

2010

# From Husserl and the neo-Kantians to art: Heidegger's realist historicist answer to the problem of the origin of meaning

William H. Koch  
*University of South Florida*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd>

 Part of the [American Studies Commons](#)

---

## Scholar Commons Citation

Koch, William H., "From Husserl and the neo-Kantians to art: Heidegger's realist historicist answer to the problem of the origin of meaning" (2010). *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*.  
<http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/1684>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [scholarcommons@usf.edu](mailto:scholarcommons@usf.edu).

From Husserl and the Neo-Kantians to Art:  
Heidegger's Realist Historicist Answer to the Problem of the Origin of Meaning

by

William H. Koch

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Philosophy  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Charles Guignon, Ph.D.  
Roger Ariew, Ph.D.  
Ofelia Schutte, Ph.D.  
P. Christopher Smith, Ph.D.  
Joanne Waugh, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:  
January 20, 2010

Keywords: Practice, Dreyfus, Phenomenology, Aesthetics, Aletheia

© Copyright 2010, William Koch

## Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Introduction: The New Neo-Kantians and the Problem of the Conceptual	1
Chapter One: Phenomenology	30
Section 1: Phenomenology and the Neo-Kantian Challenge	32
Section 2: Categorical Intuition and Understanding	46
Section 3: Intentionality, Care, and Gelassenheit	62
Chapter Two: <u>Being and Time</u> and Beyond	86
Section 1: Three Worlds, Worldhood and Sign	88
Section 2: Anxiety and the Problem of World Change	112
Section 3: Phenomenology, the Problem of Universals, and the A Priori	124
Chapter Three: “The Origin of the Work of Art” and Realist Historicism	150
Section 1: Truth and Untruth; The Reservoir of the Undisclosed	151
Section 2: The Example of “The Origin of the Work of Art”	174
Section 3: The Inescapable Circle and the Kantian Arrow	215
Conclusion: Reality’s Resistances	228
Bibliography	246
About the Author	End Page

From Husserl and the Neo-Kantians to Art: Heidegger's Realist Historicist Answer to the Problem of the Origin of Meaning

William H. Koch

ABSTRACT

In this work I present both a historical and philosophical argument. First, I use Martin Heidegger's early interest in the argument that concepts are furnished to the mind directly by experience, as found in Edmund Husserl's categorial intuition and Emil Lask's principle of the material determination of form, to build an interpretation of *Being and Time* and "The Origin of the Work of Art" which provides a unified understanding of Heidegger's consistent underlying position throughout his career as one of realist historicism. My interpretation of Heidegger as a realist historicist rejects the reading of *Being and Time* as a transcendental project and the claim that Heidegger, like Kant, has an abstractionist view of concept formation. Rather, for the realist historicist, our modes of relating to things, even the supposedly conceptual, have the form of engaged historical practices. These practices are understood as arising from the things they concern rather than being subjectively abstracted from, or imposed upon, them. This view furnishes us with an understanding of art as a key type of historical event through which practices arise or are changed. This position necessitates, however, a rejection of any a-historical universal knowledge and reveals the substantialist assumptions that underlie such claims to knowledge. I then apply this new reading of Heidegger to the debate between Hubert Dreyfus and John McDowell concerning the nature of skillful coping. I show that

Dreyfus' embodied non-conceptual understanding of skill acquisition fails to take seriously the centrality of membership in a historical community while McDowell's position fails to appreciate that practices and not concepts are primary.

## Introduction: The New Neo-Kantians and the Problem of the Conceptual

“One ought to have a close look at the sophistry being pursued today with schemata like form-content, rational-irrational, finite-infinite, mediated-unmediated, subject-object. It is what the critical stance of phenomenology ultimately struggles against. When the attempt is made to unify them, one treats phenomenology in a superficial manner. Phenomenology can only be appropriated phenomenologically, i.e., only through demonstration and not in such a way that one repeats propositions, takes over fundamental principles, or subscribes to academic dogmas.”<sup>1</sup>

This project has two main purposes. First, it seeks to offer a new reading of the interconnection and development of Heidegger’s works. Second, it is an attempt to apply the position discovered in my reading of Heidegger to a major contemporary debate concerning the nature of mind and world. I will attempt to present Heidegger as a Realist Historicist and to show that Realist Historicism can be, but has not been, used to good effect in the Heideggerian argument made by Hubert Dreyfus against John McDowell. In this introduction I would like to briefly present the outlines of the project on these two registers and to lay the necessary groundwork for the historical reading and argument that is to follow.

