporates the space of the keyboard into his bodily space" (145-146).

Let's suppose for now that Dreyfus is right that a kind of bodily intentionality can explain the cases of "skillful coping" described above (and let's further suppose that this is what Heidegger had in mind with "understanding"). Merely establishing another *kind* of intentionality would be insufficient to establish the *priority* of skillful coping over our

theoretical or mental acts (or the *priority* of understanding over interpretation, or the *priority* of our grip on the available over our grip on the occurrent): one might suggest, for example, that understanding has its roots in interpretation, or that skillful coping must also involve interpretation. How then, might Dreyfus's analysis of skillful coping establish that understanding has the right kind of *priority*? And what kind of priority does understanding have?

Throughout most of his writing, the priority that Dreyfus seeks to establish is an *explanatory* priority: that is, we need what Heidegger calls "understanding" to make sense of human agency in its paradigmatic and most common form. In other words, the kind of intentional acts that Heidegger calls "interpretation" are insufficient to make sense of human agency at its best. Since we need to appeal to understanding or skillful coping in order to explain human agency at its best, this mode of comportment has a kind of explanatory priority over interpretation with respect to human agency.

In sections that follow, I'll suggest that Dreyfus is right about the explanatory priority of our practical modes of comportment, but that Dreyfus overcommits because of the way his "vertical" reading of Heidegger maps "understanding" and 'interpretation" onto these respective modes of comportment. Recall that on a vertical reading, understanding *just is* a mode of comportment that is said to be more basic than our interpretation. If the priority of understanding comes from the fact that understanding (but not interpretation) can explain skillful coping, then what a vertical account needs to show is that interpretation alone is unable to account for absorbed, skillful coping. And

the usual strategy is to show that *interpretation is absent* when the absorbed agent skillfully copes with the world.

What the *absence of interpretation* amounts to depends on how one spells out Heidegger's account of "interpretation". But recall that Heidegger's use of the term 'interpretation' is quite broad: he considers any act of "taking-as" to amount to interpretation. This would include, it seems, any of the *cognitive acts* (e.g., belief) that we typically appeal to in our explanations of human action. In fact, any application of *concepts* would seem to be instances of "taking-as". So among different vertical readings of Heidegger, the absence of interpretation might amount to the absence of "mental states", "concepts", "representation", or "propositional content".

For example, Dreyfus takes Heidegger's suggestion to be that cases of fluid agency often take place in the complete absence of mental states (and in his own work, Dreyfus takes this one step even further, suggesting not only that fluid agency *can* take place in the absence of mental states, but also that fluid agency *requires* the absence of mental states):

> "Heidegger can and does claim to have given a concrete demonstration
> of his position, by showing that when we carefully describe everyday
> ongoing coping activity we do not find any mental states." ([1991], 86).

Blattner relies less on talk about "mental states", but instead on the absence of "concepts" or "representations" (recall that for Blattner, interpretation is a mode of comportment that is "suffused with conceptuality", or capable of being "captured in propositions" ([2006], 96)):

> "Heidegger's thesis in §32 [*Understanding and Interpretation*] is, then,
> this: understanding that has propositional content (i.e., interpretation) is

> derivative of understanding that does not…. We can formulate this idea
> more compactly thus: *representation is derivative of our engaged
> abilities…* there is a level of mastery and intelligence in human life that
> is not conceptually mediated, that cannot be captured in assertions."
> ([2006], 94)

Spelling out in more detail either of these readings would require a closer analysis of

what is meant by "mental state", "representation", or "conceptual content" – which is an

issue that has received a considerable amount of attention.[34] But however these concepts

are spelled out, it's safe to say that the vertical account – by denying that interpretation is

present in skillful coping – attributes to Heidegger a *very strong claim*. It attributes to

Heidegger the view that the "as-structure" is completely absent to the absorbed agent,

however one might go on to spell this out in detail.

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Before moving on to Dreyfus's second motivation, it's worth considering one

possible response to the motivation from the nature of human agency, along with the way

that Dreyfus addresses it. Doing so not only allows me to clarify what's at stake in the

debate, but it also provides the opportunity for me to explain in detail the way my

position (from Chapter 1) diverges from Dreyfus's (even as I rely on many of Dreyfus's

arguments).

Denis McManus does a nice job spelling out the possible response to Dreyfus that

I'd like to consider:

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[34] Many of the essays in Schear [2013a] focus precisely on this.

> "[Dreyfus's] 'phenomenological' argument invites the obvious response that our managing to deal skilfully and intelligently with the objects around us without entertaining explicit beliefs about them does not rule out the possibility that this feat rests on certain *implicit* or *unconscious* beliefs" ([2013], 79)

That is, Dreyfus may be right that the activity of a skillful agent needn't be directed by any "explicit", "conscious", or "thematic" belief, but this alone does not entail that the skillful agent has no mental states *at all*. All that Dreyfus has shown, it seems, is that the mental states involved in skillful activity are somehow *different* from those mental states that take place in detached, theoretical contemplation. When a certain activity becomes "automatic" for an agent, one could say that the cognitive processes that once governed the behavior are still taking place somewhere in the "background" of the agent's cognitive life: the agent is directed by "unconscious" beliefs, or other unconscious mental states. Because these mental states take place in the "background", the agent needn't be *aware* of her own desires or beliefs – but this leaves open the possibility that the agent still has them.

I'll call this the "background" challenge – and it's a challenge to the view that Dreyfus holds and attributes to Heidegger (not to be confused the social "background" practices that Dreyfus and others often appeal to – which I also introduce below). Put broadly, the "background" objection appeals to the possibility that whatever is taken to be missing from skillful coping (mental states, concepts, etc.) still occurs, but only "implicitly" or in the "background" of one's cognitive life. I take this to be a very strong

challenge to Dreyfus's position, and Dreyfus spends more time responding to some form

of this challenge than to any other.[35]

Dreyfus is obviously aware of the background challenge in its various forms. And

in fact, one of Dreyfus's most memorable and oft-quoted analogies is just one version of

the background challenge in the context of rule-following and skill-acquisition:

> "Indeed, our experience suggests that rules are like training wheels. We
> may need such aids when learning to ride a bicycle, but we must
> eventually set them aside if we are to become skilled cyclists. To assume
> that the rules we once consciously followed become unconscious is like
> assuming that, when we finally learn to ride a bike, the training wheels
> that were required for us to be able to ride in the first place must have
> become invisible [rather than having been taken off completely]"
> ([2005], 52).

In other words, Dreyfus suggests that when we fluidly cope with the world, the mental

states that guide deliberative agency don't simply become "invisible" or unconscious, but

instead these mental states are not present at all.

There are several different approaches that Dreyfus takes in response to the

background challenge. Because my reading of Heidegger ultimately diverges from

Dreyfus's, a detailed look at each of Dreyfus's responses to the background challenge is

beyond the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, it's still helpful to look at the general

strategies that Dreyfus uses to push back against the background challenge because

several of these strategies parallel the arguments I provided in favor of knowledge from a

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[35] Unfortunately, when McManus [2013] brings up this challenge, he doesn't consider a single response to this challenge that Dreyfus has provided. And there are dozens of places where Dreyfus addresses this objection. Just one example: if you look at the way Dreyfus frames his debate with McDowell, this seems to be the very issue at stake.

practical perspective in Chapter 1. In addition, we'll see below that Dreyfus often frames

his second motivation (what I'm calling the *motivation from the nature of intentionality*)

as a response to the background challenge. I'll look at four of Dreyfus's general replies in

total:

(i) *We can't spell out the allegedly "implicit" beliefs*. If skillful coping were

governed by implicit beliefs, then we should, in theory, be able to spell them out. But for

many activities (e.g. riding a bicycle), we can successfully participate in those activities

without having any idea of the rules that would supposedly govern our behavior (e.g.,

"lean to the side you are falling"). In addition, computer scientists have found it difficult,

if not impossible, to create "expert systems" for even the most mundane tasks by listing

out the rules that govern that task. While this isn't a deductive argument, it at least

suggests that "everyday coping can't be understood in terms of symbolic representations"

(Dreyfus [2005], 49), regardless of whether those representations are "conscious" or

"unconscious".

(ii) *Non-human animals and infants* skillfully cope with the world, but we would

be hesitant to impute implicit concepts to animals, or beliefs about the rules of the

activity to infants. So when an adult human skillfully copes with the world, why think the

human agent exercises capacities that go beyond what is shared with infants or non-

human animals? Of course, adult humans *possess* higher reflected capacities, but what

reason do we have to think the adult human *exercises* these capacities, rather than the

capacities we share with non-human animals?

(iii) *Paradigm cases of human agency* should be what drive our theory. Unfortunately, philosophers have often started with the detached, deliberative agent as their model. Because of this, the tendency has been to take those things that explain *deliberative agency* (e.g., desires, belief), and to extend these things to *all cases* of human agency. When we look at *absorbed, fluid* agency, we don't find mental states such as desires or belief; and philosophers are only tempted to posit them at the "unconscious" or "implicit" level because they operate under the assumption that these things *need* to be present in order for fluid coping to count as agency at all (i.e., because they assume that fluid agency needs to be modeled after deliberative agency). In effect, traditional philosophers have been extending what really applies to the fringe cases to what should be the paradigm: fluid agency.[36]

(iv) *Desires, belief, and other attitudes somehow "require" the background offered by skillful coping.* The general idea is that skillful coping can't be reduced to conceptual forms of understanding, because beliefs or other intentional attitudes only have "content" on the "background" of skillful coping. So even if we posit something like unconscious mental states, these mental states, in turn, would still require a more basic form of intentionality.

This last reply to the background objection is what I'm calling the *motivation from the nature of intentionality*, since the suggestion is that intentionality *itself* is

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[36] This argument comes from Wrathall [2014] just as much as it does from Dreyfus. That is, this argument seems to be in the background of most of Dreyfus's work, and Wrathall brings it out explicitly.

something that needs to be explained. Since this reply has taken on a life of its own – and since the motivation will play in important role in Chapter 3 – I've separated this reply into its own section, which we turn to now.

B.   *Motivation from the nature of intentionality*

Dreyfus also takes the Primacy of Practice to be motivated by the nature of our interpretive acts themselves. Whereas in the previous section, we saw Dreyfus appeal to "understanding" to explain certain cases of human agency, on this line of reasoning, there's something about our interpretive acts *themselves* that needs to be explained, and that can only be explained by appealing to understanding or skillful know-how. Our interpretive acts themselves only manage to have content on the "background" of skillful understanding:

> "[Explicit beliefs] can only be meaningful in specific context and
> against a background of shared practices." ([1980], 7)

> "So absorbed bodily coping, its motor intentional content, and the
> world's interconnected solicitations to act provide the background on the
> basis of which it becomes possible for the mind with its conceptual
> content to think about and act upon a categorially unified world."
> ([2007a], 360-361)

The goal of the motivation from the nature of intentionality is to show that our interpretive acts only have intentional content against a "background of shared practices" (often shortened to "background practices", or simply a "background" – not to be confused with the "background objection" from the previous section). These practices are *shared* because "we acquire these social background practices by being brought up in them" ([1980], 7), and such practices are embodied by our *skills* or practical know-how.

Dreyfus applies this notion of "background practices" to a wide range of philosophical problems, and spread throughout his work are several different reasons for why intentional attitudes require such a background.[37] But the argument that has received the most attention – especially recently – makes an appeal to a regress-of-rules *à la* Wittgenstein. What the regress argument seeks to establish is that our intentional attitudes require a kind of skillful know-how in the "background", on pain of regress. As Wrathall explains: "The application of rules itself depends on skills for applying rules. If we try to capture *those* rules in terms of the application of further rules, then…" ([2000], 96-97, ellipsis in the original).

To step back for a moment, it's important to recognize that Dreyfus first introduces the regress argument within the context of a discussion on human agency (and in particular, as a response to the "background objection"). As we saw above, Dreyfus's view (and also the position he attributes to Heidegger) is that the skillfully absorbed agent is guided by a kind of bodily intentionality, which is more fundamental than any of our cognitive attitudes or mental states. What Dreyfus needs to show is that the role he attributes to skills or "background practices" cannot be played by something like unconscious belief, or other implicit mental states:

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[37] Dreyfus applies the concept of "background practices", for example, to his critique of artificial intelligence, and to his theory of skill acquisition. In addition to the regress of rules arguments explored below, Dreyfus takes the "frame" problem in Computer Science to motivate the notion of a background. Dreyfus also appeals to background bodily know-how to explain the "perceptual stability in change", i.e. the way we can pick out particular objects despite changes to that object or its appearance ([2007a], 362; cf. also [1980], 7ff).

"What makes up the background is not beliefs, either explicit or implicit, but habits and customs, embodied in the sort of subtle skills which we exhibit in our everyday interaction with things and people… [Treating the background as a set of procedures runs into a dilemma]: If skills are to be analyzed in terms of the sort of rules people actually sometimes follow, then the cognitivist will either have to admit a skill for applying these rules, or face an infinite regress. Or, if he says that one doesn't need a rule or a skill for applying a rule, one simply does what the rule requires, then he has to answer Wittgenstein's question: why not just accept that one simply does what the situation requires, without recourse to rules at all?" ([1990], 8-9)

While Dreyfus first offered this regress in the context of rules for action, it's been extended to cover any application of rules whatsoever, which includes our ability to apply concepts to objects quite generally (since it might be said that to grasp a concept is to understand the rule for when that concept applies). In order to interpret the book in front of me as blue, for example, I need to have a rule that specifies when the concept 'blue' applies to some object. But how will I know if this rule for applying the concept applies in a given situation? It seems we would need another rule, which starts off an infinite regress.

On this more general regress of rules, it's no longer human agency that stands in need of an explanation, but rather the general notion of *intentionality*. How is it that my belief manages to be *about* the book in front of me? How can such a belief put a *condition* on the world, such that the belief can be *true* or *false*? What the broader regress of rules argument seeks to show is that in order to answer these broader questions about intentionality, we need to appeal to something more basic, namely bodily skill, from which the intentionality of our mental states arises.

In the next section, I look at McManus's prominent challenge to at least this broader version of the regress argument. While I don't think this version of the regress argument is successful, I still think Dreyfus is right about the specific questions motivating certain sections of *Being and Time*, namely questions about the origin and possibility of *intentionality*. In Chapter 3, I introduce Heidegger's notion of *truth*, and suggest that his theory was meant to address just these questions. In particular, what Heidegger's discussion of truth aimed to establish was his *Grounding Claim*, namely, that interpretation is grounded in understanding.[38]

2.4   McManus on the Primacy of Practice

A.   McManus's Philosophical Challenge to Dreyfus

In his recent book *Heidegger and the Measure of Truth*, McManus poses a set of challenges to Dreyfus's reading of Heidegger's Grounding Claim. Of particular interest to McManus are the regress-style arguments that discussed above (and specifically the more general version of the regress argument discussed at the end of 2.3, where the regress no longer appears in the context of human agency). Recall that on this motivation for the Grounding Claim, our intentional attitudes themselves are said to *require* a background of know-how or coping skills. Because of this, our coping skills are supposed

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[38] But to spell this out in detail, I need to first correct Dreyfus's reading of 'understanding' in Heidegger.

to "explain" something about our intentional attitudes, e.g., how it's possible for them to have "content".

McManus is less convinced that Heidegger wants to offer any kind of "explanation" of our intentional attitudes. So McManus naturally asks: "But exactly what is it about [our intentional attitudes] that needs accounting for, that needs to be 'made intelligible' or shown to 'make sense'?" ([2012], 78). What we need to 'make sense' of, on the more general regress argument, is our ability to apply concepts to objects. But the problem, according to McManus, is that Dreyfus (and others) have learned the wrong lesson from the rule-following literature. The lesson isn't that something like "know-how" *explains* how we apply concepts, but rather that to grasp a concept *just is* to know how to apply it.

What Dreyfus presupposes is a "detached" view of human cognition, or an overly intellectualized view of the mind – where a person is able to grasp concepts independent from how these hook up with the world. In particular, McManus accuses Dreyfus of adopting what McDowell calls the "master thesis", which is: "The thesis that whatever a person has in her mind, it is only by virtue of being interpreted in one of various possible ways that it can impose a sorting of extra-mental items into those that accord with it and those that do not." (McDowell [1993], 270; cited in McManus [2012], 82). On the master thesis, whatever a person has in mind needs to be interpreted in order to be hooked up with the world, and McManus suggests it's this detached view of the mind that lends itself to the regress in the first place.

According to McManus, the regress arguments still show us *something*, but just not what Dreyfus takes them to show. Instead of showing that our intentional attitudes need to be somehow "explained" or "accounted for" through skillful coping, McManus suggests that the regress arguments show that we shouldn't have adopted the "detached" view of the mind to begin with, i.e. that we shouldn't have adopted the "master thesis". To drive home this point, McManus marshals Heidegger's claim that we are "always already in" the world, rather than detached from it and in need of a connection, as the master thesis would presuppose. Once we free ourselves from the grip of the master thesis, McManus suggests that we'll realize that there's nothing left about our intentional attitudes that need to be explained: our worries can be dissolved in a Wittgensteinian fashion. According to McManus, "the only sense in which we have established 'how intentionality is possible' is by recognizing how a confused, 'extraordinary' idea made us think that it was *im*possible" ([2012], 87).

McManus's critique of Dreyfus has been well received: in his review of McManus's book, Blattner [2013] suggests, "McManus's objections to this aspect of Dreyfus's interpretation of Heidegger are detailed, careful, and forceful, perhaps even fatal." I agree that McManus is getting something right about the way regress-style rules have been used to defend Heidegger's Grounding Claim (or also the Primacy of Practice). And McManus is certainly not the first to accuse Dreyfus of over-intellectualizing the

mind before explaining what the mind cannot do.[39] It seems that the regress-style arguments only get their purchase when we start with a detached, intellectualized version of the mind, such that a person has a grip on "mental contents" that in some way need to be hooked up to the world.

But before looking at the alternative picture that McManus offers, it should be noted that McManus offers a critique of just *one* of the ways that Dreyfus motivates the Primacy of Practice (a detail that could be completely lost in McManus's close analysis of the regress arguments). Even if the regress-style arguments are flawed, what's still left intact is the *motivation from the nature of human agency*, along with other arguments under the *motivation from the nature of intentionality* that don't appeal to any kind of regress.

B.   *McManus's Alternative*

The focus of Heidegger's that receives the most attention from McManus is Heidegger's claim for the Primacy of Practice (rather than the primacy of understanding over interpretation). One notable feature of McManus's reading is the way he proposes to synthesize a wide range of themes that appear in *Being and Time*, from the distinction between occurrent and available entities, to Heidegger's account of truth. It's the latter that McManus draws upon to defend Heidegger's claim to the Primacy of Practice. In

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[39] See, for example, McDowell [2007a], [2007b]. John Searle [2000] and Alva Noë [2000] also accuse Dreyfus of overintellectualizing the mind.

particular, McManus appeals to Heidegger's allusions to understanding as providing a "measure" for truth.

According to McManus, skillful practices are required to provide our interpretive acts with a "measure". To illustrate, McManus considers an utterance of the sentence, "Roy Hilbert is 7'2'' tall". In order to assess whether this utterance is meaningful, one needs to have the "know-how" of measuring height. This includes knowing that the tape measurer should go straight along Roy's back (rather than diagonal, like when we measure a computer screen), and knowing that the Roy should stand straight rather than slouch. In other words, the meaningfulness of the utterance requires that we know how to operate measuring equipment.

For McManus (in contrast to Dreyfus), nothing hinges on whether or not we can spell out our background familiarity with measuring tools in the form of rules. So it doesn't matter to McManus if our use of measuring tools, for example, is guided by implicit rules or beliefs, or if know-how is guided by knowledge-that.[40] Instead, McManus wants to focus on the way that rules governing tool use – when spelled out – don't have what he calls "conformist" conditions for truth. Suppose that while measuring Roy, a person says "The height of a person is always measured in a straight line". This latter assertion doesn't simply correspond (or fail to correspond) to a fact. Instead, there's a sense in which the latter statement *constitutes* the practice of measuring height

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[40] See, e.g., McManus ([2013], 79).

altogether. This outlines, for McManus, the way that Heidegger's claim to the Primacy of Practice is supposed to run: when we ask whether some assertion corresponds to the world, we rely on our practical skills (with available entities) to give this assertion its "measure". And it's in this sense that the practice of measuring people with measuring sticks has *priority* over the claim that Toy is 7'2'' tall.[41]

While McManus certainly finds creative support for this view in Heidegger, it's not obvious that his suggestion will work more generally. In fact, trouble for this picture begins once we start looking at utterances that wouldn't require tool use to confirm. Utterances of the sentence 'Goldbach's Conjecture is true' or 'Free will is compatible with divine foreknowledge' are meaningful and have truth conditions, but it's not obvious what kind of tools we would use to "measure" these utterances. So it's difficult to see how skillful practices might have any kind of priority in these cases.

But there's perhaps a deeper worry, even with McManus's original example. That's because when it comes to *tools for measuring*, the *grounding* relation seems (to me at least) to run the opposite direction from what McManus suggests. According to McManus, what's fundamental is the practice of measuring, along with the skills and tools involved in such measuring. Without these skills and tools, according to McManus, we wouldn't be able to make claims about a person's height. But there seems little reason

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[41] I'm specifically omitting the notion of *grounding* from McManus's account of the Primacy of Practice, since McManus also avoids the term, calling it an "idiom" often used by Dreyfus and Heidegger ([2013], 87).

to think we couldn't tell the story in the *opposite* direction: it's only *because* we want to measure a person's height that we develop the tools and skills for doing so. One might suppose, for example, that we start by making claims about which of two people are taller. These would be theoretical assertions, and to settle the matter, we would need to develop the practice of measuring along with the tools for doing so. On this opposite story, it would be the *theoretical assertion* that would come first and have an important priority over the skills and tools involved in the practice of measuring. It's only *because* of the theoretical assertion that we develop the skills and tools that could settle the matter.[42]

To bring this out a bit further, we can imagine a case where our measuring practices gets things *wrong*. Suppose that to settle the matter on who is taller, it becomes practice to use a stick that – unbeknownst to us – happens to expand or contract dramatically depending on the temperature. When we find out that the length of the stick varies with the temperature, we would likely conclude that our *practices* got things wrong, in the sense that these practices do not allow us to establish the truth of theoretical assertions about a person's height. We would then need to *find* some new practice to

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[42] Of course, not all tools are used for "measuring", so we couldn't tell this kind of story for *every* instance of tool use. But we needn't establish this for every instance of tool use in order to be worried about the support that McManus might provide for the Priority of Practice. One option for McManus might be to say that assertions are only *meaningful* if they can be confirmed (which requires tools). But this might require taking the view from "sideways on" which McManus rejects, since the meaningfulness of our assertions would be viewed again as something that needs to be explained.

settle the theoretical assertions, but the theoretical assertions would continue to be meaningful, even as we search for the practices for measurement.

Because the priority could be read in the opposite direction, it's difficult to see how McManus's alternative could successfully motivate the Primacy of Practice. His critique of Dreyfus, however, reopens the question of *how* exactly "the practical" is supposed to account for something missing from our explanation of intentionality. As it turns out – and what will emerge in the next section – is that the mistake lies in the very demand to ground intentionality in the "practical", a mistake that stems from conflating Heidegger's two claims (Primacy of Practice with the Grounding Claim). What a close analysis of intentionality is supposed to show, for Heidegger, isn't a priority of the "practical" but rather a priority of what he calls "understanding" over our interpretive acts.

2.5   Wrathall on the Grounding Claim

A.   Wrathall's Textual Challenge to Dreyfus

Recall that on the "pragmatist" reading of Heidegger, understanding *just is* skillful know-how. This gets spelled out in a "vertical" relationship between understanding and interpretation, where understanding is taken to be a mode of comportment more basic than what Heidegger describes as interpretation. In order to establish the *priority* of understanding, then, one must show that *interpretation is absent* when the agent is skillfully absorbed in the world; and that's a tall order, given that interpretation for Heidegger covers any act of "taking-as".

Recently, Wrathall has pushed back against the view that understanding is a mode of comportment, which is assumed in the pragmatist reading of Heidegger. At the heart of his challenge is Heidegger's insistence on what Wrathall calls the "pervasiveness of interpretation" ([2013], 180). As Wrathall points out, interpretation is "not an occasional supplement activity", but instead something that the human agent is *always* engaged in. For example, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes not only our theoretical grasp of the world, but also our practical, concernful grip on things to be one that always involves interpretation:

> "Concernful being amidst what is available gives itself to understand which involvements it can have in each case with what is encountered, and it does this from out of the significance that is disclosed in understanding the world. Circumspection discovers – that means, the world that is already understood is interpreted. (148 – translation modified).

> "All predicative simple seeing of the available is in itself already understanding-interpretation" (149)

> "every perception of available equipment is understanding—interpreting, and lets us circumspectively encounter something as something (149)

Heidegger suggests in these passages that even the *practical* grip the agent has on the world involves interpretation.