At the most basic level Realist Historicism is the view that what we understand as history arises as the temporal manifestation or expression of *what-is*. For Heidegger this will mean that things are meaningful insofar as they fit into our complex of practices, that these practices and their changes over time are what make up history, and that these

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity* John van Buren trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) p. 37 henceforth cited as [OHF.]

practices ultimately originate from what they concern. There are several major implications already discernible within the extremely schematic position I have just presented for Heidegger. First, Realist Historicism will contain as a major element the Primacy of Practice that William Blattner has argued is central to Heidegger's work.<sup>2</sup> Blattner defines the Primacy of Practice as the view that "the intelligence and intelligibility of human life is explained primarily by practice and that the contribution made by cognition is derivative."<sup>3</sup> This will mean for us that questions about the nature and origin of concepts or cognitive categories are parasitic upon questions about the origin and nature of practices. As we will show, much of Heidegger's reinvention of Edmund Husserl's categorial intuition and Emil Lask's principle of the material determination of form will rest upon the move of relocating issues previously concerning concepts and categories into the realm of practices. Indeed, one way to describe my project here is as an attempt to trace the development of what will appear as Blattner's Primacy of Practice in *Being and Time* from Heidegger's early involvement with Husserl, Dilthey and the Neo-Kantians and then to trace where this insight goes following *Being and Time*. This brings us to our second major implication. Specifically, Heidegger's Realist Historicist commitments necessitate a powerful anti-mentalism. This means that the model of the subject, or humanity, primarily as minds relating to objects or the world is going to be rejected by Heideggarian Realist Historicism. Rather than minds or objects

---

<sup>2</sup> For these arguments see, for example, William Blattner "Ontology, the A Priori, and the Primacy of Practice" in Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas ed. *Transcendental Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007) henceforth [TH.] and "The Primacy of Practice and Assertoric Truth: Dewey and Heidegger" in Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas ed. *Heidegger, Authenticity and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus vol. 1* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000) henceforth [HAM.]

<sup>3</sup> TH. p. 10

Heidegger will talk of practices and projects through which such things as people and material things come to light as meaningful. Third, insofar as practices are our access to *what-is* and practices are historical, i.e. temporal and changing through time, we can never be assured of any unchanging, universal or a-historical knowledge. All knowledge will be historical knowledge open to change in the face of the development of new practices or the collapse of old practices. It is important to stress that these changes, the rise of new practices and the collapse of old ones, must on this model be seen as expressions of *what-is* and not human accidents or historical contingencies. As we will see this follows necessarily from the details of categorial intuition and Lask's principle of the material determination of form. For the Realist Historicist, historical change tells us about the nature of what exists.

I have been using vague phrases such as "what exists" up until now and it will be useful to pause for a moment and discuss why I have chosen to use these terms and in what sense the Realist Historicist is, in fact, a realist. Insofar as I am presenting Heidegger as a Realist Historicist it is possible to claim that Realist Historicism can be understood as a very specific form of phenomenology. As the central elements of Realist Historicism I have presented should suggest, the Realist Historicist will be a phenomenologist who grounds her or his claims on the way that things show up for us in our practices. It is practice, and the history practice carries with it, which is the phenomenon on which the studies of the Realist Historicist focuses and upon which the descriptions offered by the Realist Historicist will be grounded. In this sense, then, the Realist Historicist is just seeking to get clear about what we all implicitly assume in our day to day practices and her or his claims, if correct, should point to what we are always



already assuming but often rarely aware of. From this perspective “what is” is a stand in for “what is of everyday concern”. In one case, then, what is and is of concern might be Justice while in another case it may be dinner or one’s own sense of self. For the Realist Historicist, to get clear about what these things are we must investigate the practices in which they appear as of concern to us and, in doing so, investigate the historical contexts from which they arose and in which they continue. It is necessary to stress here a hermeneutical commitment to specificity, things only show up in particular practices and investigations and so discussing the nature of ultimate reality, by which we mean something like “what at base level everything is throughout all practices” is going to be to fall into the transcendental trap we claim the Realist Historicist avoids.<sup>4</sup>

The position I am presenting can be understood as realist in, then, at least two senses. First, it is ontologically realist in the sense that it claims that there is a reality independent of human imagining, thinking, willing or desiring. Indeed, the anti-mentalism of the Realist Historicist is also an overt anti-idealism insofar as ideas are derived from lived practices. Similarly, if we understand social constructivism to be the claim that a group creates its own meaning by creating its own structure of social practices, Heidegger’s focus on understanding the originating disclosive event from which worlds take their start as arising from neither individuals nor groups of people but rather from reality itself must be seen as a rejection of social constructivism. If, on the

---

<sup>4</sup> The question of whether this rejection of universal claims can be conjoined to the claims of Realist Historicism itself will be discussed at the end of this work. It is enough for now to state here that the central claims presented by, say, the Realist Historicist Heidegger are made based upon how the specific investigations of Heidegger have progressed, and what we seem justified in thinking from the limits of our own shared practices, without claiming, either potentially or actually, universal truth.

other hand, we wish to ask if there is a reality independent of all practices this is something about which the Realist Historicist claims to be able to say very little. The position allows neither a strong event ontology in which reality would be identified with that special class of events called practices, nor does it allow a claim about what could meaningfully exist exterior to practices. It is, however, important to note that the finitude of all practices and their dependence upon other practices and, from Heidegger's perspective, their dependence upon origins suggests that no given practice can itself be thought of as self-sufficient nor can a totality of practices, i.e. a world, insofar as the mystery of that given world's origin and the incompleteness of its own ongoing practices and self-conceptions point beyond its own limitations. One might hazard to suggest that the Realist Historicist holds an event ontology with two types of events, originating events and the practices which are ongoing echoes of such events. This, however, would be to overlook the role that Heidegger attributes to that which is beyond the boundaries of any specific disclosive-event which he calls the undisclosed, the Mystery, or the Earth.

The position I am presenting is realist in an epistemic sense as well, which might be seen as a stranger claim. The epistemic realist claims not only that reality exists but also that our claims about reality get it right. The Realist Historicist must admit the disclosive nature of all practices and claims, in other words the partial truth of all practices, while also pointing to the finitude of all disclosures, in other words the partial untruth of all practices. Of course, what this should suggest is that there has been a fundamental change of meaning in the move from traditional philosophy to Heidegger, and part of what has changed meaning is the concept of truth. The traditional epistemic realist exists in a framework where something like a completely true statement or

representation is possible and meaningful. For the Realist Historicist the nature of truth is for it to be grounded in what it conceals and fails to reveal. Once we grasp this point we can appreciate the reverse as well, that we can see the way in which a statement or practice gets reality wrong only insofar as it directs our attention to its own inadequacy and, often, to the history through which it has drifted from its original disclosivity or been falsified in service to some other practice. Ultimately, the most important thing to realize in relation to the talk of the epistemic realist is that the first step in assessing the truth of a claim is to understand what the claim means which, I and the Realist Historicist would claim, very often requires an involved investigation into the meaning of the practices in which such a claim arises and the history from which such practices have derived. The dream of verifying and falsifying claims is replaced, then, with the ongoing practice of attempting to fully understanding them. Whether we talk in terms of claims or traditions, this is the primary practice of the Realist Historicist.

My talk of ontological and epistemic realism should reveal that there is a disconnect between the position I am labeling Realist Historicism and traditional discussions of realism. Ultimately, the problematic which drives the debates around realism derives from the modernist image of humanity as subjects relating to objects. The question of realism is usually formulated in terms of the ultimate nature of the object. For this reason, a realist is often thought of as someone who thinks reality exists and defines that reality as something independent of subjectivity and unchanging in certain fundamental ways. I can claim realism for the Realist Historicist only, then, in the sneaky sense that the Realist Historicist rejects the subject/object model of the human condition and so too rejects the idea that what “is” rests upon subjectivity in some sense. However,

the Realist Historicist cannot claim to know about anything outside of history which is stable or unchanging in any way. History, as the way in which *what is* comes to appearance, provides us, I claim, with no grounds for claiming absolute stability for anything. If, then, the claim that ultimately all we have encounter is change and becoming is taken to be antithetical to realism the Realist Historicist cannot be a realist in that sense.

The three major implications I have discussed, specifically the primacy of practice, anti-mentalism and historicism, are interconnected and place my reading of Heidegger in immediate opposition to some very successful and powerful alternative readings of Heidegger's works. Perhaps most importantly they will place me in contradiction to the transcendental read of Heidegger that claims that Heidegger wishes to arrive at a priori and transcendental knowledge of structures which must necessarily be, in some sense, present in every possible historical period whether past or future. Similarly, these structures are presumed to be present in every living instance of Being-in-the-World or Dasein, whether or not the instance or context in question shares practices with the context from which we have arrived at the structures in question. The structures arrived at by the transcendental Heidegger, most specifically the structures of Worldhood and temporality presented in *Being and Time*, are presumed to be a-contextual and a-historical. In order to combat this view I shall have to offer a read of parts of Heidegger's work, especially *Being and Time*, which can address Heidegger's overt use of the language of the transcendental tradition which can nonetheless maintains a commitment to Realist Historicism. This will involve a nuanced reading of Heidegger's worldhood and temporality that attempts to draw on Heidegger's unique understanding of

what it means to be transcendental and a priori. More than this, however, we will be aided by certain methodological insights which, I shall claim, form the very core of what remains the same through Heidegger's career. Where the transcendental reading of Heidegger generally ends up offering us a view of Heidegger as a phenomenological transcendental idealist<sup>5</sup> we shall focus upon those elements of Heidegger's work which necessitate the historical nature of all disclosure and the realist foundation of phenomenological methodology.

This issue of hermeneutic selectivity is worth dwelling upon for a moment. One of the most powerful and impressive scholars of the transcendental Heidegger, Steven Crowell, is swift to admit that his development of a transcendental phenomenology out of Heidegger's work requires a selective reading.<sup>6</sup> As I already suggested this is equally true of my own reading, and indeed of all readings. For this reason it is worth reflecting for a moment upon how we might compare and judge such selective readings. Crowell, drawing on a tension between his own work and John van Buren's, describes his hermeneutic principle as an isolating and focusing upon one of two voices which can be found through the course of Heidegger's work. These two voices are the voice of the mystical and the voice of the transcendental Heidegger. The mystical Heidegger is anti-philosophical and is primarily concerned with the negative work of deconstructing metaphysical conceits in an attempt to re-achieve a connection to Being which is understood as a primal historical source. As Crowell describes this voice,

---

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 16 to Chapter 4 of Steven Crowell *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001) henceforth [SM.]

<sup>6</sup> This, and the discussion which follows, draws on Crowell's positions in the introduction to SM.