But if our practical grasp on the world involves interpretation, then the "vertical" account of understanding and interpretation can't be right. These passages would not only make it difficult to establish the Primacy of Practice, but they would seem to suggest even the *opposite* order of priority. Since our circumspective grip on available entities always involves interpretation, Heidegger might seem to be promoting an overly-

rationalized picture of the human agent, where our theoretical grip on entities pervades even the most practical grip we have on the world around us.

Wrathall recognizes that attempts have been made to maintain the "core" of the pragmatist reading – the Primacy of Practice – while being faithful to Heidegger's claim that interpretation is present in absorbed, practical agency.[43] But Wrathall suggests that a better approach – and one more faithful to Heidegger – would be to "rethink the way the thesis of the primacy of practice was formulated… and this will lead us, in turn, to a different way of thinking about understanding" ([2013], 187). In other words, the pragmatist reading of Heidegger may be right that Heidegger takes our practical modes of comportment to have a kind of priority over theoretical modes. But we should resist the temptation to think that "understanding" and "interpretation" map onto the distinction between comportment in its practical and theoretical modes. If we instead decouple the Primacy of Practice from Heidegger's Grounding Claim, we open up the possibility of spelling out and defending each claim independently.

B.   *Wrathall's Alternative (Structural-functional account of understanding)*

We saw above that on the typical pragmatist reading, it's difficult to square Heidegger's claims about the *pervasiveness of interpretation* with the Primacy of Practice. The conflict arises because if understanding and interpretation are distinct

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[43] E.g., Wrathall ([2013], 188-187) explores the way Taylor Carman squares a vertical account with the pervasiveness of interpretation in Carman [2003].

modes of comportment, then it's difficult to maintain the priority of understanding when the interpretive mode of comportment is everywhere. Thus Wrathall suggests we should rethink the "vertical" relationship between understanding and interpretation, where understanding is taken to be the most basic form of comportment. In fact, Wrathall suggests that understanding isn't a type of "act" at all:

> "Understanding is not the most basic kind of human activity. It is the structure that makes all human activities *activities* as opposed to mere movements or events" ([2013], 188).

On Wrathall's reading, understanding isn't a kind of "skill" or know-how, nor is it theoretical knowledge-that. Instead, it's a structure that applies more broadly to *all* of our acts: "Thus every human action, practice, skill, mental or perceptual state, emotion, mood, or disposition will manifest understanding" ([2013], 188). All human activities and actions can be seen as concrete instances of the common structure of understanding.

Heidegger's *structural* analysis of understanding, then, is oriented toward the role or function that understanding plays in the life of the human agent. In particular, since the defining mark of human agency is *world disclosure*, Heidegger's formal analysis of understanding is oriented toward the role that understanding plays in world disclosure. As Wrathall puts it, "The *function* of a thing is the operation it performs, the part or role it plays in achieving an overall end or purpose… The *structure* is the way constituent features of a whole are organized so as to perform the function" ([2013],178). Heidegger's analysis of human understanding is "structural-functional", in that Heidegger seeks to explain how human understanding must be organized to contribute to the function of *world-disclosure*.

As we saw earlier, Heidegger takes "projection" to be the "existential structure" of understanding (GA 2: 145) [44]. The human agent discloses a world by projecting itself onto an ability-to-be, which opens up a pattern of affordances in terms of which we encounter the things around us. Interpretation, then, involves a kind of commitment to working out the possibilities projected by understanding. As Wrathall explains, "If I commit myself to pursue some definite set of possibilities that the world affords me – if I let myself be solicited by some possibility, that possibility will, for its part, demand of me that I develop myself to respond appropriately to it. The possibilities 'exert a counter thrush' [*Rückschlag*] – they rebound or push back at us. As we commit to a definite possibility, then we develop and refine and execute and perfect our skills for seeing what possibilities are afforded to us" (Wrathall [2013], 193, citing GA 2: 148). One advantage of Wrathall's reading is that it shows how interpretation can be *pervasive,* since staying absorbed in an activity requires a kind of commitment to a certain set of possibilities though which to approach things.

But as we saw above, interpretation isn't the *only* thing that Heidegger takes to be pervasive. *Understanding* is supposed to be pervasive as well, present in all human activities or comportments, whether *theoretical* or *practical*. Heidegger's claim, according to Wrathall, is that *all* comportments, "including the cognitive forms that philosophers tend to treat as foundational, are instances of projection onto possibilities"

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[44] For a closer look at *projection*, see earlier in this chapter, section 2.A.c.

([2013], 193). Yet at the very least, it's much *easier* to see the structure of projection onto possibilities in practical cases. And it's for precisely this reason that – on Wrathall's reading – Heidegger gives a kind of methodological priority to practical over theoretical instances of understanding. What Heidegger wants to explore is the way understanding contributes to the function of world disclosure, which it does through "projection onto possibilities". In his analysis of understanding, Heidegger focuses on instances of *practical* understanding, since such cases "most perspicuously allow us to see" the structure of projection onto possibilities ([2013], 193).

That's not to say that the practical doesn't have *other* kinds of priority over the theoretical, for Heidegger. For example, Wrathall suggests that the pragmatist reading of Heidegger might be correct in taking practice to have a priority "in, for instance, fixing the content of cognitive states, or in illuminating how projection onto possibilities works" ([2013], 198). But nowhere in Heidegger's analysis of *understanding* is Heidegger "claiming that one particular type of comportment – skillful action – is foundational for the rest" ([2013], 193). If this view is to be attributed to Heidegger, it needs to come from somewhere other than Heidegger's view that interpretation is grounded in understanding.

In effect, one major upshot of Wrathall's discussion is that we need to keep Heidegger's two claims distinct, rather than conflating the Grounding Claim with the Primacy of Practice. By doing so, we can give an analysis of Heidegger's account of human understanding that doesn't tie it together with the Primacy of Practice, at least in any straightforward way. And as an added bonus, we no longer need to view the *pervasiveness of interpretation* as a threat to the the Primacy of Practice.

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2.6   Understanding Reconsidered: Self-Projection as Adopting a Perspective

At the beginning of this Chapter, I suggested that *to have understanding, for Heidegger, is to have the capacity to grasp things as a whole.* Furthermore, I suggested that the most basic way the human agent does this is through self-projection, which amounts to *adopting a practical perspective*. The goal now is to to make good on these two claims. I take it that by reading Heidegger in this way – where the notion of a "perspective" does a lot of the work – we can tie together each of the "themes" in Heidegger's account of understanding that were introduced in Section 2.2, while building out a "structural-functional" account of understanding. One other advantage of this account – as we'll see in Section 2.7 – is that the notion of a *perspective* also provides new resources to defend Heidegger's Grounding Claim, motivating it from the nature of human agency.

In Chapter 1, I introduced what I call *knowledge from a practical perspective*, which occurs when the agent views the world from the perspective of some activity. When the agent is caught up in an activity, she doesn't grasp the things around her as bare objects to which properties can be attached. Instead, she approaches the world *from* her activity to see which actions her environment affords. When the agent is caught up in an activity, she encounters things around her from out of this network of affordances.

I also suggested that *knowledge from a practical perspective* is akin to what Heidegger calls "circumspection". This practical kind of knowledge is on display when a carpenter takes a hammer to be "too heavy" and immediately sets it aside. When the carpenter is absorbed in the activity of building a house, the activity itself is what

structures her interpretive attitudes. Because she interprets the world *from the perspective* of some activity, the activity itself needn't be a constituent of the attitudes that she holds about the hammer. Thus when she interprets the hammer as "too heavy", we needn't require that she has some concept about her activity in the so-called "background" of the attitude that she holds about the hammer.

Examples of absorbed agency exhibit a kind of "forth and back" motion. In the first motion, the agent adopts a perspective by getting involved in an activity. And in the second motion, the agent interprets the world in light of that activity. As Heidegger would put it, the first motion is a way of getting *ahead* of things. And the second motion is a *return* to things from the perspective of some activity. According to Heidegger, this "forth and back" motion constitutes the most "direct" grasp that we have on the world around us:

> "I have *always already* gone *further ahead* than the thing that is given
> (in an extreme sense) 'directly' to me. I am always already further ahead
> by understanding the end-for-which [*Wozu*]… only *from* this end-for-
> which [*Wozu*], where in fact I always already am -- do I return to the
> thing that I encounter." (GA 21: 147)

> "Thus the direct understanding of something that is given in the lived
> world in the most natural way *is* constantly a *returning* to what I
> encounter, a constant return that is necessary because of my own
> authentic being, as concernful-dealing-with-things-in-the-world, has the
> property of always-already-being-ahead-with-something" (GA 21: 147)

> "So when I simply understand the most natural things that I deal with
> without thematically understanding them, I do not see, for example, a
> white thing that, by some kind of manipulation I then figure out is chalk.
> Instead, from the outset I already live in connections that are related to
> the end-for-which [*Wozu*], I am held out into a specific lived world that
> is oriented to specific kinds of behavior and concern, and from these
> behaviors and concerns I understand this thing as chalk." (GA 21: 147-8)

To summarize these passages, what Heidegger calls our "primary human comportment" involves: "Always already abiding with the source of meaning and understanding, *while returning to whatever we encounter*" (GA 21: 148).

The distinction between these two moments, for Heidegger, is just the difference between understanding and interpretation. In an act of understanding, we "get ahead" of entities by "projecting" ourselves onto a practical possibility. For Heidegger, this doesn't mean that we think "about" the possibility, since that would "negate its status as a possibility". Instead, Heidegger says that the possibility is something "lived" – we *dwell* in a possibility. Projecting oneself onto a possibility amounts to *putting oneself into position* to view the world from the perspective of that possibility: it amounts to inhabiting a practical context by adopting an activity.

After *getting ahead* of things by adopting an activity as a practical perspective, the agent *returns to things* to recruit them for the service of that activity (i.e., the agent "lets things be involved" in the activity). Heidegger calls this second movement "interpretation", and it involves the "working-out [*Ausarbeitung*] of the possibilities projected in the understanding" (GA 2: 148). When the agent is absorbed in the task of building a house, she looks around to see which tools measure up to the tasks of hammering, sawing, etc. She works out these concrete possibilities by recruiting the things around her for specific tasks.

Because the agent is constantly *returning to things* from the perspective of her activity, the agent first encounters the things from *within* her activity. Her activity provides something like an ordering principle, which structures the engagement the agent

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has with the things around her, and allows these things to show up with a kind of unity to them. So in virtue of being absorbed in an activity, the agent has an *a priori* sketch of how things fit together as a whole. Heidegger sometimes calls this sketch a "pre-view" [*Hinblick*], since our grasp on the *unity* of our practical surroundings comes prior to our experience of the things around us. When the agent then *returns to things*, she first encounters an "equipmental context", and it's from out of this context that she can then articulate individual items of equipment.

It's in precisely this way that by getting ahead of things, the human agent *opens up a world* (which is to say, understanding has the function of world-disclosure). In order for me to inhabit the world of carpentry – to stick with this example – it's not enough for me to read books about the topic, or take the relevant courses. Nor is it enough for me to "go through the motions" and build some tables or chairs. In order to inhabit the world of carpentry, I need to *see the world* as a carpenter sees it, namely, as a context for doing carpentry (e.g., I might see a tree as lumber, rather than how a botanist sees it). The world of carpentry is disclosed when I get *ahead of things* by becoming absorbed in the possibility of carpentry, such that I can *return to things* from the perspective that carpentry affords.

The two moments that constitute the "forth and back" motion don't take place sequentially – but rather they are two logical aspects of the very same act. One advantage of the metaphor of vision – with the emphasis on a *perspective* – is that helps to explain the complimentary relationship that holds between understanding and interpretation. In visual perception, adopting a perspective and viewing the world from that perspective

aren't two distinct steps that follow one after the other. Instead, the agent adopts a perspective *by* viewing the world from it. As theorists we can step back and isolate the perspective as a *structural* element present in every perceptual act, but we never see this structure instantiated except in an act of perception.

Understanding is a structural element of interpretation in the same way that a perspective is a structural element of visual perception. That is, understanding isn't a kind of activity or event that takes place prior to interpretation, but is rather a structure present in all interpretive acts. The practical agent adopts a practical perspective *by* interpreting the world from that perspective. We as theorists can step back and talk about "the understanding" that constitutes the agent's practical perspective, but the agent's understanding is something she enacts *in* an interpretive act. As Heidegger puts it, "in interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself" (GA 2: 148).

Another advantage of stressing the notion of a *perspective* is that it helps to show, for Heidegger, how circumspection can be a kind of *non-reflexive self-knowledge*. When the carpenter takes the hammer to be "too heavy", her attitude is directed *at* the hammer, rather than at herself. But at the same time, the agent occupies a certain practical perspective, and this perspective is *reflected* by the attitude that she holds about the hammer. The perspectival interpretive act reflects that the agent is absorbed in this particular activity, and it can do so even in the absence of any kind of "I" notion in the interpretive act.

Because the attitude is held from the perspective of her activity, the attitude –

which is *about* the hammer – reflects in this case that the agent holding the attitude is a

carpenter, or lives in the world of carpentry. That is why – as we saw earlier – Heidegger

describes "projecting" as a way for the agent to "dwell in" or "keep oneself in" a

possibility (GA 24: 392). In order to inhabit the world of carpentry, I would need to quite

literally *move into* the possibilities characteristic of carpentry, and adopt these practical

possibilities *as my perspective*. These possibilities constitute my perspective, and it's in

terms of, or in light of this perspective that things around me show up.

This is why Heidegger often describes "projection onto possibilities" as a kind of

self-projection [*Sichentwerfen*]. The human agent projects *itself*, in the sense that the

practical perspective she adopts "unveils" who she is as an agent. As Heidegger explains:

> "To understand means, more precisely, to *project oneself upon a possibility* [*sich entwerfen auf eine Möglichkeit*], to always keep oneself in a possibility in this *projection*. Only in projection [*Entwurf*] – in self-projection [*Sichentwerfen*] onto an ability-to-be [*Seinkönnen*] – is there this ability-to-be, this possibility *as* possibility. If in contrast I merely reflect on some empty possibility into which I could enter and, as it were, just gab about it, then this possibility does not exist precisely as a possibility; instead for me it is, as we might say, actual [*wirklich*]. The character of possibility *becomes* manifest and *is* manifest only in projection, so long as the possibility is held fast in the projection. The phenomenon of projection contains two things. First, that *upon which* the human agent projects itself is an ability-to-be of this very agent. This ability-to-be is unveiled [*enthüllt*] primarily in and through the projection, but in such a way that the possibility upon which the human agent projects itself is not itself apprehended objectively [*gegenständlich erfaßt*]. Secondly, this projection *upon* [*auf*] something is always a projecting of [*von*]… Insofar as the human agent projects itself onto a possibility, <u>it projects itself in the sense that it is unveiling itself as this ability to be</u>, in this specific being. Insofar as the human agent projects itself onto a possibility and understands itself in that possibility, this understanding, this becoming manifest of the self, is not a self-contemplation in the sense that the ego would become the object of some

cognition or other; rather, the projection is the way I which I *am* the possibility; it is the way in which I exist freely. (GA 24: 392-3, *translation modified, underline added*)

In sum, an agent projects onto possibilities not by by thinking about them (since for Heidegger, that would negate their character as *possibilities*), but rather by "living in" them, as the possibilities constitute my *perspective* on the world. It's in this sense that the agent is "always already ahead of itself", since the agent always extends itself "outward", as it were, by occupying the perspective of some possibility. My return to things then "unveils" *me*, because the possibility in terms of which I grasp the things around me reflects who I am as an agent.

2.7   The Primacy of Practice (motivated by the nature of human agency)

In the beginning of this chapter, I introduced Heidegger's claim for the Primacy of Practice, which I defined in the following way:

Primacy of Practice: The primary way the agent relates to the world isn't through *thought,* but rather through it's practical *dealings*.

I also introduced two general ways that Dreyfus motivates the Primacy of Practice, the first of which is the *motivation from the nature of human agency*. The general idea is that our practical modes of comportment have an *explanatory priority* over our theoretical modes of comportment with respect to human agency, since only the former can explain human agency at its best. To establish this priority, Dreyfus suggests that cases of fluid agency involve only a practical form of intentionality (often called "absorbed coping"), which is irreducible to the kind of intentional attitudes had by the deliberative agent.

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What got Dreyfus into trouble – I suggested – was his insistence on the *absence of interpretation* from absorbed, skillful coping. What makes this a difficult philosophical position to defend is the broad way that Heidegger defines 'interpretation'. For Heidegger, interpretation amounts to any act of 'taking-as', which would seem to include all of our beliefs, and any application of concepts to objects. Because of this, Dreyfus is forced to conclude that skillful coping requires the complete *absence of mental states*, and he attributes this view to Heidegger: "Heidegger can and does claim to have given a concrete demonstration of his position, by showing that when we carefully describe everyday ongoing coping activity we do not find any mental states." (Dreyfus [1991], 86).[45]

Dreyfus insists on the absence of interpretation only because his reading of Heidegger maps understanding and interpretation onto Heidegger's claim for the Primacy of Practice (thereby collapsing Heidegger's Grounding Claim into the claim for the Primacy of Practice). But as we saw in the previous section, this mapping is a mistake, and we should keep these two claims distinct. My suggestion below is that by exposing this mistake in Dreyfus's reading of Heidegger, we actually offer good news for Dreyfus's overall position; since once we correct this aspect of Dreyfus's reading, we can

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[45] More could be said about what Dreyfus means by "mental states". But the point still stands that by insisting on the absence of interpretation, Dreyfus leaves himself very little space to carve out his view of skillful coping.

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keep the core of his reading of Heidegger while putting it on stronger philosophical grounds.

In particular, there are two key tenets of Dreyfus's view (and also his reading of Heidegger) that we should retain. The first is that the absorbed agent exhibits a mode of comportment that's irreducible to what we find in cases of deliberative agency. This is – for Dreyfus – just to say that the grip we have on the available is irreducible to the grip we have on the occurrent. The second tenant we should retain is that the Primacy of Practice is motivated by the nature of human agency: we can explain paradigm cases of human agency only through an appeal to the mode of comportment on display in fluid agency, and it's in virtue of this fact that the practical mode of comportment has a priority over the theoretical.

What we can leave behind is the Dreyfus's stronger view that skillful coping requires the *absence of mental states* (and as a reading of Heidegger, this view needs to be corrected anyhow in order to accommodate the *pervasiveness of interpretation*). In its place, we can put forward the more modest view that the mental states exhibited in absorbed agency are irreducible to those found in deliberative agency. What the *motivation from the nature of human agency* then needs to show is that we can *only* explain paradigm cases of human agency by appealing to mental states that exhibit this distinctly practical form of intentionality.

This is precisely the view I put forward in Chapter 1.1, where I argued that knowledge from a practical perspective – where the agent views the world *in light of*, or *in terms of* her activity – is irreducible to an attitude that the agent holds *about* the

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activity, where the activity is a *constituent* of the attitude. I take this view – which I attribute to Heidegger – to retain the two core tenants from Dreyfus, while offering a more modest position. To spell this out in more detail, it would be helpful to draw out the key features of the (more modest) reading that I'm offering in parallel to the reading we get from Dreyfus.

The key difference between Dreyfus's view and my own concerns the presence of mental states in absorbed agency:

According to Dreyfus, when an agent is absorbed in an activity, mental states are absent.	**On the view I put forward,** when an agent is absorbed in an activity, the activity itself is absent from the agent's mental states.

It's on this point that I take my view to be more *modest* than Dreyfus's. Rather than requiring the complete absence of mental states from skillful coping, my view requires only the absence of mental states *of a certain sort* (namely, those that *represent* one's activity or aim, rather than being *structured by* that activity or aim). And that's because, on my reading, the absorbed agent interprets the world from the *perspective* of her activity: the agent needn't think *about* her activity, because *everything else* shows up in light of, or in terms of her activity.

The obvious challenge to either view is that whatever is taken to be *absent* from absorbed coping is simply *unrecognized* by the agent, or somewhere in the *background* (earlier, I called this the "background" challenge to Dreyfus):

The challenge to Dreyfus is that the absorbed agent has *unconscious*	**The challenge to my view** is that the absorbed agent has her goal or activity in the "background" of her mental states, i.e. her

| mental states, or mental states of which she is not aware. | activity can be found somewhere in the *deep structure* of her cognitive acts. |

Earlier in this chapter, I outlined four general strategies that Dreyfus takes against the "background" challenge.[46] Likewise, when I looked at the "background" challenge to my own view in Chapter 1, I responded with four reasons for rejecting the requirement that the agent have her activity or goal in the "background" of her cognitive life (p. 58ff). Some of the arguments that I offered were clearly inspired by Dreyfus, adapted only to cover the more modest position that I'm putting forward.[47]

But setting this aside – what would be *Heidegger's* response to the "background" challenge? Heidegger also employs the *motivation from the nature of human agency* in his defense of the Primacy of Practice. According to Heidegger, when we look at the practically engaged agent, we find that the agent's grip on things *as available* has a kind of priority over the grip she has on things *as occurrent*. How does Heidegger show that our grip on the available is *irreducible* to our grip on the occurrent, and that the latter is insufficient for explaining cases of fluid agency?

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[46] See Chapter 2.3A.

[47] In particular, Dreyfus and I agree that skillful coping requires the agent to exercise only those capacities that are shared with infants and non-human animals. I suggested in Chapter 1 that a chicken, for example, is able to pick up information about the world in order to facilitate successful pecking without the concept of "pecking" as such. Of course, the adult human has the the *capacity* to step back and reflect on her activity, but we needn't require this capacity to be *exercised* in absorbed agency, since we don't require the capacity to be exercised in the case of the chicken. Dreyfus offers this style of argument in several places (see argument (ii), above). The main difference is that while Dreyfus takes non-human animals to exhibit a kind of coping without mental states, I simply require that the non-human animal copes without a concept of its goal or activity.

In Chapter 1, I introduced what I take to be Heidegger's most explicit argument for the Primacy of Practice, motivated by the nature of human agency.[48] According to Heidegger, when the human agent is absorbed in an activity, her environment shows up as a *practical whole*. The practical agent encounters "equipment", with a normative orientation, where things hang together around her activity or aim. And it's this *holistic* grasp on the world – exhibited by the absorbed agent – that cannot be reduced to the grip we have on the occurrent. Our grip on the occurrent cannot account for the *practical unity* encountered by the absorbed agent in the world of everyday concern.

On my reading of Heidegger, what this shows is that the practical agent needs to adopt her activity as the *perspective* from which she views the world. The human agent *gets ahead of things* by "projecting" herself onto an ability-to-be, thereby adopting an activity as her perspective and *opening up a world* (e.g. "the world of carpentry"). Only because the human agent *returns to things* from the perspective of her activity can that activity provide a kind of *unity* to the things she encounters, where things hang together *as a whole*.

This *holistic* grasp on things is not something that can be recovered from our occurrent grasp on entities – and this is what I take to be Heidegger's response to the "background" challenge. According to Heidegger, we don't "progressively [take] the single things together, in order to finally establish a coherent interconnection of them"

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[48] For a detailed look at this argument, see Chapter 1, Section 2.

(GA 29/30: 347). In other words, we don't start by thinking about occurrent entities, and then later weave them together by thinking also about our practical activity or aim. Rather than encountering things *in addition to* our activity or aim, we need to encounter things *in light of* or *in terms of* our activity or aim. In other words, rather than have a grasp on the activity as such (whether or not the activity is in the "background" of one's cognitive life), the activity must be what *structures* the grasp we have on the things around us, and what allows the things around us to be encountered together as a unified whole.

In sum, for human agents, our practical comportments have a kind of priority because the most basic way we encounter things around us are *in terms of* our activities, or *in light of* our practical aims. Heidegger establishes this priority by appealing to the way things show up as a *practical whole*, which cannot be recovered by piecing together our non-practical, context-independent grip on entities.

Chapter 3: Understanding and Truth

3.0   Introduction

At the very heart of Heidegger's account of truth is the view that *intentionality is explained in terms of human agency, rather than the other way around*. To spell this out more precisely, Heidegger's account of truth should be read as a rejection of two philosophical claims, each of which are still prevalent in contemporary analytic philosophy. The first is a claim about the *kind of thing* that serves as the primary bearer of truth:

> **1a)** Some kind of intrinsically intentional object (e.g., a "proposition") is the primary bearer of truth.

There are lots of things to which we ascribe truth: propositions, beliefs, sentences, utterances, memories. It's often said that some of these inherit their truth conditions from others (a sentence, for example, might inherit its truth conditions from the proposition it expresses). This first claim doesn't spell out exactly what exactly the primary bearer of truth must be, other than that it is some kind of *object*. We can put this claim into a vocabulary closer to Heidegger's:

> **1b)** The the "primary locus of truth" is something occurrent, or present-at-hand. The being of truth is occurrentness.