“There is, first, the Heidegger who seeks the proper name of Being; the Heidegger who, in spite of his best insights into the ontological difference, often seems to imagine being as some sort of primal cosmic ‘event’... The real hero of van Buren’s story is not Heidegger, but Derrida, and his view seems to be that if philosophy is anything more than personalistic appropriation of an ultimately mystical ‘sending,’ it consists in deconstructing putative claims to philosophical knowledge.”<sup>7</sup>

The transcendental Heidegger, on the other hand, primarily concerns himself with the limits and potential of philosophy as, to borrow the term from Husserl, a rigorous science. As Crowell describes this voice,

“There is, second, the Heidegger who is concerned with the reflexive issue of the possibility of philosophy itself, the Heidegger who constantly chastises other thinkers for not being rigorous enough, for succumbing to metaphysical prejudice and losing sight of the things themselves. This Heidegger seems precisely to shun the excesses of what the first Heidegger appears to embrace... In contrast [to van Buren], the real hero of my Heidegger story is neither Heidegger nor Derrida, but Husserl; or rather, a transcendental phenomenology that inaugurated by Husserl and carried on in Heidegger’s best moments, cannot be deconstructed because it is presupposed in every deconstruction – not as a set of first-order claims but as that which underwrites the meaning of the practice itself.”<sup>8</sup>

Crowell and van Buren agree, then, about the nature and presence of two voices in Heidegger and their primary difference is which of the two voices they take to represent Heidegger’s “best moments”. The reading of Heidegger I will be offering will, in contrast, presuppose the presence of rather more than two voices in Heidegger. It is precisely Heidegger’s existence at a cross-road of traditions, each of which he sought to improve using the best moments of the others, which allowed Heidegger to see to the heart of the hidden assumptions within the philosophy of his enemies, allies and

---

<sup>7</sup> SM p. 7

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 7

influences. From the perspective of the reading I am going to offer, the central elements of both the supposedly mystical and supposedly transcendental Heidegger are inescapably connected to the extent that neither read can hope to be really coherent without the other. As such, the two-voice model fails as a hermeneutic tool and, I believe, a more integrative reading which avoids the assumptions, whether Derridian or Husserlian, of both hermeneutic frameworks is likely to allow us to make more sense of a larger portion of Heidegger's works. With this said, however, I must admit that my project is very like Crowell's in that I will seek to trace the fundamental influences and concerns of the young and early Heidegger through what he achieved in *Being and Time* to his later work and, taking the central insights and moments from this reading, offer a coherent position I am calling Realist Historicism much as Crowell develops the larger position of Heidegger's Transcendental Phenomenology. At the end the read I offer will be justified by the coherence of the fundamental concerns I have projected for Heidegger's career and their ability to provide a useful hermeneutic lens for reading all of Heidegger's works. For example, I hope to show that Heidegger's admiration for, and renovation of, Husserl's categorial intuition and Lask's principle of the material determination of form are the foundation for both *Being and Time* at its most seemingly transcendental and those historicist, and supposedly mystical, "excesses" of the middle and later periods which are so appalling to those who espouse a transcendental read.

Let us turn now to the second purpose of this project, which is to apply Realist Historicism to a contemporary debate on the nature of mind and world which, I feel, would benefit from such an addition. In *Mind and World* John McDowell offers an attempt to bring Kant and Aristotle together by offering a naturalism which can respect

Kant's realization that reason can only have insight into what it constitutes while nonetheless avoiding the temptation to fall into idealism, even a transcendental idealism saddled with an empirical realism like we find in Kant.<sup>9</sup> McDowell seeks, then, a naturalism which avoids the reduction of reason to causal responses, as found in bald naturalism, and the loss of any traction with an external reality, as we find in idealism or a coherentism such as Donald Davidson's. As Crowell is swift to point out, this attempt to bring Kant and Aristotle together was also important to Heidegger and was, in fact, one of the main aspects that Heidegger greatly admired in the work of Lask.<sup>10</sup> We have good reason, then, to think that an investigation of what Heidegger found useful in Lask and how he changed Lask's insights will also be useful for analyzing Lask's heir, John McDowell.

The use of the term "heir" is particularly appropriate here when we consider the philosophical environment Heidegger worked in and the environment we find ourselves in today. Kant had sought to offer both a realism and idealism in the form of his divide between the empirically real and transcendently ideal. Precisely this divide, and the various other dualisms which accompany it, such as the all-important divide between the active and passive faculties of cognition, are necessary to assure us of our access to Kant's brand of the a priori. The philosophical generations following Kant were faced with the sense, as Robert Pippin puts it, that "...one could not enter the Kantian system without his doctrine of things in themselves and their unknowability, but one could not

---

<sup>9</sup> John McDowell *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996) henceforth cited as [MW.] p. 85.

<sup>10</sup> SM p. 14



remain in the system and still accept such claims.”<sup>11</sup> This left open either the Hegelian move to break down the wall between the empirically real and transcendently ideal by providing a speculative idealism or the rejection of the skepticism which Kant used to limit empiricism by presenting a new empirical naturalism which rejected transcendental conceits. The philosophical environment of Heidegger’s time adds a final twist to this historical dialogue insofar as it was dominated by an attempt to escape the naturalism/idealism divide by returning to Kant. This Neo-Kantianism took many forms, from Paul Natorp’s Hegelian rejection of Kant’s faculty of intuition in preference to the conceptual to Emil Lask’s realist commitment to concepts as expressions or activities of the matters they concern in his principle of the material determination of form. The important point, for us, is that the challenge faced by the Neo-Kantians was constantly to arrive at a position somehow between the radical reductivisms of both naturalism and idealism. As we should suspect from my description of Natorp, often the attempt was questionably successful. It is within this environment that the life philosophy of Dilthey and the phenomenology of Husserl both arose as possible ways out of a seemingly sterile philosophical deadlock that had dominated philosophy in one form or another since Kant. If we glance briefly at our contemporary situation we can’t help but see the resemblance to Neo-Kantian philosophy at the time when Heidegger began his career. For example, recoiling from a generally reductivist naturalism as presented in much of logical positivism and its offspring we find analyses of the historical structures of scientific change very much in the tradition of Dilthey in the work of Thomas Kuhn, we find a

---

<sup>11</sup> Robert Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity; On the Kantian Aftermath* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 33 henceforth [PS.]

problematizing of empiricist assumptions in favor of analysis of conceptual, logical and linguistic relations in the tradition of Natorp starting in Quine's meaning holism and leading into Donald Davidson's coherentism, and we find a Laskian attempt to understand the conceptual as, in some sense, natural without being reducible to brute causal mechanisms in the work of McDowell. These generalizations are, of course, only meant to suggest a pattern and the real interesting analysis would concern the details of each thinker's work where any number of new and unique nuances will be found. For us, however, only the work of McDowell and the similarities and differences between he, Lask and Heidegger will be important for now.

In line with the pattern we have just suggested, today we also have those who are attempting to make the argument for the importance of phenomenology, whether Husserlian, Heideggerian or Merleau-Pontian, for escaping the ongoing philosophical deadlock between various strategies to get beyond Kant. Amongst these figures are, importantly, Steven Crowell, Hubert Dreyfus, Charles Guignon, John Haugeland and Sean Kelly. Amongst the Neo-Kantians it is probably safe to say that Lask was most influential in a positive way upon Heidegger and, as the parallels would lead us to expect, McDowell often speaks in a very Heideggerian fashion and often seems to be formulating a contemporary version of Heidegger's Being-in-the-World wherein the divide between world and subject has been abolished. To this read of McDowell as Heideggerian both Crowell and Dreyfus have offered objections.<sup>12</sup> I will briefly present McDowell's new

---

<sup>12</sup> Crowell in the introduction to SM and Dreyfus in his APA Pacific Division Presidential Address in 2005 "Overcoming the Myth of the Mental: How Philosophers Can Profit from the Phenomenology of Everyday Expertise" henceforth cited as [OM.], and later in *Inquiry*, Vol. 50, No. 4. which was dedicated to an extensive exchange between Dreyfus and McDowell.

Neo-Kantian argument and Dreyfus' new Heideggerian response in order to prepare the ground for a discussion of what both leave out of their accounts which, I feel, the Realist Historicist Heidegger can provide. As we shall see, the argument Dreyfus offers relies upon those insights of Heidegger's from which Blattner draws his Primacy of Practice. The limitations and assumptions found in Dreyfus' use of this argument will help us to see how much we can enrich the full meaning of the Primacy of Practice when we take the time to carefully trace it to its origins, for example in Lask and Husserl.

As already mentioned McDowell wishes to occupy the space between bald naturalism and idealism or coherentism. It is important for him to occupy this position because, he thinks, it is impossible to maintain that we can have *reasons* for our beliefs in either side of the dualism he formulates. In bald naturalism, say for example in something along the lines of the empiricism of Hume where impressions arise in the mind due to sensory impacts from the external world, we can arrive at causal explanations for our beliefs but these causal impacts do not themselves give us *reasons* to believe that the world is a certain way, they simply *cause* us to believe it is so. On the other hand, in the coherentism of Davidson a belief is only justified by another belief, or by that belief's relation to the entire web of beliefs in which it exists. But relations between beliefs can only give us reasons to believe something about relations between beliefs, it can not give us reasons to believe that the world is a certain way. In Davidson's picture, outside the web of beliefs is a brute causal relation to the world which both keeps coherentism from tumbling into idealism and causes it to be susceptible to the same objection McDowell launched against bald naturalism. The brute impacts from outside can't justify the web of beliefs, they can only cause it. Facing this gauntlet, then, McDowell insists that we must

maintain a minimal empiricism which consists of “the idea that experience must constitute a tribunal, mediating the way our thinking is answerable to how things are, as it must be if we are to make sense of it as thinking at all.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, in bald naturalism experience does not constitute a tribunal but rather a cause and in coherentism thinking and believing constitutes the tribunal rather than experience. We might extend this point to idealism wherein experience is constituted, no matter in how complex a process, by thought rather than offering a tribunal for thought. As the quotation suggests, McDowell relies heavily on a Kantian idea that thinking can only really be thinking insofar as it has both form and content, i.e. insofar as it is both conceptual and intuitional or, to put it another way, both actively organized by the mind and passively informed by reality through experience. However, as what we have said so far should suggest, the challenge McDowell faces is that passivity and intuition cannot simply be receptivity to the brute causal deliverances of external reality.