As Heidegger explains, on this assumption the *logos*, or primary locus of truth is "something that is in a certain sense always, like trees, mountains, forests, etc., that is occurrent or extant [*vorhanden, vorfindlich*]" (GA 38: 1). But while the primary locus of truth is something occurrent – just like trees and mountains – what sets it apart from

ordinary entities is that it is *intrinsically intentional*. By "intrinsically intentional", I mean that such entities have an alethic profile independent from the intentional or interpretive acts of speakers or believers (it might be said, for example, that a proposition is true or false independent of whether a person entertains the proposition). Propositions or thoughts have truth conditions – which is to say they have *intentionality* – independent of human activities that might involve them.

The second claim in the background of Heidegger's account of truth is about *what we do* when we take something to be true, namely, that we bear some kind of relation toward whatever object serves as the primary bearer of truth:

2a) Intentional attitudes (e.g., "belief" or "judgment") are relations that we take up to these intrinsically intentional objects.

Or as Heidegger would put it:

2b) Comportments are primarily directed toward these occurrent, intentional entities.[49]

On this view, propositions (or some other intrinsically intentional object) serves as the *object* of our intentional attitudes. It's for this reason that attitudes such as belief, hope, or fear are often called "propositional attitudes". When a person *believes* that P is true,

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[49] Or put differently, "knowledge relates only to representations" (GA 45:17). I take Heidegger to be rejecting this view when he denies the assumption that "the correspondence of a statement [*Aussage*] must have first produced the subject-object relationship." (GA 26: 158). This latter formulation is less straight-forward, since it relies on the notion of *correspondence*. But as we'll see below, I take Heidegger to be advancing the general point that we do not (typically) comport ourselves toward entities by comporting ourselves toward some kind of intentional entity, such as a statement or proposition.

hopes that P is true, an later *fears* that P is true; the person is said to relate to the very same thing (namely, the proposition 'that P') in three different ways. This view, according to Heidegger, "takes the subject as merely something which grasps." (GA 26: 161). The subject grasps propositions and takes up different positions with respect to them.

Although it's possible to hold either of these views independently, the two claims are obviously connected. If the primary bearer of truth is a proposition, then intentional attitudes such as belief would seem to inherit their truth values from propositions. But a story needs to be told about how a belief comes to be associated with a proposition from which it inherits its truth conditions. One common response is that beliefs (or other attitudes) *just are* ways of relating to propositions: a person holds a belief *by* relating to a proposition in a way that endorses it. Because a proposition is the *object* of belief, attitudes such as belief inherit truth values from propositions.

This picture gets spelled out, perhaps most famously, by Frege. According to Frege, what "stands in the closest relation to truth" is what he calls a *thought* ([1918], 307). At the linguistic level, when we say that a sentence is true, "we really mean its sense is", which is the thought the sentence expresses. And at the cognitive level, a person's belief or judgment has its truth value only in virtue of the thought that is apprehended. Frege endorses the first claim, since he takes thought to be an *intrinsically intentional object*. A thought is a kind of *object* because it exists independent from acts of thinking; a thought "needs no bearer". And a thought is *intrinsically intentional* because no person is required to *interpret* the thought in order for it to take on its intentional

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profile: "What I recognize as true I judge to be true quite independently of my recognition of its truth and of my thinking about it" (307).

Frege endorses the second claim when spelling out the nature of our intentional attitudes. According to Frege, when a person thinks, "something in his consciousness must be aimed at the thought" (308), and it's this directedness at a non-sensible thought that "opens up the outer world for us". Without being directed toward thought, "everyone would remain shut up in his inner world", so it's *in virtue* of a person's relation to pure thought that she relates to the outer world (309). Of course, there are different kinds of relations that we can bear to thought, since it's possible to entertain a thought, or merely apprehend it, without taking it to be true. Thus for Frege, a person makes a judgment by apprehending a thought while recognizing its truth (294). And similarly, other attitudes – such as entertaining a question – can be spelled out in terms of different ways of relating to thought.

Perhaps just as famous is Frege's Platonism, or his belief that thoughts exist in a kind of "third realm". Unlike ideas, according to Frege, thoughts can be shared, and do not require a bearer for their existence. Yet unlike ordinary objects, thoughts cannot be seen, touch, smelled, or tasted; and indeed are "timeless, eternal, unchangeable" (309). In light of these facts, Frege concludes in an infamous way: "So the result seems to be: thoughts are neither things of the outer world nor ideas. A third realm must be recognized" (302). Likewise, "thoughts are by no means unreal but their reality is of quite a different kind from that of things" (311).

Philosophers since Frege have often been loath to endorse a Platonic view of propositions. Heidegger, as we'll see, described "a third realm of meaning" as "an invention that is no less doubtful than medieval speculation about angels" (GA 24: 306). One common strategy to avoid Frege's conclusion is to make propositions out to be something more naturalistically acceptable; such as ordered complexes of ordinary concrete objects (i.e., *Russellian* propositions), sets of possible worlds, or functions from possible worlds to truth values. What these approaches share is a commitment to the two theses above. Whatever propositions are, they are said to be: 1) intrinsically intentional objects that serve as the primary bearer of truth, and 2) the "object" of attitudes such as belief, or the object to which we relate in holding intentional attitudes.

As we'll see below, Heidegger's proposed an alternative strategy to avoid a "third realm" of meaning. Rather than providing an alternative account of these intrinsically intentional objects, Heidegger proposed that we give up the two claims above, and refrain from positing intrinsically intentional objects to begin with. In doing so, Heidegger sought to reverse the typical order of explanation: it's the *acts* of the human agent that explain intentional *objects* (such as propositions), rather than the other way around. Rather than finding some sort of (occurrent) *object* to serve as the primary bearer of truth, we should instead focus on the *acts* themselves, or what Heidegger calls the "comportments" of the human agent. But this, in turn, requires that we first get clear about the *kind* of entity that comports itself intentionally, i.e., we need what Heidegger calls an "existential analytic of Dasein".

This is why – as mentioned at the start of this chapter – at the very heart of Heidegger's account of truth is the view that *intentionality is explained in terms of human agency, rather than the other way around*. There's a tendency among philosophers to posit the existence of intrinsically intentional objects such as propositions, and explain the intentionality of human acts (such as belief) in terms of these intentional objects. This tendency harbors a commitment to the view that the intentionality of propositions has an *explanatory priority* over the intentionality of human acts: propositions manage to *say something* about the world independent from human agents, and it's in virtue of propositions that human agents manage to make claims about the world. On this view, it's the intentionality of propositions or thoughts that ultimately "opens up the outer world for us" (Frege [1918], 309).

As we'll see below, one major factor that drove Heidegger to switch the traditional order of explanation is what he called the "problem of judgment", and more specifically, the version of the problem of judgment that we now call the "problem of the unity of the proposition". This is why nearly every major discussion of truth by Heidegger includes an analysis of how he avoids this problem. One major step in overcoming this problem was to switch the order of explanation that traditionally holds between intentional objects and the agents who comport themselves intentionally. Of course, switching the order of explanation brings with it a new set of concerns, but Heidegger sets out to address such concerns in his account of truth.

Unfortunately, the most vocal critics of Heidegger's account of truth have failed to recognize the close connection between Heidegger's account of truth and the problem

of the unity of judgment, thereby divorcing Heidegger's account of truth from the very issues that *motivated* it.[50] Or even worse, some of these very critics have gone as far to *attribute* to Heidegger the first thesis – that the primary bearer of truth is something like an utterance or assertion – only to delegate the role that "uncovering" might play for Heidegger to a "theory of reference". To counter this, I start by reconstructing some of Heidegger's philosophical context, paying special attention to the way Heidegger *himself* motivated his theory of truth from the problem of judgment (section 3.1). I then turn to what Heidegger took the problem of judgment to show about intentionality (section 3.2), before turning to Heidegger's account of truth, which I also defend (section 3.3).

There are several reasons to focus on Heidegger's account of truth within the broader context of this dissertation. As I suggest below, Heidegger's *account of truth* is just as much an *account of intentionality*; and as such, it's closely tied to his treatment of "understanding" and "interpretation". In particular, I show below that *intentionality as such*, and thus *truth as such*, is ultimately grounded for Heidegger in non-reflexive self-understanding. What this amounts to, for Heidegger, is support for the Grounding Claim (from Chapter 2), i.e., the claim that interpretation is *grounded* in understanding. Heidegger's account of truth is supposed to show that when we give a close analysis of the nature and origin of intentionality, we find support for the Grounding Claim.

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[50] In particular, the line of argument advanced through, Tugendhat [1984], Lafont [2000], and Smith [2007] makes no mention of the problem of judgment, or how this would have been a problem for theories that take correspondence to be the primary notion of truth.

3.1 The Problem of Judgment

A.   Heidegger on The Problem of Judgment

In his Summer 1927 seminar, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger asked the following question:

> "Regarded naively, assertion offers itself as an extant complex of spoken words that are themselves extant. Just as there are trees, houses, and people, so also there are words, arranged in sequences, in which some words come before other words, as we clearly see in Hobbes. If such a complex of extant words is given, the question arises, *what is the bond that establishes the unity of this interconnection*?" (GA 24: 205)

Heidegger was articulating what is now often called the problem of "propositional unity". Heidegger typically called this the "problem of the copula", but at times also called it "the problem of judgment", the "problem of the proposition [*Satz*], or "the *so-called* problem of the copula".[51]

What to name this problem — and how to frame it — was not a trivial concern for Heidegger. In fact, Heidegger thought that the way we frame this problem would have far-reaching implications for metaphysics:

> "In short, metaphysics is decided by our position with respect to the problem of the copula, the manner and way in which we deal with it, and how we fit it into the whole [of metaphysics]… You can see from here the far-reaching significance of what is apparently this special problem concerning the dry question of what is meant by the 'is' in the proposition." (GA 29/30: 469).

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[51] Heidegger gave attention to the problem in many places, including GA 2: 159ff; GA 3: 58ff; GA 20: 63-99; GA 21: 140ff, 320ff; GA 24: 252ff, 292ff, 285-6; GA 26: 29-32, 123ff; GA 29/30: 466-484ff. I also take the problem to be in the background of GA 45: 80-107, where Heidegger discusses "productive seeing", which is a kind of "essential cognition" that takes up the essence of a thing "into the naming word" (96). For the problem in the background, see also GA 40: 66-67 and much of GA 25.

Heidegger traced the problem back at least to Aristotle. To introduce the problem that Aristotle recognized, Heidegger asked his students to consider an utterance of the following sentence:

(i) "The board is black"

This sentence is *meaningful*; when someone utters this sentence, they manage to say something about the world. Further, an utterance of (i) could be evaluated for truth or falsity. We can contrast (i) with just a mere list of words:

(ii) "The board", "black"

Each word in (ii) is independently meaningful. But the mere list of words, on its own, doesn't say whether the board *is* black, or whether the board *is not*. So (ii) is found to be lacking in a way that (i) is not.

It's important to note that we don't capture what is lacking in (ii) by adding the word "is" as another item on the list:

(iii) "The board", "is", "black"

Here again we have a list of words. And each word on the list is independently meaningful. But (iii) is still just a list of words, so it still fails to *say something* that could be evaluated for truth or falsity. As Heidegger puts it, in (i), "Words are not just strung along, but are also synthesized into the whole of a verbal manifold" (GA 21: 140). These "dissociated elements do not… constitute the whole. They lack precisely their essential unity" (GA 26: 31). The words on the list will not actually represent the board *as* black until the words are taken together as a whole. What (iii) lacks is the *unity* that we find in (i).

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This is often called the "problem of the copula" because the copula is said to responsible for the unity that we find in (i). When the sentence is uttered, the copula *connects* the other two terms. But in order for the copula to provide this connection, it can't *refer* to an entity like the other two terms. As Heidegger put it:

> "For the present we have only to keep in mind the realization that the 'is' signifies the being of a being and is not itself like an occurrent thing. In the statement 'The board is black, both the subject, ('board'), and the predicate ('black'), mean [*meint*] something occurrent [*Vorhandes*] — the thing that is the board and this thing as blackened, the black that is present in it. The 'is,' in contrast, does not signify something occurrent, which would occur like the board itself and the black in it." (GA 24: 258)

In other words, the words 'board' and 'black' gain their meaning through the things to which they refer: the board and blackness. But as Heidegger (and Aristotle) point out, the 'is' can't mean some *third* thing that occurs alongside the board and the property of blackness. That's because the 'is' is supposed to give *unity* to the board and blackness. If the 'is' referred to some third thing occurring beside them, then we would be forced to again ask the question of what gives unity to these three things instead. Thus Aristotle and Heidegger conclude that 'is' – while meaningful – is in some sense "nothing":

> "… the determination being [*Sein*], in the expression '*is-ing*' [seiend] *is nothing*: being is not an entity. But the expression certainly *con*signifies [bedeutet… *mit*] something (GA 24: 257).

The problem of judgment will continue to be a theme of the current chapter. Before moving forward, there are two things worth highlighting. First, Heidegger's theory of truth was a *direct response* to the problem of the judgment. And in fact, Heidegger *himself* used the problem of the judgment to motivate his theory of truth: nearly every time Heidegger discusses truth as disclosure, it's after he introduces the

problem of the judgment. Because of this, it's safe to say that Heidegger saw his account

of truth as an alternative to other ways of spelling out what's responsible for the unity in

judgment.

Second, it's worth noting that Heidegger often situated his project *as a whole* as a

response to the problem of the copula. In the quotation above, we see a formulation of

Heidegger's famous "ontological difference principle": that being [*Sein*] is not an entity

[*Seiendes*] (or as it's more commonly translated: *Being is not a being*). Shortly after

making the quoted claim, Heidegger closes out his course with lectures on "The Problem

of the Ontological Difference". We see the same pattern in the 1929-30 course

Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics. After discussing the problem of the copula,

Heidegger introduces the ontological difference principle, and raises the question of the

meaning being:

> "This says that *being is not a being*, not a thing, nor any thingly property,
> nothing at hand. Yet it does mean something; when I say 'is' and 'is not',
> I understand something by it after all. Yet what does *being* mean?" (GA
> 29/30: 471)

Earlier, I took a closer look at the connection between the problem of the copula and the

problem of *being* in Heidegger.[52] At a very minimum, what I hope to have motivated in

the forgoing discussion is that the problem of the copula was a *big deal* for Heidegger: it

motivated Heidegger's inquiry into being, along with his famous "ontological difference"

principle. And of more immediate importance: the problem of the copula would have

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[52] See my Introduction, section C.

been in the background in Heidegger's section on truth: *Heidegger's account of truth is supposed to provide a solution to this problem.* And this shouldn't surprise us, since Heidegger's early work was on theories of judgment.

B.   Theories of Judgment and Theories of Truth

Above we saw the problem of unity arise at the level of *language*, but the same question can be asked about what gives unity to perception. That's how Heidegger raises the question of unity in *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*:[53]

> "If, in contradistinction to the judgment 'the board is black,' I simply perceive: board – black, I do not 'assert' anything, and thus do not state what is 'true' or 'false' (GA 26: 124).

At the level of perception, the judgment that the board *is* black seems to acknowledge something *more* than the perception of the board alongside blackness. In the case where I merely perceive "board – black", something seems to be missing.

On earliest theories of judgment, it's the *act of judging* that's supposed to supply the missing ingredient. When I take the board to be black, I not only have concepts of the board and blackness, but I *combine* these two concepts as well. This kind of view is often called a "combination theory", where the act of judging consists in the activity of combining two mental units. We find this view, for example, in Aquinas, who takes

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[53] See also GA 20: 63-99, where Heidegger discusses categorial intuition at the level of perception.

judgment to be "the activity of the mind by which it puts together or separates, in affirming or denying".[54]

The combination theory of judgment accords well with syllogistic logics in general, and with Aristotelian metaphysics in particular. Underlying this idea is that a correspondence can exist between our mental lives and the world. When a combination of ideas corresponds to a real combination out in the world, our judgment is said to be true. So a combination theory of judgment goes hand in hand with this version of a correspondence theory of truth. That's why, when Heidegger discusses a "correspondence" theory of truth, he often discusses it as a proxy for a "copy theory" [*Abbildtheorie*] of the mind, where the goal of mental activity is to "copy" the relationships that hold out in the world. If truth consists "in the fact that representations within the soul reproduce things outside," Heidegger explains, then it is natural to view truth as a "kind of correspondence" (GA 21: 162).

With the rise of German idealism, philosophers began to raise questions about ability of the mind to picture a transcendent reality. The problem is that if we assume that the world is populated by mind-independent things in themselves, then there is no way our minds could correspond to them. As Heidegger put it, "The neo-Kantian epistemology of the nineteenth century often characterized this definition of 'truth' as an expression of a methodologically retarded naïve realism, and declared it to be

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[54] For a history of the combination theory of judgment, see Rojszczak and Smith [2013].

irreconcilable with any formulation of this question which has undergone Kant's 'Copernican revolution'" (GA 2: 215). As a result, the correspondence theory of truth also fell out of fashion, which in turn lead to a resurgence in theories of judgment. The idea is that if the human mind isn't simply making immanent copies of a transcendent reality, then the activity of judging must involve more than combining concepts that would then mirror an external world.

But as philosophers started to rethink the nature of judging, so did they need to rethink what it means for such a judgment to be *true*. Thus theories of judgment were always accompanied by their respective theories of truth, and theories of truth were inseparable from their corresponding theories of judgment. The upshot is that it's *this* context that framed Heidegger's conception of truth. When Heidegger asks about the extent to which truth can be conceived as a kind of "correspondence", he's looking for a theory of judgment that would support the view that truth amounts to correspondence. Thus, rather than viewing Heidegger's own account of truth as "disclosure" as an alternative to "correspondence", we should consider it an alternative to theories of judging that make truth out to be such a correspondence.

C.   *From the Act of Judging to its Content*

As we saw above, on early theories of judgment, it's the act of judging that provides the unity lacking in a mere list of words, or in the perception 'board – blackness'. There's one other issue looming in the background of this picture: namely the threat of psychologism: or the view that logical laws could be reduced to psychological

laws. Psychologism becomes an attractive option once we admit that the act of judging is

responsible for the units that serve as the subject matter of logic. If a psychological

activity is responsible for the unity that allows something to be true or false, it becomes

easy to take the topic of logic *to be* just these psychological acts.

Near the end of the 19th century, support for the psychologistic picture had waned.

Central to the critique of this view is that psychologistic theories fail to distinguish

between the *act* of judging and its *object* (or it's *content*, which contemporary

philosophers often call a 'proposition'). As Heidegger explains:

> "There was a tendency in logic to take the laws of thought as laws of the
> psychic process of thought, of the psychic occurrence of thought. In
> opposition to this misunderstanding, Husserl, like Brentano, showed that
> the laws of thought are not the laws of the psychic course of thinking but
> laws of what is thought; that one must distinguish between the psychic
> process of judgment [*Urteilsvorgang*], the act [*Akt*] in the broadest sense,
> and what is judged in these acts. Distinction is made between the real
> intake [*Inhalt*] of the acts, the judging as such, and the ideal, the content
> of the judgment [*Urteilsgehalt*]. This *distinction between real
> performance and ideal content* provides the basis for the *fundamental
> rejection of psychologism*" (GA 20: 160-161).

Heidegger puts this point in no uncertain terms in his earlier essays on logic:

distinguishing between the act of judging from its ideal content was the way to expose

the "glaring sophism of dialectical pseudo-logic" required to defend the "theoretical

worthlessness of psychologism" (PRM: 24; RRL: 33).

In response, logic was determined to govern the *content* of judgment: *what is

judged*, rather than the judging; or *what is said*, rather than the saying. But this shift from

the *act* of judging to its *content* would have major implications for theories of judgment,

and thus for theories of truth. In particular, the shift from act to content completely

changes the way one approaches the problem of the copula, or the problem of unity. On earlier versions of the problem, the basic question concerned what the mind must do above and beyond representing two concepts. A "theory of judgment", in this sense, would be a theory of *judging*, since the activity of judging would be responsible for providing the required unity.

With the shift from act to content, the question becomes ontological rather than psychological: the question no longer concerns what the *mind must do*, but instead concerns how *content must be* such that it has the right kind of unity. A "theory of judgment", in this second sense, is a theory of the *content* of judgment. The content of judgment not only represents the board and blackness, but it represents the *being*-black of the board. The content *itself* combines these elements into a kind of unity, which allows the content to be true or false. So the *locus* of the unity shifts from the *act* of judging to its *content*, and a new question emerges: what are these *contents of judgment* such that they combine the board and blackness?

One thing that's clear is that these *contents* of judgments are unlike ordinary objects of perception. As Husserl states in his Sixth *Logical Investigation*:

> "I can see color, but not *being*-colored. I can feel smoothness, but not *being*-smooth. I can hear a sound, but not that something *is* sounding. Being is nothing *in* the object, no part of it, no moment tenanting it, no quality or intensity of it, no figure of it or no internal form whatsoever... among these anything like an 'is' is naturally not to be found" ([2001], 277).

While ordinary perception can deliver the board or blackness, the *unity* of the board and blackness is not to be found, for Husserl, in the objects themselves.

Because the unity is not to be found in the objects of *outer* perception, the temptation is then to think these unities are something *mental*, to be found in *inner* perception. According to Heidegger, this was precisely the mistake made both by Locke and Descartes:

> "We said that color can be seen, but *being*-colored cannot. Color is something sensory and real. Being, however, is nothing of the sort, for it is not sensory or real. While the real is regarded as the objective… the non-sensory is equated with the mental in the subject, the immanent. The real is given from the side of the object, the rest is thought into it by the subject… The origin of non-sensory moments [such as 'being'] lies in immanent perception, in the reflection upon consciousness. This is the argument of *British empiricism* since Locke. This argumentation has its roots in Descartes" (GA 20: 78).

According to Heidegger, what Husserl showed is that it's an "old prejudice" to "interpret and identify 'non-sensory' or 'unreal' with immanent and subjective" (GA 20: 80). For Husserl, the *content* of judgment isn't immanent or subjective, but is instead a *state of affiars*, which is a new or special kind of objectivity ([2001], 281).

Recall from earlier that we found Frege making a similar set of distinctions in carving out the ontological space for what he calls a *thought*. A thought, for Frege, is something "timeless, eternal, unchangeable," and thus different from objects of outer perception: "a thought is something immaterial and everything material and perceptible is excluded from this sphere of that for which the question of truth arises" ([1918], 309, 292). But while Frege recognized that thoughts cannot be found in the "outer world", he also – like Husserl – wanted to resist the temptation to endorse the view that thoughts are merely "ideas", to be found in the "inner world… of sense-impressions" (299). Frege held that while thoughts are "not something which it is usual to call real", these thoughts

"are by no means unreal but their reality is of quite a different kind from that of things" (311).

Thus we find both Husserl and Frege appealing to objects with a new kind of "objectivity" or "reality". Once an anti-psychologist stance is adopted, it seems imperative to explain what these *contents* must be such that they a) have a kind of unity, such that they can be true or false, and b) have this unity without the aid of anything psychological. Today, this is often called the problem of the "unity of the proposition", since *propositions* are commonly taken to be the objects of our intentional attitudes. A solution to this problem, then, will provide an account of propositions, such that propositions have just these two features.

D.   *Russell on Propositional Unity*

Before jumping into Heidegger, it would be helpful to explore still other approaches to the problem of judgment, and to look at Bertrand Russell's engagement with the problem in particular. While focusing on Russell may seem arbitrary, there are several reasons to focus on Russell rather than philosophers with whom Heidegger would have been more familiar. The first is that Russell and Heidegger shared many of the same convictions when approaching the problem of judgment. For philosophers such as Lotze, Frege, and Husserl, the object of judgment or assertion – *what is thought* or *what is said* – involves, as Frege put it, "a reality… of quite a different kind from that of things." Russell and Heidegger each pushed back against this picture. In a letter to Frege, Russell famously suggested that Mont Blanc, for example, "itself is a component part of what is

actually asserted in 'Mount Blanc is more than 4,000 metres high'."[55] Likewise, when

Heidegger discusses the assertion 'the picture on the wall is hanging askew', he stresses

that *what is known* [*Erkannten*], includes the "real picture on the wall", rather than some

representational entity. So one thing shared by Russell and Heidegger is a rejection of the

view that there are intermediary (and intrinsically intentional) entities at which our

judgment or assertion is directed.[56]

In addition, it's worth bringing focus to Russell because of the centrality of the

problem of judgment in his philosophical development. Russell was keenly aware of the

problem of judgment, and it motivated Russell to abandon his previously-held views

several times throughout his career. By engaging with the problem of judgment through

Russell, we not only get a sense of how difficult the problem really is, but we also get a

tour of unsuccessful attempts to solve it. By examining some of Russell's failed

alternatives, we can then bring to light exactly what is novel to Heidegger's approach to

the problem of judgment, which in turn motivates Heidegger's theory of truth.

Russell's first formal treatment of the problem of unity comes in his 1903

Principles of Mathematics. Propositions play an important role in this work, since Russell

views his logic as a "calculus" of the "relation of implication between propositions"

([1903], 14). Russell's new logic requires that propositions be analyzable into their

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[55] Russell's 1904 letter to Frege published in Gabriel et al. [1980].