The way that McDowell formulates the challenge we just touched upon is to borrow Seller’s criticism of the Myth of the Given. The idea of the Given is the idea that at some level a belief is justified by a deliverance from the world beyond which one can go no further in the chain of justification. Generally this deliverance is understood in terms of a Kantian intuition which then gets organized and conceptualized by the understanding. The criticism of this myth rests in pointing out, as we stated, that this Given could never be properly or improperly conceptualized unless it already shared something fundamental with the realm of concepts but, as the language of cognitive

---

<sup>13</sup> MW. p. xii

imposition and worldly givenness requires, this sharing is going to be mysterious, even pseudo-religious, at best and impossible at worst. There is no way for a concept to “fit” a pure intuition, either the concept is applied arbitrarily or the intuition causally necessitates the conceptualization. In the first case we lose justification and in the second case we lose the active nature of cognition. As McDowell ends up putting it, the idea of the Given is “the idea that the space of reasons, the space of justifications or warrants, extends more widely than the conceptual sphere.”<sup>14</sup> In turn the criticism of this idea rests in stating, most simply, that only the conceptual can constitute a reason, and so the space of reasons and the space of concepts overlap entirely with neither extending beyond the other. What this will mean for McDowell, if he is to resist Davidson’s claim that only beliefs justify other beliefs, is that we still have active and passive cognitive faculties but in the passive faculty of intuition concepts are still used, but used passively. We end up, then, with a Kantian distinction between active understanding and passive intuition but the space of concepts encompasses both with concepts simply being used differently by each faculty. The claim that concepts go all the way out into the world, as it were, clearly echoes in a sense Natorp’s own rejection of the given but not his dismissal of intuition. More than this it echoes Lask’s claim that matters determine their conceptual form not by being received through impressions and then being formed but rather by presenting us with forms or concepts. We might say that form is how matter appears, or concepts are that through which the conceptualized appear. Of course, this places the conceptualizing, at some level, out of our individual hands. For McDowell this is where culture and

---

<sup>14</sup> MW. p. 7

revisability come in. If even our seemingly most basic sensory experiences contain passively used conceptual elements then the most basic level of this conceptualization is provided to us by the culture into which we are raised. We learn to see in a certain way. But these inherited conceptualizations are always revisable and open to the always already passively conceptual tribunal of experience so that we are not trapped in some sort of social constructivism.

As is the case with the work of Lask, there is much here that will be in harmony with Heidegger. However, the main limitation of McDowell's work from a Heideggerian perspective is that he is still working primarily within a mentalistic space of concepts, intuitions and cognition. Against this element of McDowell's work Dreyfus will offer a critique of a new myth, the Myth of the Mental. As Dreyfus puts it, "Heidegger could counter, however, that in assuming that all intelligibility, even perception and skillful coping, *must be, at least implicitly, conceptual* – in effect, that intuitions without concepts must be blind, and that there must be a maxim behind every action – Sellars and McDowell join Kant in endorsing what we might call the Myth of the Mental."<sup>15</sup> At the heart of both the Myth of the Given and Mental is an unsupported assumption about what must be the case which, if pushed in the right direction, looks more and more like an argument about how certain terms have been defined, seemingly by fiat, at the start. In those who believe the Myth of the Given we have the assumption that, if it is true that intuitions without concepts are blind and concepts without intuitions are empty, then there must be a locatable moment in which both intuition and conceptualization occurs.

---

<sup>15</sup> OM. p. 6-7

For a more sophisticated believer in this myth, if the hope of isolating a temporal moment is given up then at least one can insist on a reconstruction of the contribution of intuition once the conceptual contribution is subtracted. If this is not the case it becomes difficult to imagine what work the intuition/concept distinction is really doing. For those who reject the Myth of the Given all the work really occurs in the assumption that in discussing the contributions of understanding and the contributions from *what is* through intuition we are discussing two radically different types of things, two different realms of being. As my brief discussion of the criticism of the Myth of the Given earlier should have led one to ask, why is it that we can rest assured that concepts and intuitions really do represent radically incommensurable sorts of things? Why, aside from simply assuming it, must we believe that an entirely unconceptualized Given could not guide its own conceptualization? It is worth noting that Kant himself struggled with these questions and, to a great extent, they can be seen to motivate changes which occur to his thought throughout the course of his critical period. The problem of the schematism, as discussed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is precisely the problem of how a connection between intuition and concept can be justified rather than simply imposed. At times Kant seems to hope that the productive imagination will be able to bridge the gap, at times it seem even to be understood as a root origin for both the faculty of intuition and understanding, but at other times Kant attempts to avoid the necessity of this position. This struggle within Kant himself was of particular interest and importance for Heidegger.<sup>16</sup> For those who believe in the Myth of the Mental we find a similar

---

<sup>16</sup> See Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* James Churchill trans. (Bloomington: Indiana

assumption, namely that something can only be meaningful in terms of reasons insofar as it is, at least implicitly, conceptual and understandable in terms of rules.<sup>17</sup> To borrow an image from McDowell, we might well ask why it is that the sphere of the meaningful is presumed to occupy the same space as the sphere of the conceptual with neither extending beyond the other? In other words, aside from making it the foundation of our epistemology, what argument can we really provide for the supposed independent emptiness of concepts and blindness of intuitions or even for the primacy and existence of their respective faculties? As should be clear, then, the critique of the Myth of the Mental seeks to avoid entirely the assumptions that rest at the very foundation of Kant's entire system and the problematics which we have inherited from him.