[56] It's in this specific sense that Russell and Heidegger could each be said to endorse "direct realism". In what follows, I avoid the label "direct realism", just because the label invites connotations that take us to topics like theories of reference, which is orthogonal to present issues.

component parts, and in particular, into *terms* and *relations*. A "term" for Russell, is what we ordinarily think of a proposition as being *about*: "I shall speak of the *terms* of a proposition as those terms, however numerous, which occur in a proposition and may be regarded as subjects about which the proposition is" (46). Relations, then, are what terms can enter into. The proposition that 'Socrates is human', for example, is a "proposition having only one term", namely Socrates. The other component of this proposition is the predicate, or 1-place relation *human*.

Russell's insistence that the predicate 'human' is a *constituent* of the proposition, but not a *term*, is curious, given that Russell uses 'term' as his broadest ontological notion. Russell uses 'term' synonymously with 'unit', 'individual', and 'entity'; and it includes "whatever may be an object of thought, or may occur in any true or false proposition, or can be counted as *one*." This includes, among other things, "a man, a moment, a number, a class, a relation, a chimera, or anything else that can be mentioned". Russell's widest ontological category is that of a *term*: and it includes everything that "has being", or that "*is* in some sense" (43), including both "things" and "predicates".

So to bring out the apparent tension for Russell: the 1-place relation *human*, according to Russell, is a term. Unlike Frege, Russell holds that terms can become the subject matter of propositions, e.g., in the propositions expressed by the sentences, 'Humanity belongs to Socrates', or 'Humanity is a concept'. Among *terms*, Russell's most basic distinction is between *things* and *concepts* (44). The distinctive mark of *things* is that they "can never occur otherwise than as a term in a proposition: Socrates is not capable of that curious twofold use which is involved in *human* and *humanity*" (45).

Concepts and relations, on the other hand, have a twofold nature. While they *are* terms –

and they can appear in propositions as terms – there is also a way they can appear in

propositions without appearing *as* terms.

Thus we find Russell asserting a curious set of claims with regard to the

proposition "Socrates is human":

(i) The proposition contains only one term (Socrates),

(ii) *Humanity* (or *human*) is a constituent of the proposition,

(iii) *Humanity* (or *human*) does not appear in the proposition as a term,

(iv) *Humanity* (or *human*) is a term.

I'll set aside the question of whether Russell can spell out these claims in a way that's

consistent. The more interesting question is why Russell felt compelled to jointly hold

each of these positions. In particular, why would Russell take there to be some terms that

are *constituents* of propositions, that do not appear in those propositions as terms?

What's clear is that Russell was motivated by the problem of unity. In his classic

formulation of the problem, Russell considers the proposition expressed by 'A differs

from B':

> "Consider, for example, the proposition 'A differs from B'. The
> constituents of this proposition, if we analyze it, appear to be only A,
> difference, B. Yet these constituents, thus placed side by side, do not
> reconstitute the proposition. The difference which occurs in the
> proposition **actually relates A and B**, whereas the difference after
> analysis is a notion which has no connection with A and B. It may be
> said that we ought, in the analysis, to mention the relations which
> difference has to A and B, relations expressed by *is* and *from* when we
> say 'A is different from B'. These relations consist in the fact that A is
> referent and B relatum with respect to difference. But 'A, referent,
> difference, relatum, B' is still merely a list of terms, not a proposition. **A
> proposition, in fact, is essentially a unity, and when analysis has**

destroyed the unity, no enumeration of constituents will restore the proposition. The verb, when used as a verb, embodies the unity of the proposition, and is thus distinguishable from the verb considered as a term, though I do not know how to give a clear account of the precise nature of the distinction" ([1903], 49-50, emphasis added).

According to Russell, the *constituents* of the proposition "A differs from B" are those objects in the set:

{A, difference, B}

Analysis of the proposition yields just these three constituents. But this list of constituents is different from the proposition itself, because the mere list doesn't tell us how these constituents are combined into a unity. The list itself doesn't tell us, for example, whether A is different from B, or whether B is different from A – which would matter for non-reflexive relations, such as 'taller than'. And as we saw before, a mere list simply fails to assert anything at all.

In the passage above, Russell rejects the suggestion that we can capture the unity by adding *more constituents* to the proposition (constituents that would correspond to 'is' and 'from' in the sentence 'A is different from B'). On this alternative, analysis of the proposition would yield a list of constituents that belong to the larger set:

{A, referent, difference, relatum, B}

This alternative fails for the same reason as before; namely, because a mere list of constituents fails to capture the *unity* of a proposition.

In particular, the mere list of constituents fails to tell us whether 'difference' appears as another *term* in the proposition, or whether it appears as the relation in which the other terms enter into (keep in mind that in other propositions, the relation

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'difference' in fact does appear as a term). What the analysis of the proposition fails to show, according to Russell, is that the relation of difference "actually relates A and B" in the proposition. This is why the verb, for Russell, "embodies the unity of the proposition". Although Russell admits it's difficult to give a clear account of how the verb provides the right kind of unity, it seems that his account will depend on spelling out what it means for a relation to "actually relate" in a proposition.

As it turns out, spelling out what it means for a relation to "actually relate" in a proposition was a difficult task – and this is precisely where Russell began to recognize problems with this early theory. To put the problem in a general way, when one relies on an "actual relation" between terms to provide unity for the proposition, it becomes difficult to account for the difference between a *proposition* and a *fact*. To borrow a later example from Russell, consider Othello's false belief that Desdemona loves Cassio. The proposition endorsed by Othello seems to contain three constituents: Desdemona, love, and Cassio. On Russell's earlier theory, what accounts for the *unity* of the proposition is the relation 'love', which "actually relates" the two terms, Desdemona and Cassio. But because Russell's early theory requires the relation 'love' to "actually relate" Desdemona and Cassio, he has very few resources to explain what makes this proposition *false*, rather than true. On ordinary intuitions about truth, what makes a proposition *true* is that the terms stand in an "actual relation". Because Russell appeals to the "actual relating" of two terms in his definition of a *proposition*, his early theory lacks the resources to accommodate ordinary intuitions about truth, or to distinguish between a propositions and a *fact*.

Russell soon came to realize that his earlier views on propositions left no room for a theory of truth, and his first response was to save his view of propositions by abandoning ordinary thinking about truth. In his 1904 article on Meinong, Russell suggests that truth is indefinable, or incapable of analysis: "What is truth and what falsehood, we must merely apprehend, for both seem incapable of analysis" ([1904], 524). But Russell was not comfortable with this position for long, because so long as Russell took truth to be incapable of analysis, he lacked the resources to combat his primary philosophical target: British idealism. In particular, Russell needed an account of truth to show how "belief always depends upon something which lies outside the belief itself" ([1912], 121).

In order to make space for a theory of truth, Russell soon revised his earlier view of propositions. What Russell viewed as the *source* of his earlier confusion was the view that in belief, the mind relates to a *single object* (i.e., to a proposition).

> "The necessity of allowing for falsehood makes it impossible to regard belief as a relation of the mind to a single object, which could be said to be what is believed. If belief were so regarded, we should find that, like acquaintance, it would not admit of the opposition of truth and falsehood, but would have to be always true. This may be made clear by examples. Othello believes falsely that Desdemona loves Cassio. We cannot say that this belief consists in a relation to a single object, 'Desdemona's love for Cassio', for if there were such an object, the belief would be true. There is in fact no such object, and therefore Othello cannot have any relation to such an object... Hence it will be better to seek for a theory of belief which does not make it consist in a relation of the mind to a single object" ([1912], 124).

In place of the view that the mind relates to a single object, Russell proposes that in the act of believing or judging, the mind relates "to several things other than itself". In the example above, Othello's belief is directed not at a singular proposition, but instead at

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three objects: "Desdemona and loving and Cassio". And it's the "relation of judging" that puts these *constituents* of the judgment into a kind of "order" ([1912], 127).

This is often called Russell's *multiple-relation theory of judgment*, and it's worth noting how much of a departure this would have been from Russell's earlier view. As we saw above, early theories of judgment took the *act of judging* to provide the unity that's missing from a mere list of words. With the looming threat of psychologism, focus began to shift from the act of judging to it's *content*. Propositions were then seen as part of a *solution* to concerns over psychologism; but by 1910, Russell began to see propositions as a liability, and wanted a theory of judging that no longer relied upon them.

Russell's multiple-relation theory of judgment no longer relied upon propositions, but instead shifted the source of unity back to the *act* of judging. Thus, the multiple-relation theory of judgment was significant concession to psychologism: the very *subject matter* of logic depended for their existence on the mind.[57] Russell recognized this as the "chief demerit" of his theory, since we could not "be sure that there are propositions in all cases which logic would seem to need them" ([1984], 115). But for Russell, it was better to make a *logical* concession than an *ontological* concession. By making this concession to psychologism, Russell could hold (contrary to British idealism) that truth consists in a

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[57] For more on Russell's development and his concessions to psychologism, see Godden and Griffin [2009].

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"correspondence with fact" ([1912], 129). – something his earlier views on propositions would not allow.

As it turns out, Russell would soon be faced with a much more pressing challenge to his multiple-relation theory of judgment. While writing his 1913 manuscript of *Theory of Knowledge*, Russell received a visit from Wittgenstein, where Wittgenstein raised a concern for Russell's theory that would prove to be devastating. The problem, as recounted by Wittgenstein [1913], "Every right theory of judgment must make it impossible for me to judge that 'this table penholders the book' (Russell's theory does not satisfy this requirement)" (91). Or as Wittgenstein would later put it in his *Tractatus*, "The correct explanation of the form of the proposition '*A* makes the judgment *p* must show that it is impossible for a judgment to be a piece of nonsense (Russell's theory does not satisfy this requirement)" ([1921], 65).

There's no doubt that Wittgenstein's objection caused Russell a great deal of anxiety – ultimately forcing Russell to abandon his 1910 version of the multiple-relation theory of judgment. But it takes a bit of work – and perhaps even speculation – to spell out the exact force of Wittgenstein's objection (which Russell himself admitted was difficult to grasp).[58] One plausible view is that the problem indicated by Wittgenstein is

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[58] Shortly after Wittgenstein's visit, Russell wrote in a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell: "I showed [Wittgenstein] a crucial part of what I have been writing. He said it was all wrong, not realizing the difficulties—that he had tried my view and knew it wouldn't work. I couldn't understand his objection – in fact he was very inarticulate—but I feel in my bones that he must be right, and that he has seen something I missed." (Quoted in Clark [2011], 204).

none other than the problem of unity.[59] Recall that on Russell's early theory, the problem of unity required a relation in the proposition to "actually relate" the other constituents of the proposition. Because this made it difficult to distinguish between propositions and facts, Russell abandoned the requirement that the verb "actually relate" the terms of the proposition, and instead took the *act of believing* to be responsible for the unity, for example, between Desdemona, loving, and Cassio. But if the *act of believing* cannot turn 'this table penholders the book' into something *meaningful*, then there seems to be little reason to think that the act of believing can turn Desdemona, loving, and Cassio into a meaningful unity either. After all, in neither case is a verb required to *actually relate* the terms of the proposition. So whatever accounts for the meaningful unity in 'Desdemona loves Cassio' should also be in place in the case of 'this table penholders the book'.

Thus Russell was faced with a dilemma. If the belief that 'Desdemona loves Cassio' is only evaluable for truth when love *actually relates* the two, then it becomes difficult to distinguish between a proposition and a fact. But when we loosen this requirement, and no longer require love to *actually relate* the two in order to express something that's evaluable for truth, there seems to be no reason to rule out 'this table penholders the desk' as something *meaningful*, which in turn could be evaluated for truth. On Russell's earlier view, propositions become facts. But on Russell's later view, cases of nonsense become propositions.

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[59] For an overview of Wittgenstein's objection to Russell, see Peter Hanks [2007]. Hanks takes this line to Wittgenstein's objection (although he spells out why it would be a problem in somewhat different terms).

It's surprisingly difficult for Russell to find his way out of this dilemma without abandoning prior commitments. One obvious response to Wittgenstein's challenge would stress the fact that a penholder isn't even the *type* of thing that can "actually relate" a table and a book. But this response isn't enough to save Russell's multiple-relation theory of judgment, since on this theory, the 'actual relating' is required in order for a belief or proposition to be *true*, rather than for the belief to be *evaluated for truth*. So at most, this response tells us that 'this table penholders the desk' is something that *can't be true*—or that it's necessarily false—rather than that it is nonsense. Because of this, the potential response can't explain, for example, why the *negated* piece of nonsense (i.e., 'it's *not* the case that the table penholders the book') isn't *true*.

Russell would never fully recover from this objection. In his 1918 lectures *Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, Russell recounts the dilemma that he faced due to the "discovery" that he attributed to "Mr. Wittgenstein":

> "There are really two main things that one wants to notice in this matter that I am treating of just now. The *first* is the impossibility of treating the proposition believed as an independent entity, entering as a unit into the occurrence of the belief, and the *other* is the impossibility of putting the subordinate verb on a level with its terms as an object term in the belief. That is a point in which I think the theory of judgment which I set forth once in print some years ago was a little unduly simple, because I did then treat the object verb as if one could put it as just an object like the terms, as if one could put 'loves' on a level with Desdemona and Cassio as a term for the relation 'believe'... I hope you will forgive the fact that so much of what I say today is tentative and consists of pointing out difficulties. The subject is not very easy." ([1918], 59)

To sum things up, Russell found no easy way to account for the unity of the proposition. On the one hand, if we take there to be a proposition where Desdemona, loving, and Cassio belong together as a unit, then we are unable to account for the difference between

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propositions and facts without admitting the subsistence of non-existent entities (e.g. Desdemona's love for Cassio). But if an *act* of judging is supposed to account for the unity – as in Russell's multiple relation theory – then the relation *loving* cannot appear as another *term* in the proposition that Othello believes. That's because if loving appears as just another term, relating to "Desdemona and loving and Cassio" can't be true or false any more than relating to "the table, penholder, and book".

At this point, it may seem as if we've taken a significant detour from Heidegger. But the very problem that plagued Russell is what motivated the account of judgment that appears in §33 of *Being and Time*, which in turn motivated Heidegger's account of truth. As we'll see in the next section, Heidegger resisted the temptation to posit purely intentional entities, and instead took an *act* to account for the unity that we find in judgment: on this point, Heidegger shared the same general approach as Russell took with his multiple-relation theory of judgment. But whereas the multiple-relation theory of judgment is suspect to Wittgenstein's "nonsense" objection, I'll suggest below that Heidegger's account of judgment is not. That's because for Heidegger, the act of judging is a "derivative mode of interpretation", or is *founded* on more basic human acts, where the human agent approaches things around her *as tied up with her activities* (GA 2: 154). Prior to relating to objects and relations "directly" – which we find as the foundation for Russell's multiple-relation theory of judgment – the human agent recruits things around her for her practical aims, and the unity of judgment is derivative of this more basic practice. I'll turn now to the details of Heidegger's account of judgment.

3.2   Heidegger on the Problem of Unity

The places in *Being and Time* where Heidegger confronts the problem of unity most directly are in the sections on interpretation and assertion (Heidegger often uses 'assertion' interchangeably with 'judgment'). These places include §32 ("Understanding and interpretation") and §33 ("Assertion as a derivative mode of interpretation"), although as Heidegger points out, the problems addressed in these sections "necessarily come up against the problem of truth" (154), which Heidegger turns to in §44 ("Dasein, disclosedness, and truth").

Below, I'll focus on what Heidegger took to be the consequences of the problem of unity. I'll first show that the problem of unity, for Heidegger, requires that we turn from the *content* of judgment back to the *activity of judging* to account for intentionality and the possibility of truth (my section 3.2.A). We saw above that Russell did just the same, but I'll suggest that Heidegger avoids the problems faced by Russell's multiple-relation theory because Heidegger takes judging to be *derivative* of more basic interpretive acts (3.2.B). Further, Heidegger recognized that by allowing the human agent to play an explanatory role in the origin of intentionality, the problem of unity requires an analysis or "existential analytic" of the human agent (3.2.C). In contrast to the view that human agents are, at bottom, *predicators*, Heidegger suggest that human agents are *sense-makers*, and acts of predication take place only within the broader context of making sense of the world and ourselves.

But Heidegger also recognized that his analysis of *what makes truth possible* has implications for what we take truth *to be*, and this plays out in §44 of *Being and Time*. In

particular, Heidegger works out the consequences of taking the "as-structure" to be present even in the most basic grip we have on the things around us (in contrast to a view, for example, that we start with an uninterpreted "acquaintance" with the things around us prior to judgment). Since it's the "as-structure" that makes truth possible, Heidegger needs an account of truth that can accommodate the way in which truth is involved even in our most basic interpretive acts. In my section 3.3, I'll explore these consequences by giving a close reading of §44 of *Being and Time*.

A.   *From the Content of Judgment back to the Act*

In §33 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger raises the problem of unity, and indicates two philosophical commitments that allow the problem to arise:

> "When considered philosophically, the *logos* itself is an entity, and according to the orientation of ancient ontology, it is something occurrent. Words are proximally occurrent; that is to say, we come across them just as we come across things; and this holds for any sequence of words, as that in which the *logos* expresses itself. In the first search for the structure of the *logos* as thus occurrent, what was found was the *occurring-together* of several words. What establishes the unity of this 'together'?" (GA 2: 159)

The first commitment indicated above is that the "*logos* itself" is an entity, or what Heidegger would call "occurrent" or "present-at-hand". On this view, the primary bearer of truth is some kind of *entity*, or something occurrent. This is tantamount to first claim about truth, introduced earlier in the chapter, which Heidegger ultimately rejects:

1a) Some kind of intrinsically intentional object (e.g., a "proposition") is the

primary bearer of truth.

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The second commitment from this passage concerns how we should go about analyzing the *logos*, or this intrinsically intentional entity. In the passage above, the suggestion is that we should start with the *ingredients* or building-blocks of the *logos*, whether these be concepts or words. The question of judgment, then, concerns how these basic ingredients can be combined into a sequence or complex, such that the sequence of concepts or words is truth-evaluable: "And so, in clarifying *logos*, the approach suggested seems to be to start from that out of which it is made; the basic element of *logos* is the concept. Therefore, the doctrine of concept is to precede the doctrine of *logos* (qua judgment)." (GA 26: 30).

But if we start with occurrent entities (such as concepts or words), and then ask how it is that we arrange them into a complex or unity, we'll gain only what Heidegger calls an "extrinsic understanding of the unity" (GA 21: 140). This approach fails to explain their "essential unity", or how the ingredients of judgment *belong* together in judgment: "For, in the first place, *logos* is an original unity. Though it can be resolved into individual concepts, these dissociated elements do not, nevertheless, constitute the whole. They lack precisely their essential unity" (GA 26: 31).[60] According to Heidegger, the unity of judgment is *original*, and it's from out of this original unity that we can identify distinct concepts or notions.[61]

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[60] This quotation is almost identical to what we saw earlier from Russell: "A proposition, in fact, is essentially a unity, and when analysis has destroyed the unity, no enumeration of constituents will restore the proposition." ([1903], 49-50)

[61] To put Heidegger's point differently, one could say that a theory of concepts must be preceded by a theory of judgment (or that the latter has some kind of priority over the former). The priority of judgment

It should be noted that one can agree with Heidegger on just this point, while giving up only the second commitment, namely, that analysis of the *ingredients* of a proposition reconstitutes the proposition as a whole. This is the strategy employed by Frege, who takes truth to be primitive, and analyzes the ingredients of a proposition (or "thought") in terms of the roles they play in allowing a proposition to be the bearer of truth. In doing so, Frege retains his commitment to the view that the primary bearer of truth is still an entity of sorts, or an entity that Heidegger would classify as "occurrent".

It's not obvious whether Heidegger ever seriously considered this kind of strategy, at least around the time of the publication of *Being and Time*. As we saw earlier, Heidegger remained skeptical of positing a realm of "validity" or a new kind of objectivity for these intrinsically intentional objects. And because ordinary objects are not the kind of thing that can be true or false independent from our interpretive acts, Heidegger rejected the view that the *original* unity of judgment could be found in a purely intentional *object* – which is to say that the *logos* is not something occurrent. Instead, Heidegger asserted that the *logos* is a "way of being" of the human agent (GA 2: 226) – which is to stress that judging or asserting is something that human agents *do*, or at least a structure that human agents inhabit. Further, by denying that the *logos* is

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over concepts was a view help prominently by Kant, who in a well-known passage from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, asserted that "the understanding can make no other use of these concepts than that of judging by means of them (A68/B93)." Heidegger traced the priority of judgment back at least to Aristotle (GA 26: 31), and endorsed the priority at least tentatively: "This consideration [of unity] has also in recent times led to the seeking the core of logic in the judgment and in the doctrine of judgment. There is undoubtedly something correct in this preference for the theory of judgment (of statement) – even though the justifications given for it remain quite superficial." (GA 26: 32).

primarily something occurrent, Heidegger shifts the primary *locus* of truth from

something occurrent (such as a proposition or a thought) to the *human act* of judging or

asserting. This point can easily be missed in Heidegger's account of truth – especially

since in *Being and Time*, Heidegger shies away from the using the term 'act' to describe

the primary locus of truth. But what's at issue, for Heidegger, is the "kind of being which

truth possesses" (GA 2: 226). Rather than positing the existence of ideal entities to serve

as the primary bearers of truth, Heidegger suggests that what is primarily true is a human

agent's "being toward" entities; i.e. the human agent's "way of being", or way of relating

to the things around it:

> "the knowing [*Erkennen*] which asserts and which gets confirmed is, in
> its ontological meaning, itself a *being toward* real entities" (GA 2: 218)

> "the *logos*… tells how entities comport themselves" (GA 2: 219)

> "being-true as being-uncovering, is a way of being for the human agent"
> (GA 2: 220)

> "Uncovering is a way of being for being-in-the-world" (GA 2: 220)

> "the *logos* is that way of being in which Dasein can *either* uncover *or*
> cover up… the *logos* is that way of comporting oneself which can also
> cover things up". (GA 2: 226)

> "*Truth* and *being-true* have… *the human agent's mode of being.* By its
> very nature, truth is never extant like a thing but exists" (GA 24: 310)

> "Truth as unveiling is in the human agent as a determination of its
> intentional comportment" (GA 24: 310)

In a more traditional vocabulary, we might say that Heidegger takes the *act* of judging to

be the primary bearer of truth, rather than the *content* of judgment.[62] But why didn't

Heidegger *himself* put his point in this more straightforward way? In his work just prior

to *Being and Time*, Heidegger credited the phenomenological movement with bringing

the act/content distinction to prominence in its critique of psychologism. But because

phenomenology put so much emphasis on the (ideal) *content* of judgment, Heidegger

charged phenomenology of taking a psychologistic view of the *act* of judging, i.e., the

view that the act of judging is a psychological event that merely occurs or fails to occur:

> "However, it must be noted that in this demarcation in the phenomenon
> of judgment – judged content as ideal being or valid being on the one
> hand and real being or the act of judgment on the other – the distinction
> between the real and the ideal being of judgment is indeed confronted,
> *but* that precisely *the reality of this real aspect of acts is left
> undetermined.* The being of the judgment, its being as an act, that is, the
> being of the intentional, is left unquestioned, so that there is always the
> possibility of conceiving this reality in terms of psychic processes of
> nature. The discovery, or better the rediscovery of the ideal exerted a
> fascination, cast a spell, as it were, while on the other side, the acts and
> processes were relegated to psychology… The situation thus remains the
> same: although here the reality of acts is in a certain sense examined, the
> specific act-being of the comportments as such is nevertheless not
> examined." (GA 20: 160).

Because phenomenology had simply adopted the psychological view of 'acts',

phenomenology, according to Heidegger, had failed to touch on "the question of the

being of the intentional" (GA 21: 160). And this is why Heidegger chose to use locutions

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[62] This is why, in Heidegger's account of truth, he emphasizes that asserting [*Aussagen*] is an "intentional comportment" of the human agent, in contrast to what gets asserted [*Ausgesagtes*] (GA 24: 295).

such as 'being toward' and 'ways of being' rather than 'acts' in *Being and Time*:

Heidegger wanted to guard against the conception of "acts of consciousness understood

as psychic processes" (GA 21: 79).[63]

It's for the very same reason that Heidegger also shifted away from the term

"intentionality" in *Being and Time*. If an *act* is merely a psychological process, then to

say that such an act is *intentional* is to say that a relation holds "between physical and

psychic" objects (GA 21: 46). On this picture, intentionality becomes something *added* to

a psychological process that directs it toward the physical, i.e. intentionality is a

"subsequent coordination of at first unintentional lived experiences and objects" (GA 21:

61). But this picture fails to to recognize that the "comportment itself", or the "psychic

itself" is "in it's very structure a directing itself toward" (GA 21: 39, 46). When properly

understood "acts refer to those lived experiences which have the character of

intentionality (GA 21: 47). By raising the question of the *being* of acts, or the being of

that which is intentional, Heidegger seeks to displace the view that some kind of *object*

(whether an ideal object, or psychological) must serve as that which is intentional, or as

the primary locus truth.