As the title of his APA address should suggest, Dreyfus seeks to build his critique of the Myth of the Mental out of a phenomenology of expertise which he connects to Heidegger's understanding of Aristotelian *phronesis*. For Dreyfus and Heidegger *phronesis*, understood by Dreyfus as a form of ethical expertise, must be understood on the model of perception. In a given context and situation we see what the right thing to do is. From this Dreyfus will build up an analysis of any form of expertise at all, rather than staying focused on purely ethical expertise. Now this understanding of *phronesis* as a sort of ethical perception is shared by McDowell, but the conclusion he and Dreyfus draw

---

University Press, 1962) and *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). See also Blattner's discussion of the productive imagination in Kant and Heidegger in "Laying the Ground for Metaphysics: Heidegger's Appropriation of Kant" in Charles Guignon ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 165 henceforth [CC.].

<sup>17</sup> I am assuming here, as is Dreyfus, Kant's understanding of a concept as a rule for the subsumption of a particular under a general category. However, the critique of the myth of the mental can be extended to other positions on the nature of a concept.



from it are radically different. For McDowell, the fact that *phronesis* is something learned and yet something perceptual provides a strong argument that perception in general is conceptual. This follows if we assume that what is learned in the course of ethical education are various maxims, rules and processes of conceptualization which are first actively acquired and then passively utilized in perception. In contrast to this assumption, however, Dreyfus asserts that what is acquired in ethical education or practice, and indeed in most practices, is not a collection of rules and/or concepts but rather a set of skills which are neither implicitly nor explicitly conceptual. We might think here in terms of “knowing that” and “knowing how” where know-how is not merely an implicit knowing-that but rather an inarticulate and inarticulable skill-set.

One of Dreyfus’ favorite examples of expertise acquisition is the process of becoming a master chess player. A beginner chess player certainly learns rules and maxims, in accordance with the model McDowell favors, and also gains various concepts which are then used in the course of playing chess. The move to being an expert chess player, however, is the move to a level of perception which bypasses entirely the need for implicit or explicit rules. The expert player simply sees what move is best, and the outcomes of such moves reinforce or force a change in the way in which the player sees the board. Once this level has been achieved there is no reason to think that the behavior of the expert is even potentially understandable in terms of rules or concepts. In order to avoid the image that Dreyfus’ counter argument applies only to a rather small subclass of human behavior it is worth pointing out that, in general, we are all expert at a vast number of activities from walking and navigating rooms to social interaction. Based on this model, then, Dreyfus follows Merleau-Ponty in asserting the existence of a space of

motivations between the space of causes and space of reasons. Motivations are perceptual and meaningful but nonconceptual. For example, when we enter a room we see, Dreyfus asserts in accordance with the work of Sean Kelly, affordances for action. We see obstacles to be avoided and doors to be opened. This is a level of perception which is, nonetheless, normative insofar as our perception provides us with a sense of when our setting, for example, gets easier and harder to navigate. We have a direct perceptual experience of this better and worse even as the master chess player has a direct perception of the changing strengths and weaknesses of his position on the board and opportunities opening and closing based on his competitor's moves. Similarly, when talking with someone we, in most cases, note and react to innumerable bodily cues. Make a point of standing a few inches closer to a person than you usually would and you will swiftly notice a wide array of new reactions, most of them performed without your interlocutor even realizing what she or he is responding to. Dreyfus strengthens the plausibility of this account by discussing trained multilayer neural networks in computer programming. These neural nets are trained not by being provided rules but rather by receiving negative or positive feedback based upon their output. An example Dreyfus mentions is neural nets which have been programmed to tell the difference between sonar echoes from mines versus those from solid rock. When the output is incorrect the net is given negative feedback and the various weights of internal nodes in the net are changed in response with changes also occurring in response to positive feedback. The multiple levels of the net allow for the weighing to occur based on responses to more and more detailed aspects of the input. Dreyfus describes the situation thus,

“To construct a semantic account of what a network that has learned certain

discriminations has learned, each node one level above the input nodes could, on the basis of connections to it, be interpreted as detecting when one of a certain set of input patterns is present. (Some of the patterns will be the ones used in training and some will never have been used.) If the set of input patterns that a particular node detects is given an invented name (it almost certainly won't have a name in our vocabulary), the node could be interpreted as detecting the highly abstract feature so named. Hence, every node one level above the input level can be characterized as a feature detector. Similarly, every node a level above these nodes can be interpreted as detecting a higher-order feature that is defined as the presence of one of a specified set of patterns among the first level features detectors. And so on up the hierarchy. The top features could be those in an ambient optic array that corresponded to the significance of a situation, and the net's output would then correspond to the response solicited by that situation.”<sup>18</sup>

The central point to be drawn from this is that the level consisting of the most basic discriminations in the perception of the expert, be that expert human or computer, are not originally linguistic and are even potentially unable to be articulated without the invention of a vast entirely new language. Most of the thousands and thousands of affordances and motivations experienced by experts in the course of performing the practice in which they are experts do not map onto named or overtly recognized features of the world. All of this is meant to suggest the implausibility of the idea that what is occurring in this situation is best considered in terms of unconsciously formed and used concepts, rules or representations. Skill acquisition is ultimately perceptual, the chess master or mine sensing machine both see in a certain way rather than conceptualizing, following an organizing rule, or representing. Indeed, all of this suggests a tuning of the body more than an organizing of the mind. We might suggest that, whether discussing chess or expert walking, we are in the realm of muscle memory and not traditional memory.