In effect, Heidegger changes the *order of explanation* between intentional acts

and their content. On a more traditional view, as we saw above, it's the *content* of

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[63] In *Being and Time*, Heidegger asserts that "acts are something non-psychical." Appealing to Scheler, Heidegger warns that "any psychical objectification of acts, and hence any way of taking them as something psychical, is tantamount to depersonalization (48).

judgment that serves as the primary locus of truth, and intentional acts involve entertaining these contents while taking up certain attitudes with respect to them (e.g., one might say that the act of "judging" amounts to endorsing the truth of a proposition). But as we also saw, this pushes the problem of unity back to the *content* of judgment – so one difficulty for this view is that it must say what the content of judgment *is*, such that the content of judgment can be true or false independent from the act of judging. Heidegger circumvents this problem by taking the primary locus of truth to belong to the *act* of judging. What's primarily true or false is a human agent's *being-toward* the world. The intentionality of occurrent entities (such as sentences) is then parasitic upon the intentional acts of the human agent.

There are several things required in order for his account to be successful. To start with, Heidegger needs to provide an account of "judging" or "asserting" that doesn't rely on intrinsically intentional entities. It would be circular, for example, to analyze intentional acts in terms of relations to propositions, while taking propositions to be analyzable in terms of the acts by which they are expressed. But Heidegger should still be able to explain what a judgment *is*, such that it can be true or false. After all, it seems that not every "being-toward" entities is truth evaluable – the mere apprehension of "board – black", to borrow one of Heidegger's examples, fails to put a condition on the board, and thus lacks what is required for an act to be true or false.[64] An account of judging or

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[64] As we saw earlier, "If, in contradistinction to the judgment 'the board is black,' I simply perceive: board – black, I do not 'assert' anything, and thus do not state what is 'true' or 'false' (GA 26: 124).

asserting will need to explain how certain human acts can get things right or wrong without invoking propositions or other intentional entities in this explanation.

The topic of the next subsection (3.2.B) is Heidegger's account of the activity of judging. Before moving on, it's worth looking at one more thing that Heidegger's account of judging should be able to explain: how exactly is the intentionality of a human act transferred to a sentence, utterance, or proposition? While Heidegger's account avoids the burden of working out an account of *intrinsically* intentional entities, such as Fregean thoughts, there still are certain entities like sentences that we take to have truth values. Heidegger should be able to provide a story for how the truth of *being-toward* entities can be extended to sentences or other entities that we take to be bearers of truth.

Heidegger – by his own admission – never completely addresses this last issue. In order to provide an account of intentional entities such as sentences, Heidegger would need to provide a broader analysis of *language*. But as Heidegger points out, the treatment of language that appears in *Being and Time* is incomplete: "Our interpretation of language has been designed merely to point out the ontological 'locus' of this phenomenon in the way the human agent is constituted [*der Seinsverfassung des Daseins*], and essentially to prepare the way for the following analysis, in which […] we shall try to bring the human agent's everydayness into view in a manner which is ontologically more primordial" (166). So in *Being and Time*, Heidegger is content to

show that the phenomenon of language is rooted in the kind of entity that we are, i.e. that the intentionality of language is to be explained in terms of the agents who comport themselves intentionally.

Nevertheless, the question of how the truth of our *being-toward* entities can be transferred to entities such as sentences is an important one, especially because it forms an important step in Heidegger's defense of the correspondence theory of truth with respect to intentional entities (GA 2: 223-225). Perhaps because of this, Heidegger does provide a sketch of a theory, and the sketch that he offers has it's roots in a certain view of communication.[65] According to Heidegger, communication does not involve grasping or sharing the same intrinsically intentional entities, since it's just these entities that Heidegger wants to do without. Instead the *communicative* role of assertion is to bring another agent into the same *being-toward* entities: "that which is 'shared' is our *being-toward* what has been pointed out [by the assertion] – an entity in which we see it in common" (155). If a person interprets a situation *as dangerous*, she might put this in words so other people can interpret the very same situation *as dangerous* as well.

One possibility of language, for Heidegger, is that it might bring us into a relationship with things that is not "primordial". When this happens, "The primary relationship-of-being toward the entity talked about is not 'imparted' by the communication; but being-with-one-another takes place in talking with one another and

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[65] Relevant passages are spread throughout several sections of *Being and Time*, e.g. p.155, 159, 162-168, 224ff.

in concern with what is said-in-the-talk." (168). What Heidegger likely has in mind are occasions when an agent stands in some relationship to things *by endorsing* a sentence or utterance about those very things. It's possible for me to hear the claim of some physicist, and even to repeat this claim myself, without having the "primary" relationship to that which the claim concerns. If I believe that whatever the physicist said is true, there really would be a sense in which the intentionality of my belief act is dependent upon the intentionality of the physicist's utterance: *what I believe* depends on *what was said*. My belief would still be *about* the world: as Heidegger notes, the human agent still "remains in a being-toward these entities". But the human agent "has been exempted from having to uncover them again, primordially" (224).

At a certain point, according to Heidegger, we go from *using* language to extend what we can talk about, to thinking about language *itself*. Or in Heidegger's vocabulary, language goes from being something *available* to something *occurrent* (224). And as we'll explore more below, it's only at *this* point that Heidegger takes the traditional notion of correspondence to capture what we mean by 'truth':

> "The uncoveredness of something becomes occurrent conformity of one
> thing which is occurrent (the utterance) *to* something else which is
> occurrent (the entity under discussion). And if this conformity is seen
> only as a relationship between things which are occurrent – that is, if the
> kind of being which belongs to the terms of this relationship has not been
> discriminated and is understood as something merely occurrent, then the
> relation shows itself as an agreement of two things which are occurrent,
> and agreement which is is occurrent itself" (GA 2: 224).

This, of course, is only a sketch, and a more complete analysis of language should provide more details about how we go from *using* language to holding attitudes *about* language itself. But what's central to Heidegger's account of judgment – and thus to his

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account of truth – is the view that intentionality of *entities* (such as sentences) are explained in terms of the intentional *acts* of human agents, rather than the other way around.

B.   The Act of Judging as a Derivative Mode of Interpretation

As we saw above, Heidegger sought to switch the order of explanation by allowing the human agent to play a central explanatory role in the unity of the proposition. Recently, several philosophers in the Analytic tradition have moved in this direction as well. Scott Soames, for example, takes propositions to be cognitive act types (a position he shares with Husserl, even if Soames fails to credit Husserl with this view). But Soames argues that strictly speaking, "it is *not* the act itself that most fundamentally represents o as red, but the agents who perform it who do ([2014], 235). This means, for Soames, that "the explanation [of propositional unity] begins with agents ([2014], 239)."

But if things can be true or false only in virtue of *something that agents do*, then the natural question to ask is "what exactly *is* it that we are doing"? One answer to the question about *what agents do* appeals to the act of *predication*. This is the suggestion we find with Soames, who takes predication to be a basic or primitive cognitive act that brings the constituents of a proposition into a unity, thereby allowing a proposition to represent how things are, or to be true or false. Since predication is a primitive notion, Soames takes it to be incapable of analysis, but Soames gestures toward predication by way of illustration: when an agent perceives an object o *as red*, remembers that o is red, or understands an utterance of 'This is red'; the agent predicates redness of o. For

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Soames, what these acts share in common is that they each involve the primitive

cognitive act of predicating redness of o.

But does predication capture *what we do* when we comport ourselves toward the

world in a way that can be true or false? According to Heidegger, there are certain acts

where we *predicate*, or take some property to hold of an object. But rather than taking

predication as basic, Heidegger suggests that predication is a *derivative* mode of

interpretation, and because of this, the notion of "predication" does not capture what we

do in more primitive interpretive acts. By taking predication to be a *derivative* mode of

interpretation, Heidegger would have offered a radically different approach to traditional

problems that arise in theories of judgment. Like most of his colleagues in Germany,

Heidegger was still working with an 19th century syllogistic logic (despite the fact that

the new logic was gaining traction throughout Europe). Syllogistic logic deals with

sentences of the form 'S is P', but of course, there are a whole host of sentence types that

do not easily fit into that form (e.g., existence claims, hypothetical judgments, or

sentences with indexicals or unarticulated constituents). To deal with these sentence

types, the solution was to distinguish the *grammatical* form of sentences from the *logical*

form of the thoughts or judgments that these sentences express (see, e.g. Lotze [1874],

44ff). An important goal of a theory of judgment was to say how these seemingly

intractable sentences might fit into the logical form of judgment, 'S is P'.

Heidegger embraced this general approach early on in his career. For example, in

1913 Heidegger looked at an exclamation "Fire!". This exclamation expresses a

judgment, according to Heidegger, since it can be evaluated for truth or falsity. But one

would be hard pressed to use grammar in this case as a guide to the logical structure of the content expressed by the judgment. So on the usual approach, an expression "Fire!" needs to be analyzed in terms of a judgment that has the logical form 'S is P'. But Heidegger made a radical break from the traditional approach sometime before *Being and Time*. For Heidegger, the problem is that sentences of the form 'S is P' are "ready-made for the logic and study of grammar" (GA 29/30: 498), and are "artificially stripped of any real context in which they might be made" (GA 21: 139). These sentences are an unnatural *abstraction* from our ordinary utterances that do not have the form 'S is P'. In our day to day utterances, we use impersonals such as "It's raining". Or we say things like "the board is badly positioned", without articulating the context in which the board is found. Or we just look at a hammer and say "too heavy" (GA 2: 157).

What made Heidegger radical is that he took such "intractable" sentences to be *paradigmatic cases of the way that language is used.* On the traditional approach, 'S is P' was taken as a *paradigmatic* sentence form, to which other sentences needed to conform. But for Heidegger, the analysis of sentences should go in the opposite direction: Heidegger wanted to show how the sentences of the form 'S is P' could *grow out* of these more basic interpretive acts. Thus Heidegger argued that assertion or judgment (which are terms that Heidegger often used interchangeably), "has not a primary cognitive function but a secondary one". Our most basic interpretive acts do not contain what Heidegger calls the "apophantical 'as'" that we find in a theoretical assertion. Instead, our most basic interpretive acts — which Heidegger says are *circumspective* — involve what Heidegger (cryptically) calls the "existential-hermeneutical 'as'". So our most basic

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interpretive acts do not contain the logical structure of 'S is P'; and the interpretive acts that have this structure are grounded in a more basic type of interpretation.

To bring this out, Heidegger focuses on assertions about the available. Examples of this kind of assertion include utterances of:

(i)   "The hammer is too heavy" (GA 2: 157, 360)

(ii)   "Too heavy!" (GA 2: 157)

(iii)   "The board is badly positioned" (GA 29/30: 498)

According to Heidegger, the "unexplained presupposition" of traditional logic is that the "meaning" of sentences (i) and (ii) is to be taken as: "This thing – a hammer—has the property of heaviness'" (GA 2: 157). In other words, the presupposition is that these sentences, at bottom, involve predicating a context-independent property of an object. In contrast to this, Heidegger suggests that "we cannot trace back these 'sentences' to theoretical statements without essentially perverting their meaning" (GA 2: 158).

According to Heidegger, a "change-over" occurs when we go from the sentences above to a theoretical assertion: "Something *available with which* we have to do or perform something, turns into something '*about which*' the assertion that points out is made" (GA 2: 158). This change-over involves *decontextualizing* the objects and properties, so that the object and predicate are no longer drawn from an activity or a context of use. This, in turn, changes *what we do* in an act of taking-as. In the theoretical assertion, the "as-structure" has "undergone a modification" where "the 'as' no longer reaches out into a totality of involvements." Instead, "the 'as' gets pushed back into the uniform plane of that which is merely occurrent" (GA 2: 158).

Heidegger describes both our theoretical and circumspective interpretive acts as "limit cases", between which there are "many intermediate gradations: assertions about the happenings in the environment, accounts of the available, 'reports on the situation'". But like theoretical assertions, these intermediate cases also "have their 'source' in circumspective interpretation" (GA 2: 158). What Heidegger calls "circumspection" is what I called "knowledge from a practical perspective" in Chapter 1, and it's the kind of interpretive act that guides practical concern: "Concern is guided by circumspection, which discovers the available and preserves it as thus discovered. Whenever we have something to contribute or perform, circumspection gives us the route for proceeding with it, the means of carrying it out, the right opportunity, the appropriate moment." (GA 2: 172).

When the human agent takes a break from her activity, or when her activity is "interrupted", it's possible then to interpret the world independent from the activity. The human agent's concern for things does not disappear, but as Heidegger puts it, "circumspection becomes free and is no longer bound to the world of work" (GA 2: 172). But what's key for Heidegger is this way of looking at the world – independent from our practical activity – requires *stepping back* from the way we ordinarily interpret the world. And because of this, predication is also grounded in our more basic, practical interpretive

acts.[66] As we'll see, this will become an important step for Heidegger in offering an explanation for the unity of our predicative acts.

C.   *From the Act of Judging back to the Agent*

As we saw above, Soames and Heidegger would agree that an explanation of the possibility of truth or falsity goes back to something that human agents *do*. According to Soames, what we do is *predication*, which Soames (but not Heidegger) takes as basic. In the present context, there is one more pressing question for Soames, and that's what Heidegger calls the "Presupposition of Truth" (GA 2: 226). Let's say that Soames is right to think that predication is a basic activity, and that predication is what allows a belief or judgment to be true or false. This in itself fails to explain why it is that the human agent *must* predicate, or why the human agent *must* comport itself toward the world in a way that can get things right or wrong. After all, the human agent doesn't just wake up one morning, freely decide that it should participate in acts that can be evaluated for truth, and then start predicating. Instead, it's part of *who we are* that we comport ourselves toward things in a way that can get things right or wrong, and it's part of *who we are* that we aim to get things right. As Heidegger puts it, the human agent is the kind of entity that is always "in the truth", and that strives for truth "as something for the sake of which the human agent is" (GA 2: 228).

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[66] In Chapter 1, I gave four arguments for thinking that circumspection (or "knowledge from a practical perspective") is more basic than our theoretical interpretive acts (including "knowledge about the practical"). See Chapter 1.1B and also Chapter 1.2.

According to Heidegger, typical theories of judgment are "superficial" because they fail to to show how acts of judgment are *grounded* in the type of entity that we are. It's one thing to identify the intentional acts of the human agent, but this explanation is incomplete until we analyze these acts in terms of the agent that comports itself intentionally. In other words, the problem of unity requires what Heidegger an "existential analytic of the human agent":

> "The interpretation of the 'is', whether it be expressed in its own right in the language or indicated in the verbal ending, leads us therefore into the context of problems belonging to the existential analytic, if assertion and the understanding of being are existential possibilities for the being of the human agent itself." (GA 2: 160)

In particular, once our explanation of unity appeals to the human agent, we need to answer the question of *how must human agents be*, such that we make judgments about the world, and such that our comportments or interpretive acts can be true or false.

One explanation is that at bottom, human agents are *predicators*. This is possibly the view Soames would be straddled with, since he takes predication to be basic or primitive. If it's *predication* that's responsible for the truth-evaluability of certain acts, and if we take predication to be basic, then we end up with the view that being a *predicator* belongs to the essence of a human agent. In other words, it is part of *who we are* as human agents that we predicate. One problem with this view is that it divorces certain cognitive acts from the practical contexts from which they arise. When I enter a classroom and begin to write on a board, I take a certain object to be chalk. I do so not because I'm the kind of entity that predicates, but rather because I'm the kind of entity

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that has certain ends and that recruits the tools around me in service of reaching those ends.

But for Heidegger, it's not just the "practical" that's missed by taking predication to be basic. As Heidegger recounted, "It never occurred to me, however, to try to claim or prove [in *Being and Time*] that the essence of man consists in the fact that he knows how to handle knives and forks or use the tram." (GA 29/30: 262). Instead, what's essential to the human agent is the phenomenon that Heidegger calls "being-in-the-world", which allows things to make sense to the human agent, or stand together *as a whole*. And this is why the problem of unity, for Heidegger, requires an "existential analytic" of the human agent. If we take predication to be basic, then we end up with a narrow view of what it means to be a human agent, and thus we fail to capture the way the human agent not only *predicates*, but also *makes sense* of the things around him. However, if predication arises only within the broader activity of making sense of things, then we can come to a broader conception of human agency. And this is exactly what Heidegger aims to do. According to Heidegger, human agents aren't, at bottom, *predicators*; but instead we are *sense-makers*, or entities who possess *understanding*.

On Heidegger's account, the basic activity of making sense of things can be analyzed into two structural moments, which we described above as "getting ahead" of things by projecting onto possibilities, and then "returning" to things from the perspective

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of that possibility.[67] In the first moment, the human agent projects onto a possibility, or onto what Heidegger calls a "sense" [*Sinn*]: "'Sense' [*Sinn*] signifies the 'upon-which' [*das Woraufhin*] of a primary projection in terms of which something can be conceived in its possibility as that which it is (GA 2: 342)." For the practically engaged agent, the *sense* is just her activity or for-the-sake-of-which [*Worumwillen*], and it's in terms of her activity that things make sense, or hang together as a whole. By adopting an activity, the agent sketches out in advance the *significance* [*Bedeutamskeit*] that the things around her can have, and the agent interprets the world by allowing the things around her to have significance, or to play a role in her activity. This forth-and-back motion, at the most basic, practical level, is that Heidegger calls the "primary making-sense-of-things in terms of what-they're-for" (GA 21: 144).

An example here would be helpful. When a teacher needs to convey an idea to her students, she looks around the room to find things 'for-writing', and then recruits the things around her (e.g. the chalk and the board) to be used for this purpose. But this is not to say that the teacher first has an acquaintance with bare objects, and then adds the signification 'for-writing' to them. Instead, the opposite is the case: prior to encountering objects, the teacher stands in a *context*, or in a *classroom*, even if she doesn't thematically hold attitudes *about* that context. Then when she needs to write something down, she surveys the room to see what would afford writing (and this survey is what Heidegger

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[67] For a closer analysis, see Chapter 2.6, above.

calls *circumspection*). What's important is that the teacher surveys the *room* – rather than bare objects that she considers independent from the activity of teaching. Prior to encountering such objects, the teacher encounters the room populated by affordances:

> "Do not understand this to mean that we were first given a something that is free of meaning, and then a meaning gets attached to it. Rather, what is first of all 'given' – and we still have to determine what this word means – is the 'for-writing,', the 'for-entering-and-exiting,' the 'for-illuminating,' the 'for-sitting.' (GA 21: 144)

To avoid this kind of misinterpretation, we should be careful in how we describe the basic act of *making sense* of things. In a certain sense, things seem purely passive in the example in cases of fluid coping: it's not the *agent* that makes sense of things, but rather things just *make sense* to the agent. The teacher doesn't first encounter *sense-less* objects, and then group them together to form a practical whole. Rather, what the agent *first* encounters are things that make sense in terms of her activity or practical aim.

More precisely, we can describe *making sense* of things as a way of "working out" the sense that things have. This is why Heidegger describes interpretation as a "working-out [*Ausarbeitung*] of the possibilities projected in the understanding" (GA 2: 148). When the teacher walks into the classroom, she encounters "stuff for teaching", so things are never given to her in a completely sense-less way. But in order to carry on with the activity – or maintain the sense that things make – the teacher must find roles for particular things to play within her activity or aim. When things are going smoothly, this amounts to committing to certain affordances that things have in light of the activity. At

other times, e.g., when the chalk goes missing, this might involve finding new ways for things to fit together in light of her activity.[68]

Working out the sense that things have is what Heidegger calls the "disclosive function" *interpretation*, which is the most basic way that human agents interpret the world (GA 2: 150). As we saw above, interpretive acts that involve *predication* (such as theoretical assertions) are then derivative of this more basic function of interpretation, which makes sense of things. To establish this, Heidegger considers the way the 'as-structure' of interpretation gets modified from our circumspective interpretive acts to our theoretical, predicative acts.

But as we'll see below, all of this saddles Heidegger with a certain way of thinking about *truth*. Since acts of taking-as are what can be true or false, and since the as structure goes all the way down to our most basic, disclosive interpretive acts, Heidegger needs to work out the sense in which our basic interpretive acts can also be *true* (even if the truth of these acts cannot be captured by correspondence). This will become a theme in the following Section (Chapter 3.3), after a brief look back to the way Heidegger's account of judgment fares with the problem of unity.

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[68] Alternatively, when things get difficult, the human agent might adopt a new activity altogether. This topic will be picked up again in Chapter 4, since this possibility is one of the requirements for authenticity.

D.   *Predication and the Problem of Unity*

Before moving on to Heidegger's account of truth, it would be helpful to return briefly to the original problem of unity to put all of the pieces together for Heidegger. One way to bring out what's unique to Heidegger's account of judgment is to contrast this account to Russell's multiple-relation theory of judgment. As we saw above, both Heidegger and Russell shift the locus of unity from the *content* of judgment back to the *act* of judging, thus giving intentional acts an explanatory priority over intentional objects such as propositions. But where Heidegger and Russell come apart is in their explanations of how the act of judging comes about.

According to Russell, at the foundation of judgment or belief is "acquaintance", which is a kind of "knowledge of things" that precedes "knowledge of facts". Acquaintance, for Russell, is a direct relation that we can have with things, and as such it is not yet something that can be true or false. To put this somewhat differently, it's Russell's view that we start off with a sense-less or uninterpreted grip on things around us. The only thing left for the act of judging, then, is to combine the terms with which I am acquainted. And this act of combining accounts for the unity of judgment.

On Russell's story, the 'as' of interpretation comes *after* the acquaintance one has with entities and concepts. My first contact with the world comes through acquaintances with objects and relations, and only after this initial acquaintance do I take these relations to hold of objects. The problem with this picture, according to Heidegger, is that it's a myth to think that we start off with an uninterpreted or disinterested acquaintance with the things around us. Such a picture is an "inversion of the natural order", since a bare

acquaintance with things only occurs while "pulling back" from our ordinary, as-structured experience:

> "Acts of directly taking something, having something, dealing with it 'as something,' are so original that trying to understand anything without employing the 'as' requires (if it's possible at all) a peculiar inversion of the natural order. Understanding something without the 'as' – in a pure sensation, for example – can be carried out only 'reductively', by 'pulling back' from an as-structured experience. And we must say: far from being primordial, we must have to designate it as an artificially worked-up act. Most important, such an experience is *per se* possible only as the privation of an as-structured experience. It occurs only *within* an as-structured experience and by prescinding from the 'as' – which is the same as admitting that as-structured experience is primary, since it is what one must first of all prescind from." (GA 21: 145).

Thus, according to Heidegger, "every act of having something before our eyes and perceiving it, is in and of itself a matter of 'having' something *as* something" (GA 21: 144). The 'as' of interpretation goes all the way down to the most basic or "direct" grip we have on the entities around us. Heidegger goes on to ask: "But why is it that this as-structure is already present in a direct act of dealing with something?" Heidegger's answer is that when we simply "take things as they are", this taking is "always a taking within the context of dealing-with something, and therefore is always a taking-as, but in such a way that the as-character does not become express [*ausdrücklich*] in the act." (GA 21: 145).

The most basic way we encounter things around us is through the forth-and-back motion by which we *get ahead of things* by adopting an activity, and then *return to things* from that activity. And because of this, entities are always encountered from *within* the context of a practical activity. This allows the agent to first encounter a world of *affordances*: when the teacher looks around the room, she sees "the for-writing,' the 'for-

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entering-and-exiting,' the 'for-illuminating,' the 'for-sitting' (GA 21: 144). What gets

thematically understood in these circumspective interpretive acts is a "means-whereby

[*das Womit*]" we carry out our activities. (GA 21: 154). When I recruit the things around

me for an activity, I take one thing *as for sitting*, and another *as for writing*.

But this act of *returning* to things from an activity "is precisely what *discloses*

whatever we encounter, for example, *as* a door or *as* chalk" (GA 21: 148). Before

encountering entities, I already have something to do with them, and because of this I

never first encounter uninterpreted objects. Thus the fundamental move that Heidegger

makes – which is a reversal from what we find in Russell – is that Heidegger takes the

'as' of interpretation to have a *disclosive* function. It's the 'as' that first allows me to

discover things in the first place: I discover the door by encountering it *as* a door. In this

case, the 'as a door' does not   refer to a predicate that I take to hold of an object, but

instead captures *how* it is that I discover the door, or *how* it is that I comport myself

toward it.

3.3   Heidegger's Conception of Truth

In the previous sections, I looked at Heidegger's account of judgment in response

to the problem of unity. The goal was to give a sustained treatment of Heidegger's

account of judgment in order to bring out the problems that *motivated* Heidegger's

account of truth. The connection between judgment (or assertion) and truth was also

indicated by Heidegger, who stressed in *Being and Time* that his "analysis of assertion…

will prepare the way for the problematic [of truth]" (154). So I turn now to Heidegger's

account of truth, keeping in mind two commitments in Heidegger's response to the problem of unity: a) the intentionality of occurrent *objects* such as sentences or propositions is grounded in the intentionality of *acts* or *comportments*, and b) the 'as-structure' goes all the way down the most basic way we encounter entities.

My reading of Heidegger builds off Wrathall [2010], where Wrathall outlines distinct "planks" of Heidegger's account of truth. The names that Heidegger assigns to each of these planks evolves over time, but the short story is that Heidegger develops three notions of truth in *Being and Time*, which can be broadly captured as:

a) propositional truth (*correctness* or *correspondence*), which is grounded in:

b) truth of entities (*discoveredness*), which is grounded in:

c) truth of being (*unconcealment* or *disclosure*)[69]

These notions of truth are deeply interconnected, since each notion of truth is grounded in, or is dependent upon the next.

My reading develops this overall picture in two specific places. First, I suggest that Heidegger's first plank (which is often called "propositional truth") needs to be split into two distinct planks, corresponding to the *act* of assertion and its *content*. The *content* of an assertion is an intentional object – or an intentional, occurrent entity – and Heidegger takes the truth of such entities to consist in a kind of "correspondence". But

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[69] Heidegger would later take the truth of being to be grounded in a forth notion of truth: truth as the *clearing*. While a complete analysis of Heidegger's account of truth would say quite a bit about this forth plank, I'm restricting my focus in the current chapter to the first three planks, since these play a more important role in the era of *Being and Time*, and since these three planks also have a close connection to the topic of reflected self-knowledge, which (as we'll see) serves as the source of intentionality and truth.

Heidegger also takes the correspondence of these intentional objects to be grounded in the truth of intentional *acts* (which consists in a more basic kind of correspondence that Heidegger calls a "discovery of facts" or "theoretical discovery [*theoretischen Entdecken*]").[70] I'll suggest this grounding relation holds because – as we saw above – the intentionality of acts explains the intentionality of objects, rather than the other way around. [71]

I also develop the sense in which each of Heidegger's "planks" captures a distinct notion of *truth* (in response to the "rights" argument put forth by critics of Heidegger, who suggest that the phenomena Heidegger describes as *discovering* or *uncovering* lack the right to be called "truth"). I hope to show that in his account of truth, Heidegger was working out the implications of taking the 'as-structure' to go all the way down to the most "direct" grasp we have on entities around us – which is a move Heidegger made in response to the problem of judgment. Unfortunately, Heidegger's most vocal critics have failed to recognize the very problems that *motivated* Heidegger's account of truth, and in doing so, they have also failed to provide alternatives to these same problems in the

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[70] So the notion of truth as "discovery" applies to both the first and second planks of truth. As we'll see, Heidegger distinguishes between discovery of facts (or theoretical discovery), from discovery of entities. The latter is what makes possible the former.

[71] The distinction between acts of assertion (or judging) and their content seems to already be in play for Wrathall, although it's more in the background of his discussion. For example, Wrathall frequently discusses the truth of "propositional entities" within the first plank of truth, but then switches to the truth of linguistic acts when providing a positive reconstruction of the correspondence that Heidegger takes to be a kind of discovery ([2010], 21). By highlighting the act/content distinction up front, I am able to bring to light precisely how the traditional notion of correspondence (of an intentional entity) is grounded in the truth or correspondence of an intentional act. Although as we'll see below, I think Heidegger would have been better off rejecting the suggestion that the truth of intentional an intentional act amounts to a kind of correspondence.

theory of judgment. So after presenting Heidegger's account of truth below, I'll offer a

defense of Heidegger against the "rights" argument, drawing from Heidegger's account

of judging.

In what follows, I work though each "plank" of Heidegger's account of truth by

giving a close reading of §44 of *Being and Time*. What I hope to make clear is the way

Heidegger's thought on *truth* is a natural extension to his thought on the nature of

judgment in light of the problem of the unity of judgment.

A.   Correspondence, Discovery, and the Truth of Assertions

Heidegger's most influential treatment of the topic of truth comes in §44 of *Being*

and Time, which has the title "The Human Agent, Disclosedness, and Truth". The term

'disclosedness' [*Erschlossenheit*] is among a whole host of more-or-less technical terms

that Heidegger associates with truth [*Wahrheit*], which also include terms such as

'correctness' [*Richtigkeit*], 'correspondence' [*Übereinstimmung*], 'discoveredness'

[*Entdecktheit*], 'unconcealment' [*Unverborgenheit*], 'disclosure' [*Erschlossenheit*],

'openness' [*Offenheit*], 'unveiling' [*Enthüllen*], 'horizon' [*Horizont*], and 'clearing'

[*Lichtung*]. While Heidegger often made changes to his vocabulary, I take it that

Heidegger held relatively stable views on truth for about a decade on either side of *Being*

and Time. Perhaps the most important technical term for Heidegger was

'unconcealment', since he took this term to track the way Aristotle used '*aletheia*' (GA 2:

33, 219). Around the time *Being and Time* was published, Heidegger used

'unconcealment' and 'discoveredness' interchangeably, sometimes even putting one term

in parentheses behind the other.[72] In certain lecture courses (e.g., GA 24, GA 29/30), Heidegger would pass over both of these terms in favor of 'unveiledness'. Any of these terms can describe the success condition of an interpretive act, which I will just call 'discovery'.

The title of §44 immediately betrays the overall argument of the section. From the title, we see that the phenomenon of truth has *something to do with the human agent*. As we saw above, not everyone would agree with this initial claim, because if the primary locus of truth is an *intrinsically intentional object* (such as a thought or a proposition), then such an object can represent the world, and thus have truth conditions independent from any human interpretive act. But as we also saw above, in light of the problem of unity, it's difficult to spell out the nature of such objects without positing an "ontologically dubious" realm of validity – and it's for this reason that Heidegger (among others) takes the origin of intentionality, and thus the origin of truth, to go back to the human agent. In particular, Heidegger suggests that truth and intentionality is grounded in the *disclosedness* of the human agent.

Heidegger's analysis of truth comes in three stages. In the first stage, Heidegger takes his "departure from the *traditional conception of truth, and attempts to lay bare the ontological foundations of that conception*" (214). As we'll see, Heidegger suggests in this stage that the traditional notion of "correspondence" depends on *discovery* and

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[72] One example of this pattern can be found at GA 2: 214.

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disclosedness, which Heidegger takes to be more basic notions of truth. In the second stage of his argument, Heidegger returns to the notion of "correspondence" as traditionally understood to show how it is *derived* from these more basic notions of truth. Finally, in the third stage Heidegger looks at what the phenomenon of truth – and especially the "presupposition of truth" – says about the human agent.

When discussing the "traditional conception of truth", Heidegger elaborates on three theses that make up the this "traditional" conception:

> "(1) that the 'locus' of truth is assertion (judgment); (2) that the essence of truth lies in the 'correspondence' [*Übereinstimmung*] of the judgment with its object [*Gegenstand*]; (3) that Aristotle, the father of logic, not only has as assigned truth to the judgment as its primordial locus but has set going the definition of 'truth' as 'agreement' (214).

One primary challenge to a traditional conception of truth comes from the difficulty in spelling out what exactly is meant by "correspondence", since the term itself is "very general and empty" (215). To illustrate one such attempt, Heidegger considers Aquinas, who takes truth to consist in a "likening of the intellect and the thing [*adaequatio intellectus et rei*]." According to Aquinas, truth as a kind of agreement amounts to a "likening" [*adaequatio*], "correspondence" [*correspondentia*], or "coming together" [*convenentia*] (214).[73] By the time Heidegger wrote, such an account had fallen out of style, since it would seem to presuppose a "methodologically retarded naïve realism",

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[73] Heidegger translates the Latin '*adaequatio*' with the German '*Angleichung*', which Macquarrie & Robinson translate as 'likening'. I'm following their translation conventions.

where mental activity consists in a kind of picturing of the world as it is in itself, independent from the conditions of how we might experience it (215). Nevertheless, Heidegger suggests that we should still consider the notion of correspondence to see if it can "hold its own without prejudice to any of the most various interpretations which that distinctive predicate 'knowledge' [*Erkenntnis*] will support" (215). In other words, the notion of correspondence might still capture what we mean by truth in a certain limited set of cases, depending on what we mean by 'knowledge'.

To test the notion of "correspondence", Heidegger suggests that we should consider a case when "knowing [*Erkennen*] demonstrates itself *as true*" (217). It's at this point that Heidegger considers his famous example of an utterance of 'the picture on the wall is hanging askew'. The utterance would be confirmed [*Bewährung*] – or the truth of the utterance would be demonstrated – when a person "turns around and perceives the picture hanging askew on the wall". Thus Heidegger asks: "What gets demonstrated in this demonstration? What is the meaning of 'confirming' such an assertion?" After all, if truth amounts to a kind of correspondence, then confirming the truth of the utterance should amount to confirming that some kind of correspondence has taken place.

Heidegger considers (and rejects) a few different stories on how this correspondence might go,[74] but still maintains that there is a certain sense in which we

[74] In particular, Heidegger rejects correspondence theories that rely on a "copy" view of the mind, where "pictures" or mental images are "slipped in as what one supposedly has in mind in an assertion…" (GA 2: 217).

ascertain a kind of correspondence when we confirm the truth of the utterance.[75]

Heidegger then goes on to offer his positive account of the truth of assertions:

> "What comes up for confirmation is that this entity is pointed out by the being – which is being-toward what is put forward in the assertion – in which the assertion is made. What gets demonstrated is the being-discovering of the assertion… Representations do not get compared, either among themselves or in *relation* to the real thing. What is to be demonstrated is not an agreement of knowing with its object, still less of the psychical with the physical; but neither is it an agreement between 'contents of consciousness' among themselves. What is to be demonstrated is solely the being-discovered [*Entdeckt-sein*] of the entity itself – *that entity* in the 'how' of its discoveredness" (218).

So confirmation that an utterance is *true*, according to Heidegger, comes when we

recognize that the assertion is one that *discovers* – or more precisely, when we recognize

that the assertion discovers the entity "in the 'how' of its discoveredness". From this,

Heidegger provides the following analysis of assertoric truth:

> "To say that an assertion 'is true' signifies that it uncovers the entity as it is in itself. Such an assertion asserts, points out, 'lets' the entity 'be seen' (*apophansis*) in its uncoveredness. The being-true (truth) of the assertion must be understood as being-uncovering" (218).

How exactly we should understand this passage has often been the focus of secondary

literature, and rightly so. What's certain is that Heidegger takes the truth of an assertion

or utterance to consist in a kind of *discovery*. To spell this out, I'll focus on one

interpretive question that has received special attention in the secondary literature,

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[75] "Do we, let us say, ascertain some correspondence between our 'knowledge' or 'what is known' and the thing on the wall? Yes and no, depending upon whether our interpretation of the expression 'what is known' is phenomenally appropriate" (GA 2: 217).

namely, to what extent is Heidegger rejecting a correspondence theory of truth in his account of truth as a kind of discovery?

Perhaps the two most influential commentators on Heidegger's account of truth are Tugendhat and Wrathall, and they diverge on precisely this question. For Tugendhat, Heidegger is offering an *alternative* to a correspondence theory of truth. According to Tugendhat, "Heidegger handles propositional truth and comes to the conclusion that it must be understood as 'uncovering' (or—as Heidegger says later – unconcealing)." ([1994], 85). The problem with this view is that it seems to contradict the generally positive things that Heidegger says about correspondence. Heidegger's main complaint about the term 'correspondence' is that it's "very general and empty", although he suggests early on that it might have "some justification", depending on what we mean by 'knowledge' to which truth is ascribed (215). Elsewhere, Heidegger admits that the traditional approach to truth is "basically [*im Ansatz*] correct", although merely the starting point for an explanation or analysis of truth (GA 29/30: 497). And perhaps most importantly, just before Heidegger introduces the above definition of truth, he indicates that when we confirm the truth of an assertion, there is a sense in which we ascertain a kind of correspondence (GA 2: 17). Rather than trying to *disprove* the notion of truth as correspondence, Heidegger's goal is to point out correspondence, as traditionally understood, has an "ontologically derivative character" (GA 2: 225).

Yet at the same time, Heidegger says straightforwardly that the truth of assertion amounts to a kind of discovery, so it seems that Heidegger takes *both* discovery and correspondence (in a specific sense) to capture the truth of assertion. To capture this,

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Wrathall suggests that "Heidegger always saw propositional truth as being a specific kind of unconcealment, one that consists in correspondence with a fact or state of affairs" ([2010], 35). Wrathall's suggestion is that the correspondence of an act of asserting, when properly understood, amounts to a discovery of a fact or state of affairs (or to stick closer to Heidegger's more developed vocabulary, an *unconcealing* of a state of affairs). This approach solves the interpretive puzzle, since it allows Heidegger to endorse a version of the correspondence theory of truth while maintaining that the truth of assertions is discovery or unconcealment.

While I take Wrathall to offer an accurate reconstruction of Heidegger's position, it isn't obvious to me why Heidegger (at least in *Being and Time*) wanted to think of the discovery of a fact as a kind of correspondence. After all, *human agents* discover things, and we do so in our comportments or interpretive acts. Objects like sentences or propositions don't discover anything, yet they can correspond to the way things are. A much cleaner story would take "correspondence" to capture only the truth of intentional objects like sentences and propositions, while taking "discovery" to capture the truth of interpretive acts such as asserting or judging. There seems to be little reason – except possibly his zeal to redeem the notion of "correspondence" – for Heidegger to make the further claim that the discovery of facts is in turn a kind of correspondence.

But regardless of whether Heidegger overextends in his use of "correspondence", the main point of Heidegger's analysis of the truth of assertion still stands: namely, Heidegger takes there to be *distinct* notions of truth that apply to assertions considered as *acts*, and assertions considered as *objects*. The truth of an intentional act or comportment

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amounts to a kind of *discovery*. The truth of an intentional object (such as a proposition

or sentence) amount to a kind of *correspondence*. The former is more original for

Heidegger for the reasons we saw in the previous section: the intentionality of objects is

explained in terms of the intentionality of acts, rather than the other way around.

Support for this reading can be found in way that Heidegger "derives" the

traditional conception of truth in the second part of §44. When Heidegger first introduces

the traditional view of truth as correspondence, his guiding question is about what is

presupposed by the notion of correspondence, asking (in italics): "*What else is tacitly*

posited in this relational totality of the adaequatio intellectus et rei*? And what ontological*

character does that which is thus posited have in itself?" (215). Heidegger hints at what

is presupposed just after asking this question, noting that "in clarifying the 'truth-relation'

we must notice also what is peculiar to the terms of this relation" (216). By taking the

relation of truth to be one of correspondence, the story goes, we might be operating under

tacit presuppositions about the very things that enter into the relation of truth.

Heidegger answers his own question when he goes to *derive* the notion of

correspondence as it is traditionally understood. According to Heidegger, we only arrive

at the traditional notion of correspondence when we take the *terms* of the truth relation to

be objects, or occurrent entities:

> "The discoveredness of something becomes the occurrent conformity of
> one thing which is occurrent – the assertion spoken out – *to* something
> else which is occurrent – the entity under discussion. And if this
> conformity is seen only as a relationship between things which are
> occurrent – that is, if the kind of being which belongs to the terms of this
> relationship has not been discriminated and is understood as something
> merely occurrent – then the relation shows itself as a correspondence of

two things which are occurrent, and correspondence which is itself occurrent" (224)

Heidegger endorses the traditional notion of correspondence, but this notion of correspondence only comes about when we presuppose that the *terms* of the truth relation are objects, or occurrent entities. To avoid positing entities that are *intrinsically intentional*, Heidegger shows how the intentionality (and thus the truth) of these objects is derivative of the intentionality of our acts or comportments.

This is why, prior to Heidegger's "derivation" of the traditional notion of correspondence, Heidegger provides an analysis of the truth of our intentional *acts* or *comportments* (or the human agent's *being-toward* things) that does not rely on the intentionality of objects such as sentences or propositions. As Heidegger notes in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, the term 'assertion' is ambiguous between the act of asserting [*Aussagen*] and that which is asserted [*Ausgesagtes*]. When considered as an act, "asserting is one of the human agent's intentional comportments" (GA 24: 295). Prior to the derivation of correspondence, Heidegger is concerned with "asserting" [*Aussagen*] as a "way of being-toward the thing itself that is" (GA 2: 217-8). And it's to these *acts* or *comportments* that Heidegger attaches the notion of truth as discovery, unconcealment and the like: "Truth as unveiling is in the human agent as a determination of its intentional comportment" (GA 24: 310).[76] Later on, to show that this is not a "highly arbitrary way to define 'truth'", Heidegger notes that the *logos*, for Aristotle,

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[76] Also, "as discovering, [*truth*] is a characteristic of the comportment of the human agent" (GA 21: 169).

does not primarily apply to an occurrent entity, but instead "tells how entities comport themselves" or indicates a "way of being of the human agent" (GA 2: 219, 226).

The shift to the traditional notion of "correspondence" in *Being and Time* only occurs when we focus not on the act of asserting, but instead on "that which has been spoken out" [*Das Ausgesprochenene*]. That which has been spoken out, for Heidegger, is intentional, since it "has in itself a relation to any entities about which it is an assertion" (224). But this relation to entities comes about only because the "uncoveredness" of our being-toward entities is "preserved" in what is spoken out. Because of this, we can then *use* language to comport ourselves toward entities, and when this happens, "that which has been spoken out as such takes over being-toward those entities which have been uncovered in the assertion" (224). An act of repeating what has been said [*Nachsprechen*] is a way of using language where the speaker "has been exempted from having to uncover [these entities] again, primordially" (224). It's in this sense that an utterance, for Heidegger, becomes something "available within-the-world which can be taken up and spoken again." While language can never bring us "face to face with entities themselves in an 'original' experience", the human agent can still use language to comport itself toward entities.

We only reach the traditional notion of correspondence when "that which has been spoken out" switches from something *used* by human agents to something *mentioned*, for example, when we want to demonstrate that a sentence is true (224). When this occurs, the relation of truth becomes a "relationship between things which are occurrent" (e.g., between a sentence and a state of affairs). The *terms* of the relationship

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are determined to be occurrent, and thus "truth as disclosedness and as being-toward discovered entities – a being-toward which itself uncovers – has become truth as correspondence between things which are occurrent within-the-world". Heidegger shows the "ontologically derivative character of the traditional conception of truth" by showing how the *terms* of the truth relation become objects, or occurrent entities.

Regardless of the details of Heidegger's derivation, there are two higher-level points to bring out from the discussion above. The first is that the traditional notion of 'correspondence' captures only the truth of intentional occurrent entities, such as sentences or propositions. The second point – and one that is equally important – is that Heidegger's "derivation" of correspondence as traditionally understood amounts to showing *how the intentionality of our acts or comportments can be imputed to entities such as sentences or propositions*. This second point is worth stressing, because it is a direct response to the problem of unity: rather than positing *intrinsically intentional entities*, Heidegger instead aims to show how the intentionality of human comportments can be passed on to occurrent entities (such as sentences or propositions). The truth of such entities (*correspondence* as traditionally understood) is dependent on the truth of human comportments (*discovery*), because occurrent entities lack intentionality independent from the interpretive acts or comportments of human agents.

B.   *Discovery and the Truth of Entities*

In the previous section (3.3.A), we saw that Heidegger takes the truth of our intentional acts or comportments to be a kind of *discovery* (which Heidegger also, and I

believe mistakenly, takes to be a kind of "correspondence"). In contrast to the truth of

comportments, the truth of intentional occurrent entities (such as sentences or

propositions) amounts to a *correspondence* as traditionally understood. Heidegger

"derives" the latter from the former by showing how the intentionality of acts or

comportments can be passed on to occurrent entities. Because of this, we can pick up on

two roles played by *discovery* so far in Heidegger's account of truth. On the one hand, the

traditional concept of truth as correspondence *presupposes* the notion of truth as

discovery; so discovery is that which makes correspondence *possible*. And on the other

hand, discovery *just is* the truth of our intentional comportments, or interpretive acts.[77]

But according to Heidegger, the *primary* kind of discovery is one that brings

about the "truth of entities", and this is not something we find by looking at acts of

assertion. According to Heidegger, *acts of assertion* depend on more basic human

comportments, which in turn have their own kind of truth. Heidegger's basic idea is that

in order to *discover* something *about* an entity, we need to first *discover* the entity to

begin with. And Heidegger takes this original discovery of entities to be a kind of truth,

which he sometimes calls the 'truth of entities'. To break this up into two separate claims,

we could say that Heidegger puts forth the following:

> (a) *Discovering* something *about* an entity requires that we first *discover*
> the entity itself, and

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[77] Some authors have suggested that Heidegger conflates what makes the truth of assertion *possible*, with what the truth of assertion *is* (e.g., Carman [2007], 106). I think this misses Heidegger's distinction between the truth of *acts* of assertion, and the truth of sentences and propositions (or "assertions" considered as occurrent entities).

(b) Discovering entities is a kind of *truth*.

To put these two claims together, we get that view that acts of assertion or predication require a previous discovering of entities, which is a more basic kind of truth.

Perhaps Heidegger's most direct presentation of this idea comes in his *Logic* lectures. It's in this lecture course – while focusing on Aristotle to bring out the "origins" of traditional logic – that Heidegger asks about the possibility of *falsehood* along with the possibility of being deceived. To bring out an example, Heidegger offers the following story: "Say I am walking in a dark woods and see something coming toward me through the fir trees. 'It's a deer,' I say. The statement need not be explicit. As I get nearer to it, I see it's just a bush that I'm approaching. In understanding, addressing, and being concerned with this thing, I have acted as one who covers-over [*verdeckend*]: the unexpressed statement lets the entity be seen as something other than it is." (GA 21: 187)

If the assertion described above were *true*, the truth would amount to a kind of discovering [*entdecken*], since through the assertion the person would discover the thing in the distance as it is. Instead, Heidegger describes the falsity of the assertion as a kind of covering-over [*verdecken*], which allows the entity to be seen "as something other than it is". But in order for me to assert something *incorrectly* about the entity, the entity itself first needs to somehow be given to me. As Heidegger explains, "it is necessary that beforehand I already have something given to me, something coming toward me. If something did not already encounter me from the outset, there would be no occasion to regard it *as*" (GA 21: 187).

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Because of this, Heidegger distinguishes between two *modes* of discovery –

which I'll call *discovery of entities* and *discovery of facts*. The former is more original for

Heidegger because it is makes the latter possible. And while each kind of discovery have

a normative dimension, a failure to discover entities is distinct from a failure to discover

facts:

> "Therefore, we have now found a mode of uncovering that distances
> itself from the others, insofar as this truth [*Wahrheit*] has no possible
> opposite in the sense of falsehood [*Falschheit*]. Or more exactly, it is an
> uncovering [*Entdecken*] for which there is no covering-over
> [*Verdeckung*]" p. 154 (GA 21: 182).

When I mistake a bush for a deer, I still apprehend what's in front of me, but I do so

incorrectly, or in a way that *covers-over* the entity, or lets it be seen in a way that it is *not*.

But this kind of failure is altogether different from failing to see or discover the entity in

the first place. When it comes to the *discovery of entities*, Heidegger says that "being

deceived is not possible", and there is no "possibility of deception". Instead, a failure to

discover entities amounts to a kind of "not-apprehending" or a "lack of access to the

entity in question" (GA 21: 182).

There are two questions we should ask about Heidegger's distinction between the

two modes of discovery. First, what is involved with "discovering entities" – and can we

analyzes this kind of discovery any further? Second, why does Heidegger take a

discovery of entities to be a kind of *truth*? Why not think instead that the term 'truth'

applies only to discovery of *facts*, while discovery of entities is merely that which makes

truth possible?

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To answer the first question, it would be helpful to ward off one reading of the

text that Heidegger would want us to resist. For the contemporary reader, it's easy to hear

Heidegger as advocating the Russellian position that all knowledge has *acquaintance* as

its foundation. After all, acquaintance, for Russell, shares many of the same properties as

Heidegger's *discovery of entities*. While Russell never advocates for acquaintance as a

kind of *truth*, he does take acquaintance to be a kind of *knowledge* (as a *knowledge of*

things in contrast to *knowledge of facts*). Further, we don't say that an acquaintance

relation can get things "wrong" in the same sense that knowledge of things can: the

opposite of being acquainted with something is to have a kind of "lack of access", or an

inability to make judgments about that thing.

There are certain places where Heidegger might seem to be suggesting just this

kind of picture. While unpacking Aristotle, Heidegger describes discovering something

"simple" – where the thing discovered is unarticulated, or without an as-structure.[78] For

such entities, Heidegger explains that the "only possible discovering is a direct having of

those entities" (GA 21: 183). Heidegger likens this original "having" of entities to

"touching" (borrowing the Greek *thigein* from Aristotle), since it is a "direct" relation in

which "there is no distance" (GA 21: 180). From this, one might take Heidegger's claim

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[78] "But a being can be disguised only insofar as something can be synthesized with the being *as*
something… But nothing can be synthesized with a simple being because, as simple, the being stands in no
need of synthesis with anything. In fact, here we have an absolute exclusion of the possibility of synthesis."
(GA 21: 183).

to be that prior to interpreting the entity *as* being a certain way, we need to have a direct acquaintance the thing that we interpret.[79]

But this can't be Heidegger's own position, since as we saw earlier, Heidegger takes the 'as' structure of interpretation to go all the way down to the most "direct" relation we have with the things around us. So to ward off this misunderstanding of what it means to *discover entities*, Heidegger reminds the reader that the 'as' is already present in our discovering of entities: "In the field of everyday experience, I don't just stand there, as it were, in the woods and have something simply and immediately in front of me. A situation like that is pure fiction. Rather, in an unexpressed way, I encounter something that I already understand, something that is already articulated *as something* and, as such, is expected and accepted in my way of dealing with the world." (GA 21: 187).

This is why, for Heidegger, the most basic act of discovering entities amounts to allowing them to play a role in the activity in which we are engaged. According to Heidegger, "The predominant comportment through which in general we discover innerwordly entities is the utilization, the use of commonly used objects: dealing with

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[79] There are other places where Heidegger makes similar-sounding claims. For example, in *Essence of Ground*, Heidegger explains, "The correspondence of the nexus [of subject and predicate] *with* what is and its resulting unanimity do not *as such* render what is immediately accessible. Rather, as the possible 'subject' of a predicative definition, what is must already be manifest both *prior to* and *for* our predications. Predication, to become possible, must be able to establish itself in the sort of manifesting which does *not* have a *predicative* character. Propositional truth is rooted in a *more primordial* truth (unconcealment)." (*Pathmarks*, 103). But it should be noted that "predication", for Heidegger, does not take place in every occurrence of the "as-structure" of interpretation. So there are more basic acts of taking-as, for Heidegger, that do not go under the banner of what he calls "predication".

vehicles, sewing kits, writing equipment, work tools… equipment in the widest sense.

We first get to know the equipment in dealing with it" (GA 25: 21). By encountering

things around me in terms of what they afford, I first encounter the vehicle *as* something

for driving, or the needle *as* something for sewing, etc.

Why then, does Heidegger insist that this initial *discovery* of entities is a kind of

truth? I believe Heidegger takes our initial discovery of entities to be a kind of truth

because it involves the 'as-structure', which makes truth possible. The connection

between truth and the 'as-structure' became apparent in the problem of judgment: there's

a difference, for example, between simply perceiving 'board – black' and judging that

'the board is black'. While in the latter case I take the board *as* black, in the former case,

"I do not 'assert' anything, and thus do not state what is 'true' or 'false'" (GA 26: 124).

What examples such as these bring out is that the 'as-structure' is responsible for

allowing certain comportments to be evaluable for truth. And because of this, there

should be a sense in which truth applies to the most basic acts of 'taking-as'.

To sum things up, at this point, we have seen Heidegger name two different kinds

of truth:

1) *Correspondence* as the truth of occurrent *objects* such as sentences or

   propositions.

2) *Discovering* as the truth of *intentional comportments* of the human agent.

But some of our comportments, for Heidegger, are more basic than others. In particular,

in order to assert something *about* an entity, we first must encounter that entity in our

practical dealings. So "discovery", for Heidegger, can be further split into:

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2a) *Discovering facts*, or discovering things *about* entities.[80]

2b) *Discovering entities*, or allowing them to play a role in our practical dealings.

In the current section, we saw that a *discovering of facts* is grounded in a *discovering of entities*, because in order to make an assertion *about* some entity, we must first discover the entity, or have something to do with it. Heidegger takes this original discovering of entities to be a mode of *truth*, because the as-structure goes all the way down to the most basic grip we have on the things around us.

But what is it that allows the 'as-structure' to go all the way down, as it were? Why is it that don't start with a sense-less grip on the things around us (e.g. "acquaintance"), but instead first encounter things in terms of what they are for? Answers to these questions, for Heidegger, go back to the role of *disclosure*.

C.   *Disclosure and the Truth of Being*

As we saw in the previous section, the 'as-structure' of interpretation goes all the way down to the most basic way we discover the things around us, and that's because we first encounter entities in terms of *what they're for*. What makes this possible, according to Heidegger, is the phenomenon of *disclosure*. By getting involved in an activity, the

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[80] What I'm calling "discovery of facts" is what Heidegger would call a "theoretical discovery" [*theoretischen Entdecken*], which is the kind of discovery that would be made, for example, in the natural sciences (GA 2: 356-362). Such a discovery would amount to a "knowledge of facts" [*Tatsachenerkenntnis*] (GA 45: 93). To simplify things here, I'm setting aside the Heidegger's view that a discovery of facts is in turn a kind of correspondence, which I suggested above is both misleading and orthogonal to Heidegger's overall account of truth and intentionality.

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human agent discloses a *world*, thus sketching out the possibilities through which we discover entities.

The phenomenon of *disclosure* is one we already saw in Chapter 2.2, but it's worth visiting it again in the context of Heidegger's account of truth. In particular, we can tease out two claims that Heidegger makes about disclosure. The first is that world disclosure *grounds*—or makes possible—the discovery of entities: "the discoveredness of entities within-the-world is *grounded* in world's disclosedness" (GA 2: 220). Heidegger's second claim is that world-disclosure is in turn, a *kind of truth*. In fact, Heidegger takes world-disclosure to be the most *basic* or *primordial* phenomenon of truth: "that truth, in the most primordial sense, is the human agent's disclosedness, to which the discoveredness of entities within-the-world belongs" (223).

Like *discovery* in the previous section (3.3.B), we can separate these two claims that Heidegger makes about *disclosure:*

> (a) *Disclosure* (i.e. *world-disclosure*) is what makes discovering entities *possible*.

> (b) *Disclosure* is a kind of *truth*.

Heidegger spends little time in §44 defending the first of these claims, since he takes it to follow from his "earlier analysis of the worldhood of the world and of the entities within-the-world" (220). In that earlier analysis, Heidegger focused in particular on the way our original encounter with entities allows the entities to make up a normatively-oriented, practical *whole*. When the carpenter steps into her workshop, for example, she encounters *equipment* that is to be used together for her current project. In order to first encounter a context of equipment, where things "belong together", we first need to disclose that

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practical possibility in terms of which the things she encounters have a kind of unity to them.[81]

What is added in §44 is the additional claim that world-disclosure is a kind of *truth*. As it turns out, this latter claim has become the source of frequent criticism from readers of Heidegger. How does Heidegger go about defending the claim that world-disclosure is *itself* a kind of truth? The secondary literature has often focused on one passage from §44 in particular:

> "What makes this very uncovering possible must necessarily be called
> 'true' in a still more primordial sense." (220)

On the standard reading of this passage, Heidegger is suggesting that because disclosure is that what makes truth *possible*, disclosure in turn deserves to be called a kind of *truth*. Or to put this point differently, (b) holds because of (a).

Needless to say, the majority Heidegger's commentators have not been impressed by this argument. Denis McManus, for example, suggests this argument represents one of the "dubious ways" in which Heidegger defends the notion of *disclosure*. ([2013], 136). Those defending Heidegger have often been forced to appeal to Heidegger's idiosyncratic naming conventions for the phenomena he describes as "primordial".[82] While Heidegger certainly does stick to idiosyncratic naming conventions, I think it's a mistake to view these conventions – or the passage above – as an *argument* for the claim that disclosure

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[81] See Chapter 2.2, above.
[82] For a nice explanation of Heidegger's naming conventions, see Blattner [2006], 123ff. In this place, Blattner also appeals to these naming conventions in defense of the claim that disclosure is a kind of truth.

is a kind of truth. The passage occurs as Heidegger shifts his focus from *discovery* to *disclosure*, and Heidegger is simply flagging this transition to the reader. If the above quotation is an argument at all, it's an argument for the *primordiality* of disclosure, rather than an argument for the status of disclosure as a kind of truth. In other words, Heidegger is saying that *after* we establish disclosure as a kind of truth, we should view it as truth in the "primordial" sense because disclosure is what makes the other notions of truth possible.

So how does Heidegger establish that disclosure amounts to a kind of *truth*? I take Heidegger's argument for this to come immediately after the passage cited above. After referring back to his earlier work on worldhood, Heidegger says:

> What we have pointed out earlier with regard to the existential constitution of the 'there' [*footnote in original*] and in relation to the everyday being of the 'there' [*footnote in original*], pertains to the most primordial phenomenon of truth, nothing less. In so far as the human agent essentially *is* its disclosedness, as disclosed, discloses and discovers, it is essentially 'true'. *The human agent is 'in the truth'*. (221)

This passage is both cryptic and dense, but it's helpful to look back at the sections indicated by Heidegger's footnotes. This, in turn, will help to explain why Heidegger puts the 'is' in italics, along with what Heidegger means by saying that the human agent is essentially 'true'.

Heidegger's two footnotes refer back to the two parts of Chapter V, which is entitled "Being-in as such" [*Das In-Sein als solches*]. It's in this chapter that Heidegger offers his analysis of the human agent as "disposedness" and "understanding", while introducing other important notions such as "interpretation", "discourse" [*Rede*], "language" [*Sprache*], "projection", "thrownness" and "falling". Heidegger's stated goal

of this chapter is to "bring into relief phenomenally the unitary primordial structure of the human agent's being, in terms of which its possibilities and the ways for it 'to be' are ontologically determined" (130). In other words, Heidegger wants to get clear about the basic structure of human agency, in terms of which we can explain each of its comportments or activities. By the end of Chapter V, Heidegger reaches the conclusion that at the most basic level, the human agent is determined by the structure of *care*.

When Heidegger first introduces *care* in *Being and Time* §41, he offers the following definition:

> "the being of Dasein [i.e. care] means ahead-of-itself-being-already-in-(the-world) <u>as</u> being-alongside (entities encountered within the world)". (GA 2: 192, underline added).[83]

A similar definition appears in the *History of the Concept of Time*:

> "[Care, in the formal sense, is] Dasein's being-ahead-of-itself <u>in</u> its always already being alongside something" (GA 20: 408, underline added)[84]

The structure of care, for Heidegger, is an *articulated* structure, in that we can bring into relief distinct elements or parts. From the passages above, we can break up the care structure into three parts:

a) "being-ahead-of itself"

b) "being already in"

c) "being amidst" [*Sein bei*]

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[83] "Sich-vorweg-schon-sein-in-(der-Welt-) als Sein-bei (innerweltlich begegnendem Seienden)."

[84] "… das Sich-vorweg-sein des Dasein in seinem immer schon Sein bei etwas." See also GA 20: 409, 412.

It's generally accepted that the first two elements of the care structure correspond to *understanding* (or projection), and *disposedness* (or thrownness), respectively. But there are well-known debates among Heidegger scholars about whether we can cleanly map another notion from Chapter V onto the third element of the care structure.[85] The important question for us is: what does Heidegger mean by "being amidst"?

Heidegger sets out to answer just this question in the paragraph that immediately follows the *Being and Time* definition of care:

> "Because being-in-the-world is essentially care [*Sorge*], being-amidst the ready-to-hand could be taken in our previous analyses as *concern* [*Besorgen*]... Being-amidst is concern" (GA 2: 193).

In this place, Heidegger *identifies* being-amidst with *concern*, which for Heidegger, is the practical way we comport ourselves toward entities that are tied up with our projects and ends. So at least in Heidegger's initial definition of care, we find concern as a *proper substructure* of care. The dependency of care on concern is made throughout Heidegger's lecture courses as well:

"Care, as such, is concern" (GA 21: 235).

"Concern and solicitude are constitutive of care" (GA 21: 225).

"Care is co-originally *concern*" (GA 21: 225).

"Care is at the same time *a priori* concern" (GA 21: 222).

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[85] The debate stems from the fact at times, Heidegger seems to put Discourse [*Rede*] on par with disposedness and understanding (e.g., GA 2: 133, 161, 165, 180, 296). For a summary of how we got to the received view – which takes discourse to be a structural element of care, see Sheehan [2015], 151. An excellent collection of passages relevant to the debate over the care structure is located in Sheehan [2015], 297-299.

"To put it better, care *qua* structure of Dasein is being-amidst as concern. Caring, as it is in the world, is *eo ipso* concern." (GA 20: 407).

But there's one other aspect of Heidegger's care structure that has unfortunately been overlooked: the prepositions 'as' or 'in' (which I underlined above in the definitions above). Care, for Heidegger, means that understanding and disposedness show up *in* [in] our concern, or they show up *as* [als] concern. To see why this is important, we need to recall that disposedness and understanding, for Heidegger, have the basic function of disclosing the human agent *to itself*. Because we are disposed to take certain things as mattering, the human agent can "find itself [*sich befindet*] in its thrownness… not in the sense of coming across itself by perceiving itself, but in the sense of finding itself in the mood that it has" (GA 2: 135).[86] Likewise, when the human agent projects herself onto possibilities, the agent finds possibilities "in terms of which it is" (GA 2: 148).[87]

Because of this, Heidegger has something truly radical to say with his care structure. What the care structure *means* for Heidegger is that the grip I have on *where I'm going* or *where I've been* is constituted by the current normative orientation of the

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[86] Heidegger also wards off a "reflexive" reading of self-disclosure a few paragraphs later: "From what has been said it appears that a disposedness is very remote from anything like coming across a psychical condition by the kind of apprehending which first turns round and then back. Indeed it is so far from this, that only because the 'there' has already been disclosed in a disposedness can immanent reflection [*Reflexion*] come across 'experiences' at all." (GA 2: 136)

[87] As we saw in the previous footnote (with *disposedness*), Heidegger also wants to stress in the section on *understanding* that this does not require a reflexive act: "The sight which is related primarily and on the whole to existence we call 'transparency' [*Durchsichtigkeit*]. We choose this term to designate 'knowledge of the self' in a sense which is well understood, so as to indicate that here it is not a matter of perceptually tracking down and inspecting a point called the 'Self', but rather one of seizing upon the full disclosedness of being-in-the-world *throughout all* the constitutive items which are essential to it, and doing so with understanding." The German *Durchsichtigkeit* might be better rendered here as 'through-sightedness', since it involves knowing oneself *through* or *by means of* the entities around you.

things around me. Understanding and disposedness show up *in* my concern, and *as* concern. The grip I have on myself – through my disposedness and understanding – is constituted by the current practical orientation that I find out in the world. At the most basic level *care*, for Heidegger, means 'grip on myself *qua* grip on the world'.

This is why Heidegger wants to guard against the reading that 'care' stands "for some special attitude toward the self" or for "an isolated attitude of the 'I' toward itself" (GA 2: 193). For Heidegger, we don't start with a grip on who we are, or with a description under which we value ourselves, only to later give things in the world a normative orientation from that description. Since Heidegger takes the *only* grip we have on ourselves to come through the normative orientation of entities, the story, for Heidegger, is reversed:

> "In any case we must reject the misunderstanding that Dasein first of all is or could be something for whom its being is an issue, and then somehow, as isolated care, occasionally comes unto a world that it is concerned about… Dasein is being-in-the-world; and care is at the same time *a priori* concern" (GA 21: 222).

> "This being out for its own being, which is at issue for it, always takes place already in *being alongside* something, from a being-always-already-in-the-world-involved-in. (In-being is therefore constitutive for every kind of being of Dasein—even for authentic being!)" (GA 20: 408).

Thus the structure described as "care" is nothing other than what I introduced as *reflected self-understanding* in Chapter 1. Because the human agent is constituted by *care*, there is a "mirroring back of the self from things", and this explains why the human agent "never finds itself otherwise than in the things themselves" (GA 24: 247, 159).

At this point, it may seem like we have come a long way from Heidegger's account of truth. But by focusing on the care structure in particular, we have brought out what I take to be Heidegger's argument for the view that *disclosure* is a kind of *truth*. It's my view that Heidegger takes *disclosure* to be a kind of truth because disclosure includes the 'as-structure' that makes truth possible. And in fact, disclosure includes the 'as-structure' in a primary, or basic way. A carpenter, for example, has a grip on herself *as* a carpenter through the way everything around her affords actions suitable for carpentry. By disclosing the world of carpentry, the agent allows herself *to be* a person with the normative commitments that permeate this practical context or world. This is what it means to say that "the human agent essentially *is* its disclosedness" (GA 2: 221).

So the most basic 'is' for Heidegger is one where "I *am* my disclosedness" (GA 2: 132, 221), or "I *am* my world".[88] I take myself *to be* for a certain "for-the-sake-of-which" by allowing the things around me *to be* involved with this activity or end (which is what it means to be determined by *care*). This basic act of disclosure is a kind of *truth*, since it involves interpreting myself "as" my world. And disclosure makes the other modes of truth possible, since disclosing a world of possibilities allows us to discover entities in terms of what they are for.

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[88] See also GA 2: 132: "The entity which is essentially constituted by being-in-the-world *is* itself in every case its 'there'… By reason of this disclosure, this entity (Dasein), together with the being-there of the world, is 'there' for itself."

D.   Response to the "Rights" Objection

One of the most influential critiques of Heidegger's account of truth comes from

Ernst Tugendhat [1967] and [1984]. In these places, Tugendhat takes aim not with

Heidegger's claim that truth requires discovery and disclosedness, but rather with the

way Heidegger seems to *extend* the notion of truth to these phenomena. According to

Tugendhat, "By equating the concepts of uncovering, disclosedness, and unconcealedness

as such with truth there results an overall loss, despite the real gain in insight which these

concepts contain in and for themselves." The loss stems from the fact that in attempting

to "broaden" the concept of truth, Heidegger instead "has given the word truth another

meaning" ([1984], 258).

In the fallout from Tugendhat's critique, Christina Lafont and William Smith have

refined Tugendhat's argument to what has come to be known as the "rights" objection.[89]

According to to Lafont, "the central point" of Tugendhat's critique can be captured in the

question: "What justification and what significance does it have that Heidegger chooses

'truth', of all words, to designate this other phenomenon [of unconcealment]?" ([2000],

116). Or as Smith puts this same charge:

> "The critical question for Tugandhat is with 'what right with what
> meaning' does Heidegger use the term 'truth' to characterize the
> conditions for the possibility of the truth of assertions? More pointedly:
> though clearly prior and necessary for the traditional conception of
> propositional truth, how can these ontological conditions (i.e.

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[89] The "rights" objection is coined by Wrathall. For a history of the debate and the way it has come to focus
on the "rights" objection, see Wrathall [2010], PAGE.

'uncovering', 'disclosedness') be rightly understood as *truth*
themselves?" ([2007], 160).

The basic charge is that even if Heidegger is correct about the phenomena of discovery

and disclosedness as grounding "truth" as traditionally conceived, these phenomena lack

the "right" to be kinds of *truth*. The question for Heidegger, then, is what gives

Heidegger the "right" to extend the notion of truth to discovery or disclosedness?

One thing that stands out in this debate is how little effort critics of Heidegger

spend checking the text for an actual answer on behalf of Heidegger. Despite his

otherwise close reading of Heidegger, Tugendhat immediately suggest that "Heidegger

gives no answer to this question" ([1984], 254). Judging from their immediate adoption

of Tugendhat's critique, Lafont and Smith seem to agree that Heidegger simply fails to

offer any substantive argument in favor of extending the notion of 'truth' to disclosure

and discovery. Perhaps one reason they have failed to find an argument from Heidegger

is because of a stipulation on what such an answer must look like: namely, that in order

for Heidegger to show that discovery or disclosedness are kinds of truth, Heidegger

would need to show how these notions capture the same normative notions we associate

with the traditional concept of truth, such as "the bivalent structure of 'either-or'"[90].

Unfortunately, this kind of stipulation rules out the possibility of a response from

Heidegger from the start, since as we saw above, Heidegger appeals to the normativity of

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[90] Lafont [2000], 148. And according to Smith, "What Tugendhat's question calls for, then is an interpretation of disclosedness that shows how it has the normative dimension within its own sphere how it can be understood as a *critical* as opposed to a *mere* showing up of the world." For a critique of just this view, see Wrathall [2011], 36ff.

"discovery of entities" to *distinguish* it from "discovery of facts". As we saw above, while failing to discover facts involves "covering-over" entities (or showing these entities in a way that they are *not*), failing to discover entities amounts to a "lack of access" to these entities in the first place.

If we set this stipulation aside, I think we find a consistent story in Heidegger for the reason he takes *disclosure* and *discovery of entities* to be kinds of *truth*. As I suggested in the previous two sections (3.3B and 3.3C), disclosure and discovery of entities amount to a kind of *truth*, for Heidegger, because each involves the 'as-structure' of interpretation, which makes truth possible. Because we first encounter entities in terms of what they are for, discovery of entities involves taking these entities to be *as for* certain purposes. Likewise, because the human agent is determined by care, disclosing possibilities for the things around me involves assigning *myself* to a "for-the-sake-of-which", which is a way of taking myself to be *as for* certain ends or activities.

Of course, at the end of the day, Heidegger might be wrong in his analysis of *disclosure* and *discovery*. But recall that Tugendhat and Smith (and also Lafont, to a certain extent) *agree* with Heidegger's general analysis of disclosure and discovery. This puts them in a precarious position, especially in light of the problem of unity. By what "right" do we take an utterance – in contrast to a mere sequence of words – to be something that's a candidate for truth? For Heidegger, the answer to this question goes back to the 'as-structure' of interpretation, which is the very same structure present in discovery and disclosure.

Chapter 4: Understanding and Authenticity

4.0   Introduction

In the first two chapters, I introduced what I call *reflected self-understanding*, which involves "reflection [*Reflexion*]", in the optical sense, in which there is a "mirroring back of the self from things" (GA 24: 247). Sticking to Heidegger's vocabulary from *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, I distinguished between "reflected" and "reflexive" modes of self knowledge. As Heidegger describes it, *reflexive* self-knowledge involves "an ego bent around backward staring at itself", or a kind of "espionage on the ego" (GA 24: 225). In contrast, a *reflected* self-understanding is one that allows that self to "radiate back" or be reflected from the world. Reflected self-understanding allows the human agent to find itself *out in the world*, rather than by looking inward at the "ego" or the "self".

The key feature of *reflected* knowledge is that I don't find myself by looking at myself. To answer the question "Who am I", introspection doesn't help. Instead I find myself by looking away from myself – by looking out into the world. And that's because the human agent understands itself in terms of its projects, or in terms of what it can be – I can be a philosopher, or a bird watcher, and I somehow identify with these projects by allowing things in the world to show up in light of them. This is why, as Heidegger puts it, the human agent always finds itself "in things" (GA 24: 159).

Yet at the same time, the human agent doesn't always make a *choice* about the very activities that it is engaged in. As psychologists Bargh and Chartrand have noted, goals or activities can "become automated in the same way that stereotypes and other

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perceptual structures do, and when this occurs, "the environment itself activates and puts the goal into motion" ([1999], 468). This allows the agent to have goal-oriented responses to the environment without an accompanying awareness of the activity in which they are engaged. Instead, the social context has a way of guiding the agent into activities, or supplying the agent with the very possibilities it uses to make sense of the world.

As *Being and Time* unfolds, Heidegger turns his attention to this very phenomenon. According to Heidegger, in the typical or everyday case, I simply do what "one does" – so it's *Das Man* (i.e., "the one" or "the they") that's been supplying me with possibilities. Even worse, *Das Man* has been keeping it hidden that *it* (rather than me) has been the supplier of possibilities all along. As Heidegger puts it:

> "*Das Man* even hides the manner in which it has tacitly relieved the human agent of the burden of expressly *choosing* these possibilities. It remains indefinite who has 'really' done the choosing. So Dasein makes no choices, gets carried along by the nobody, and thus ensnares itself in inauthenticity" (GA 2: 268).

Not only does my social context have a way of guiding me into activities, or choosing possibilities for me, but it also covers over the fact that my context has "relieved" me of the burden of choosing. This allows me to carry on with my activities without ever realizing that I'm simply going along with the possibilities put before me, and never really making a choice.

But there is hope! As Division II of *Being and Time* unfolds, we find out how the human agent can "reverse" this process and "find itself" by bringing "itself back to itself from its lostness in the 'they'" (GA 2: 268). On the process of becoming authentic – the

story goes – Dasein experiences anxiety, where her projects break down, she can no longer find herself in the world. When this happens, the agent is forced to to reflect on (or perhaps discover, or decide)[91] who she *really* is, independent from these projects. This, in turn, allows the human agent to make a kind of *choice*. As Heidegger explains:

> "This must be accomplished by *making up for not choosing.* But "making up" for not choosing signifies *choosing to make this choice* – deciding for an ability-to-be, and making this decision from one's own self. In choosing to make this choice, the human agent *makes possible*, first and foremost, its authentic potentiality-for-being" (GA 2: 268).

So becoming authentic, for Heidegger, involves at least two things:

(i) Becoming authentic involves some sort of *self-finding*,

(ii) And it involves a kind of *choice*.

As Heidegger explains, "because Dasein is *lost* in the 'they', it must first *find* itself" (GA 2: 268). And further, I can "choose to make a choice" or "choose myself" [*sich selbst wählen*] (GA 24: 243), thereby becoming authentic.

These texts bring up a whole host of questions. What is involved in such a choice? And why am I not only choosing, but choosing to choose? Further, what is the relationship between (i) and (ii)? Does the human agent work through these steps sequentially, e.g., first finding itself, and then making a choice? Or does the agent find itself *in* making a choice? I hope to answer each of these questions below, but there's one further question that's equally pressing in the present context. What happens to the

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[91] This varies among different readings of Heidegger: whether we "discover" who we really are, or "decide" who we are. Either reading finds support in *Being and Time*.

reflected self-understanding that was so important to the practically engaged agent? Does "finding oneself" involve some kind of *reflexive* grasp on myself, above and beyond the *reflected* grasp of the practically engaged agent?

On a popular reading of Heidegger, the answer to this last question is "yes": becoming authentic involves a *reflexive* kind of self-knowledge *above and beyond* the reflected self-knowledge described above. Steven Crowell is perhaps the most explicit advocate for this reading of Heidegger. Crowell suggests that becoming authentic is the result of "a radical form of first-person self-awareness" which "requires that I be able to grasp myself as 'I-myself' independent of the roles I occupy and the practices I engage in" ([2013], 217). In other words, Crowell suggests that there's a *reflexive* moment in becoming authentic, which involves a reflexive grip on myself – rather than just the understanding that comes from looking out into the world.

Beatrice Han-Pile takes a reflexive grasp on oneself to be required for to make a second-order choice. According to Han-Pile, the "choice to choose" involves what she calls a "self-ascription of responsibility" ([2013], 297), where I not only make a choice, but also have a kind of awareness that I am the one who is choosing. To ward off an overly-intellectualized picture of such a choice, Han-Pile calls this a "pre-reflected" awareness of oneself to highlight that the awareness needn't be thematic. But it's a *reflexive* awareness on her account nonetheless. I'm aware of *myself* as the one responsible for choosing.

We see reflexive moments creep up in other accounts as well. For example, Iain Thomson suggests that becoming authentic requires a "reflexive" reconnection with the

world. And this means that the agent reconnects to her world with a new-found grasp on her own finitude ([2013], 266). And Tom Sheehan suggests something similar to Thomson: according to Sheehan, the agent that is *authentic* acts in the world with an awareness of one's ontological structure ([2015], 180).

It's worth stepping back for a moment to be clear about the central issue of this chapter. To set things up, consider Thomson's summary of the "double movement" of becoming authentic:

> Authenticity involves, "a (literally) revolutionary movement by which
> we are involuntarily turned away from the world and then voluntarily
> turn back to it, in which the grip of the world upon us is broken in order
> that we may thereby gain (or regain) our grip on this world" ([2013]:
> 274).

So we disconnect from the world, then reconnect back to it. Or we lose our grip on the world, and then gain (or regain) a grip on things. That's Heidegger's general picture.

But it seems that not "any" kind of reconnection will do. We don't just take a time out, and then go back to the same undifferentiated or inauthentic way of living. So the question is, what is it that makes our reconnection to the world one that is *authentic*? Is our new, authentic grip on the world qualitatively different from the original, inauthentic grip? Or does all of the magic take place in the moment when we are disconnected?

On the standard reading of Heidegger, in order for an agent's reconnection to the world to be authentic, it needs to be accompanied by some kind of new-found reflexive awareness of *myself*. I not only have a grip on the world, but I realize that it's *my* grip (Crowell). Or I go back to acting in the world, but with an awareness that it's *me* that's doing the choosing (Han-Pile). Or with an awareness that *I* am the type of agent who is

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finite, or who is mere projection, etc. (Thomson, Sheehan). So on this standard approach, what the new, authentic grip on the world includes (and what the former grip lacked) was some sort awareness of myself, and either *who* or *what* I am.

No doubt, there are many passages in Heidegger that suggest this kind of picture. Heidegger says that anxiety brings the human agent "face to face" with itself, and the call of conscience "reaches the self" (GA 2: 274), thereby allowing the agent to "find itself in the very depths of its uncanniness" (GA 2: 276). Further, there are some passages in *Being and Time* that seem to suggest *only* the inauthentic agent understands itself in terms of [*aus*] the world. These include some "proximally and for the most part" passages:

> "[The human agent] finds *itself* proximally and for the most part *in things*." (GA 24: 159)

> "Proximally and for the most part, the human agent *is* in terms of *what* it is concerned with." (GA 2: 141)

The suggestion, then, might be that the agent understands itself "proximally and for the most part" in the world of its concern. But in special, authentic cases of human agency, the *authentic* agent finds a way to escape the condition that it has "proximally and for the most part" and develops some radically new reflexive form of self-awareness.

This is exactly the view suggested by Crowell: "For all its usefulness, Heidegger's account of ontologically primordial self-awareness as a 'reflection back' from the things with which I am practically absorbed cannot be considered an adequate account of self-awareness. Nor did Heidegger intend it as such." ([2013], 173). According to Crowell, Heidegger's account of *reflected self-understanding* is incomplete, because Heidegger takes this kind of self-understanding to be characteristic of only the

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inauthentic agent. To support this reading, Crowell points to Heidegger's claim that the human agent "understands itself proximally and for the most part in terms of the world" (GA 2: 156).

But just one page earlier, Crowell introduces the "reflected" grip an agent has on herself alongside a much stronger claim. According to Heidegger:

> "[The human agent] <u>never finds itself otherwise</u> than in the things themselves. (GA 24: 159, emphasis added)

This stronger claim appears in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* alongside the weaker "proximally and for the most part" passage above. While Crowell cites the stronger passage, he never works out the trouble it seems to pose for his view. After all, Heidegger's stronger claim seems to capture something about human agency in *both* authentic and inauthentic modes. If the authentic agent never finds itself other than in things, then how could this agent go on to find itself reflexively, *independent* from the things themselves?

The goal of this chapter is to work out a reading of authenticity in *Being and Time* that allows Heidegger to make good on this stronger claim. In other words, I take it that for Heidegger, reflexive self-knowledge is the *only* kind of self-knowledge important for explaining human agency either of its modes. Because of this, what makes the agent *authentic* cannot be a new-found reflexive grip on *herself*, since it's precisely this reflexive grip that Heidegger is trying to do without.

But there are still plenty of "reflexive" sounding passages in *Being and Time*, and as we saw above, Heidegger advocates the view the becoming authentic requires some kind of *self-finding*. This leaves us with an interpretive puzzle:

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Non-Reflexivity – in what sense does Dasein "*find* itself" (GA 2: 268), or "return to itself" (GA 20: 389), if "Dasein never finds itself otherwise than in the things themselves"? (GA 24: 159)

Strictly speaking, I'm not sure if it's quite right to call this an "interpretive" puzzle, and that's because I take this to be Heidegger's genuine question leading into Division II. In other words, the question isn't how we should *interpret* Heidegger in light of these claims, because these claims seem to articulate the very question that Heidegger was asking. Rather than appealing to a new, reflexive element in the life of the human agent, Heidegger was asking how Dasein could "find itself" or "return to itself" *without* one.

And that's why it becomes something of a mantra in Division II to not forget about the progress made in Division I. For example, stating that the human agent discloses *itself* in "resoluteness", Heidegger reminds the reader that this involves bringing the self "right into" its practical and social world of concern and solicitude: [92]

> Resoluteness, as *authentic being-one's-self,* does not detach Dasein from its world, nor does it isolate it so that it becomes a free-floating 'I'. And how should it, when resoluteness as authentic disclosedness, is *authentically*, nothing else than *being-in-the-world*? Resoluteness brings

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[92] Also passages like: "The call comes *from* me… and yet *from beyond me and over me.*" (GA 2: 275, ellipses added for emphasis). Or, "…when the call of conscience summons us to our potentiality-for-being, it does not hold before us some empty ideal of existence, but *calls us forth into the* [practical] Situation." The call comes from Dasein. But "It is not a free-floating self-projection; but its character is determined by thrownness as a fact of the entity which it is; and, as so determined, it has in each case already been delivered over to existence, and it constantly remains so." (GA 2: 276) In all of these, Heidegger says some "reflexive" sounding things, just to remind us that he isn't trying posit anything (reflexive) that he did away with in Division I.

the self right into its current concernful being-alongside what is
available, and pushes it into solicitous being with others." (GA 2: 298)

Passages like this show that Heidegger is reaching for something in Division II. He wants

to capture elements of selfhood that we typically take to be grounded in our own

reflexive self-awareness. But he wants to accommodate these features of selfhood *without*

forgetting about the (non-reflexive) human agent of Division I.

4.2   What makes Reflected Self-Knowledge *Inauthentic*?

In his analysis of the the authentic agent, Heidegger touches on a wide range of

topics that are bound to be covered on any course on Existentialism: death, anxiety, guilt,

conscience, resoluteness. Each of these notions, according to Heidegger, corresponds to

an existential structure that makes it possible for the agent to be authentic. Rather than

reconstructing Heidegger's account of authenticity by way of these structures, I propose

that we start with the following question: what is it that makes the human agent

inauthentic?

To put this question in a different light, Division I of *Being and Time* ends with

what seems to be a nice finale. In the final chapter of Division I, Heidegger designates

care as the "being" of the human agent, bringing together the essential structures of

human agency outlined one chapter earlier in Heidegger's analysis of "being-in". The

chapter then closes with a crescendo, when Heidegger shows how the structure of care

can help solve traditional philosophical problems concerning the reality of the external

world, and the notion of truth. The analysis of the human agent in Division I seems to be

complete – that is, until Heidegger closes out Division I with a question: "Has our

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investigation up to this point ever brought the human agent into view *as a whole* [*als Ganzes*]?" (230).

A first-time reader of Heidegger might answer this with a resounding 'yes', since just a few sections earlier, Heidegger presented the care structure as the "formal existential wholeness [*Ganzheit*] of the ontological structural whole [*Strukturganzen*] of the human agent" (192). But in the opening pages of Division II, Heidegger instead answers his own question with a resounding 'no'. The problem, it seems, is that we still haven't seen what gives "unity" to this structural whole since Division I has only offered an analysis of the agent in its "inauthentic" mode: "As long as the existential structure of an authentic ability-to-be has not been brought into the idea of existence, the fore-sight by which an *existential* interpretation is guided will lack primordiality" (233).

The connection between authenticity and "being-a-whole" might not be immediately obvious, but as we see in §64, what's really at issue for Heidegger is the notion of *selfhood*. It's possible to lay out all of the structures important to selfhood without saying what it *means* to be a self (i.e., without saying what these structures *amount* to, or what gives them unity). Heidegger notes that traditionally, accounts of selfhood tend to appeal to an "I" as that which holds the self together (317), but it's precisely this position that Heidegger wants to resist. According to Heidegger, "the self is not to be traced back either to an 'I'-substance or to a 'subject'… but must be understood in terms of our *authentic* ability to be" (322). And this means that we need to how selfhood arises from within the care structure already outlined in Division I: "Selfhood is

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to be discerned existentially only in one's authentic ability-to-be-one's-self – that is to say, in the authenticity of the human agent's being *as care*" (322).

As we saw above, what the care structure *means* for Heidegger, is that the grip I have on *where I'm going* or *where I've been* is constituted by the current normative orientation of the things around me. To say that the being of the human agent is care, is just to say that the "primary human comportment" of the human agent is one of reflected (or non-reflexive) self-understanding.[93] This means that the the care structure from Division I – along with Heidegger's account of reflected self-understanding – is not to be abandoned in the analysis of selfhood. Instead, Heidegger's aim is to show how we can instantiate the care structure in either inauthentic or authentic modes, or have different *kinds* or reflected self-understanding.

At the beginning of this section, I proposed that we start by asking what it is that makes the human agent *inauthentic*. We can now ask more precisely, what notion (or notions) important the concept of *selfhood* are missing from the account of reflected self-understanding that Heidegger provides in Division I? By highlighting what makes a certain case of reflected self-understanding *inauthentic*, we can in the next section bring out what makes a case of reflected self-understanding one that is *authentic*.

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[93] See Chapter 3.3c and Chapter 1.3.

One common suggestion is that what's missing from Division I is an account of the first-person, or the "first-person point of view". [94] As we saw above, Crowell and Carman each make this suggestion explicit, although each holds the first-person to be important to selfhood for different reasons.[95] According to Crowell [2013], Heidegger needs to account for the "first-person" in order to explain "how it is that Dasein dwells in a world and does not merely function in an environment" (171). In particular, Crowell suggests that Heidegger introduces the first-person in Division II in order to capture how the human agent acts "not merely in accord with norms but in light of them" (170). According to Crowell, "Division I's account of intelligibility cannot capture this distinction", and that's precisely because the Division I lacks an account of the first-person.[96]

I agree with Crowell that the distinction he highlights – acting in accordance with norms vs acting in light of them – should be captured in any account of selfhood. But I'm not convinced that first-person awareness of oneself is required to capture this distinction (nor am I convinced that *Heidegger* would take first-person awareness to be required). To motivate each of these claims, Crowell suggests, "What I encounter in the world can be

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[94] In Chapter 1, I suggested that we should refrain from using the phrase "first-person point of view" because it's a mixed metaphor, borrowing both from language and visual perception. The problem, I suggested, is that the phrase invites conflating "perspectival" interpretive acts with those that are "first-personal", or that pick out the self in a privileged, reflexive way.
[95] Taylor Carman suggests that Division II of *Being and Time* "is concerned largely with the ontological irreducibility of the first-person point of view" ([2003] 267).
[96] For a nice summary of this general argument, see Crowell [2015], 216-220. Rebecca Kukla [2002] also suggests that the inauthentic agent, for Heidegger, cannot act in light of norms because the inauthentic agent "could not step back from them so as to see them as making a claim upon her" (4).

held up to norms or standards only because in my very being I must hold myself to standards, that is, understand myself as being something that can succeed and fail" ([2013], 28). Crowell provides an example of being a writer:

> "the practices of being a writer (the long hours at the computer, the wrangling with publishers, etc.) have salience for me – their demands take on normative force – only because I am trying to be a writer. To try is not merely to act in accord with norms (mechanically, as it were) but to be responsive to the normative, to the possibility of living up to the demands of what it is to be a writer or failing to do so. A monkey could perhaps try to write, but it could not try to *be* a writer; could not, in Heidegger's terms, understand itself as a writer, act in light of writerly norms" ([2013], 28-29).

But it isn't obvious to me that acting in light of the norms of writing requires viewing *myself* as a writer. The picture that Heidegger presents is one in which *the world* makes demands on me. In order for a pilot to land a plane, the plane needs to be in a certain position at a certain time; but these are norms that govern where the *plane* should be. When the plane gets out of position, the pilot who is responsive to the norms governing aviation acts by getting the plane back in line. Likewise, the writer knows what a good book looks like, and she carries on with her writing in light of these norms. But this doesn't require that she measures *herself* up to the norms of writing; instead, she makes sure her *book* is one that measures up (just as the pilot makes sure the *plane* is in the right position).

I take this to be the position advocated by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. For Heidegger, the human agent *always* finds itself *out in the world*: the grip I have on *who I am* can come from the practical orientation of the world around me. But it's important to Heidegger that the practical or normative orientation of the world does not follow from a

description of *myself* as a "writer" or a "pilot". This gets the picture backward. Only in allowing the things around me *to be* for writing – or by allowing these things to be governed by the norms of writing – do I have a kind of identity as a writer. Crowell points out that the 'toward-which' of equipment, according to Heidegger, always refers back my very own 'for-the-sake-of-which' (which Crowell renders as my "practical identity"). But I take this to be the reason *why*, for Heidegger, we needn't hold reflexive attitudes about ourselves. I needn't reflexively establish my 'for-the-sake-of-which' *prior* to encountering the world, because it is *through* the 'toward-which' of equipment that I grasp my 'for-the-sake-of-which'.

One possible response might be that acting in light of norms that govern *me* requires an extra level of *commitment*. Crowell seems to suggest this, for example, when considers his decision to attend his son's Little League game rather than having a beer with his buddies, which is a way of endorsing the first possibility as "normatively better than the latter" ([2013], 222). For Crowell, making the decision about *who he is* allows him to be responsible, or "become a ground" for his "ability-to-be". What this example shows, for Crowell, is that "Dasein's ability to be oriented explicitly toward what is 'best,' in this sense, is why the first-person point of view is ontologically irreducible in the account of the understanding of being" ([2013], 222).

But it isn't obvious to me that the first-person is doing any work here for Crowell – all the work seems to be in the fact that he is forced to make a *commitment*, or make a *decision* about which possibility is better (rather than the fact that these are possibilities for *himself*). We can imagine, for example, new parents who buy a house and need to

decide whether to utilize the spare bedroom as a nursery or as a bar. They are presented with two options, and need to endorse one as "best", which would make them responsible or answerable for their decision. Or take a different example of an art curator who decides which piece is 'is best' for an exhibit. Since the curator will need to act on her decision, and since this decision will be open to criticism, she will be *committing* to certain possibilities for the art exhibit, even though she isn't making a decision about *herself*. What seems to be doing the work in Crowell's original case is the fact that he is making a *decision* to endorse certain possibilities as better or worse, rather than the fact that he is making a decision about *himself*.[97]

And it's precisely the *decision* or *endorsement* of certain possibilities that seems to be absent in cases of inauthentic agency. As I described in Chapter 1, the most basic way we encounter entities within the world is through a forth-and-back motion. In the first motion, we "get ahead" of things by getting involved in an activity, or adopting a practical perspective. And in the second motion, we return to *things* by interpreting the world in light of that activity. While both authentic and inauthentic forms of agency involve this very same structure, what's lacking from the inauthentic case is the kind of *choice* that would make the person's activity one that is *owned* or *authentic*. And that's

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[97] One might contend that in decisions about how to utilize space in a new home, or about which piece of art to include, we can appeal to *Das Man* in the form of social norms to "disburden" ourselves from the decision. But it isn't clear why Crowell's original case would be exempt from this same challenge.

because the human agent can be moved into activities by their social context without ever holding attitudes *about* the activities in which they are engaged.

In sum, I started this section by asking what it is about what it is about selfhood that is *missing* from the inauthentic agent. In contrast to Crowell, I rejected the suggestion that what is missing is the first-person grasp on myself, which Crowell takes to be required in order to act in light of norms. One problem with Crowell's approach is that it is possible for me to act in light of norms – and even to endorse these norms – without reflexively taking these norms to govern *me*. Instead, I can endorse the norms that govern the things around me. And this, I take it, is the key to authenticity. What's missing from the inauthentic agent is any kind of endorsement of the how the things around me should be.

4.3 What makes Reflected Self-Knowledge *Authentic*?

I turn now to the positive details of my suggestion above: namely, that the *authentic* agent is one that makes an endorsement of how the things around her should be. This is to say, the authentic agent is one that makes a commitment to the practical orientation of the things around her, thereby acquiring a kind of ownership of the possibilities in terms of which entities in the world are encountered.

For orientation, consider the following example. When I walk into a classroom, I encounter things in the room from within the practical context of teaching. Each item of equipment "belongs somewhere" and has a function tied up with the activity of teaching. (GA 2: 102). And this means I'm responsive to the norms that govern where things

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should be. When I walk into a messy classroom, I feel uneasy because the tables and chairs are not in the right place, and I feel drawn to fix this because I'm attuned to the norms that govern or specify where things should be.

That's not to say that I hold the the equipment *responsible* for being in the wrong place. Suppose I can tell the dodgeball club held a meeting in the classroom the previous night, since all the chairs are pushed to the perimeter. In this case, I wouldn't take the *chairs* to be responsible for being in the wrong place, but instead the members of the dodgeball club who put them there. One might take this to show that normativity only governs *agents*, but I take this to be true only on a narrow understanding of "normativity", where normativity is associated only with our practices of ascribing moral praise or blame. After all, I hold the members of the dodgeball club morally responsible only *after* I find the chairs to be in the wrong place. And the chairs can be in the wrong place, even if an agent isn't responsible for their placement (e.g., if an earthquake bounces them around).

There are times, however, that I might hold the equipment "responsible" for being in the wrong place – although not in the *moral* sense of the term. Suppose I walk into the classroom and find a chair with a broken leg, tipped to its side. In this case, I would take the chair to be deficient, in the sense that it doesn't measure up to a standard. I have an understanding of what the chairs are *for*, which is to say that I encounter the chairs in terms of the possibilities they offer in the activity of teaching. When the chair no longer affords sitting, it becomes "unavailable", or an item of equipment that "one would like to

shove out of the way" (GA 2: 73-74). When the equipment isn't up to par, I need to fix the situation by fixing the equipment.

The cases described above – the messy room or the chair with a broken leg – are ordinary "breakdown" cases described by Heidegger in §16 of *Being and Time*. I'm calling these cases "ordinary" because neither of these instances would prompt me to call into question whether the activity of teaching is *worth it*. But we can imagine more extreme cases where things seem to break down completely. Perhaps I attend the dodgeball club one evening and find the sport to be truly amazing. On top of this, my students seem learn more from Coursera than they do from my lectures, and these darn chairs are becoming expensive to fix. At a certain point, I might encounter a new possibility, namely that it would be impossible to make sense of the room as a "classroom" altogether. This would force me to decide whether to take a stand on the activity of teaching.

The complete breakdown of an activity is not what Heidegger calls "death", but it's one step away from it. What Heidegger calls "death" is "the possibility of no-longer being-able-to-be-there" (GA 2: 250). The possibility of death, for Heidegger, is the possibility of being unable to find *any* meaningful configuration for the things around us, or *any* activity in light of which we can make sense of the world. When my activity breaks down completely, I'm no longer able to make sense of the world in terms of that activity, which in exposes me to the possibility of being unable to make sense of the world in terms of *any* activity whatsoever.

The way an agent relates to that possibility is what determines, for Heidegger, whether or not that agent is *authentic*. An "*inauthentic* being-toward-death" is characterized by a "fleeing in the face of death" (GA 2: 254, 259). When it becomes difficult to sustain the activity of teaching – or to work out the sense that things make in terms of the activity of teaching – I might allow myself to become absorbed in whatever activity is easiest. This would be one way of fleeing in the face of death, and it involves allowing myself to be carried along by whatever is convenient, or to be lost in whatever possibilities "accidentally thrust themselves" upon me (GA 2: 264). Another way to flee from the possibility of death is to double down on one's current activity *for the sake of* not making a choice about which activities are worthwhile. When things start to break down, I might cling still to the activity of teaching just to flee from the possibility of not being able to find any meaningful patterns in the world whatsoever. This, according to Heidegger, is a way of guarding myself by "falling back" behind my ability-to-be.

In contrast, Heidegger describes an *authentic* being-toward-death as one in which the agent "anticipates" death as a possibility. When I anticipate death, I understand that all possibilities are "finite" [*endliche*] or able to end, and this "liberates" me so I can "for the first time authentically understand and choose among the factical possibilities lying ahead" (GA 2: 264). What anticipation of death makes possible is what John Haugeland calls an *honest commitment*, in that: "first, it requires honest and dedicated effort to making it work, and yet, second, it also requires the honest courage, eventually to admit that it cannot be made to work—if it cannot—and then to quit" ([2002], 274). When I anticipate death – or view the world in light of the fact that all activities might come to an

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end – I'm am "freed" to make a commitment to how things should be, rather than being carried along by trends, or sticking to the way things currently are.

At the beginning of this chapter, I looked at Thomson's description of the process by which an agent becomes authentic, which involves a "revolutionary movement by which we are involuntarily turned away from the world and then voluntarily turn back to it" ([2013], 274). The question posed earlier was: when the authentic agent "reconnects" with the world, what gets added to the earlier picture that makes this reconnection one that is *authentic*? I believe that Heidegger's answer is that the authentic agent is one that makes a *commitment* to some practical orientation of the things around her – or makes a commitment to the way the world is meaningfully articulated. It's through this kind of commitment that she acquires a kind of ownership of over the possibilities afforded by the things around her.[98]

With this in view, we can now return to the Non-Reflexivity Problem:

Non-Reflexivity – in what sense does Dasein "*find* itself" (GA 2: 268), or "return to itself" (GA 20: 389), if "Dasein never finds itself otherwise than in the things themselves"? (GA 24: 159)

As I suggested above, by insisting that that the authentic agent must "*find* itself", Heidegger was not trying to posit a new reflexive grip that an agent must have on *herself*. Instead, Heidegger's insistence that the agent must "*find* itself" was his way of

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[98] And just as *being* responsible is separate from *taking* oneself to be responsible (or of ascribing responsibility of oneself), a distinction can be made between *having ownership* and *claiming ownership*. The former amounts to *being authentic*. While the latter amounts to merely self-ascribing authenticity.

articulating *that which needs to be explained*. Heidegger's *question* leading into Division II is about the sense in which an agent can "find itself" or "return to itself" *without* reflexively looking back at an 'I' or at herself.

Heidegger's answer, I believe, is that an agent finds herself by living up to the kind of entity that she is, namely one that can make a commitment to what is valuable out in the world. By making a commitment to the way entities should be practically oriented, she takes on a kind of ownership over the world she inhabits – which can be done without any reflexive attitudes about *herself*.

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