---

<sup>18</sup> OM. p. 10-11

It will be useful for us to step back and consider one of the other problems Dreyfus is engaging with in his criticism of McDowell. One of the major difficulties faced by the development of successful artificial intelligence has been termed the *frame problem*. The frame problem is the problem of how a computer can be designed or trained to determine relevance. Faced with any given input, whether a children's story or a sonar reading, there will be a manifold of information within which important relevant elements need to be focused upon. We might similarly think about entering a room and the vast amounts of detailed information we, seemingly naturally, ignore because it is irrelevant to our concerns and purposes at the moment. When our concerns suddenly change so also do the details of which we are aware. This seemingly simple skill to discriminate between the relevant and irrelevant has proven to be an intractable issue for bottom up engineering of artificial intelligence. Let us say we provide a process whereby a computer can distinguish what is relevant in a given situation, the computer then needs a rule to determine when that situation arises which in turn relies upon being able to determine the relevant elements of a larger class of situations and so on. What we face is a regress with classes of situations nestling within one another and each one requiring a set of relevance determining rules. It is worth noting that this same problem was faced by Kant and we have touched upon it in several ways already. The inadequacy of his answer has left the problem alive ever since and, indeed, is intimately connected to the problem of concept formation and application. In the introduction to *The Analytic of Principles* in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant raises the problem thus:

“Now if I wanted to show generally how one ought to subsume under these rules, i.e., distinguish whether something stands under them or not, this could not happen except once again through a rule. But just because this is a rule, it would

demand another instruction for the power of judgment, and so it becomes clear that although the understanding is certainly capable of being instructed and equipped through rules, the power of judgment is a special talent that cannot be taught but only practiced.”<sup>19</sup>

We see this same issue and argument revisited in Wittgenstein’s own grappling with the inadequacy of rules of use for the formation of language, the impossibility of grounding language in ostensive definition, and the private language argument. Ultimately on this subject Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Dreyfus all make the same point. As mystifying as it may seem to describe something as a “special talent” what we see here is a path to Heidegger’s primacy of practice as used by Dreyfus in which expertise is grounded in practice and developed bodily skills and not a set of rules or complex of concepts. We don’t need to build up to relevance or meaning, whether in perception or language, but rather relevance and meaning are there from the start and are only extended or altered over time. This, indeed, is Wittgenstein’s point when he suggests that in language use is meaning, we might even say that practice is meaning, rather than use having to be constructed out of rules or definitions in order for meaning to be secured. Here, then, we replace the Myth of the Mental with the Primacy of Practice.

The appearance of Wittgenstein in the previous paragraph was not unmotivated, for it begins to direct us toward the limitations of Dreyfus’ perspective. As we mentioned in the beginning of this introduction, Realist Historicism has at least three immediate implications: first the primacy of practice, second anti-mentalism, and third historicism. Although Dreyfus is basing his Heideggerian argument upon the primacy of practice and

---

<sup>19</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* Paul Guyer and Allan Wood trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998) p. 268 henceforth cited as [CPR.]

anti-mentalism it is possible to suggest that Dreyfus' understanding of what a practice is can be read as overly individual which, in turn, suggests a stronger naturalism than is found in Heidegger. Put directly, Dreyfus too often discusses practice acquisition and performance as an individual affair and this in turn reinforces traditional conceptions of the subject and, in turn, suggests stable a-historical entities which exist independent of the practices which merely concern or relate to them. Indeed it is hard to avoid these positions when discussing neural nets which still work on the traditional Cartesian and Kantian model of basic inputs passively received and complex active organizing. As presented by Dreyfus, the main difference between the Kantian subject and the neural network or master chess player is that in the first case the complex active organizing is conceptual and in the second cases the complex active organizing occurs at the bodily and sensory level. This, indeed, is the suggestion we find in Sean Kelly and Merleau-Ponty, but is it the suggestion we find in Heidegger? I claim this is not the perspective we find in Heidegger and this project will present a reading of Heidegger's work that suggest how and why this is the case. For now we might note that the base level for Heidegger is never sensory input but rather lived practice, he insists in many places that we have no experience of sensations until we learn the practice of *listening away* from things.<sup>20</sup> It is from this practice that sensations arise, and so the learning of a skill is not a fine-tuning of sensory apparatus to sense differently or in a more complex way. There is no level of base input but rather a base level complex of social practices. This last point makes clear why Dreyfus' discussion of a single chess player or sonar sensor is deceptive, and it is

---

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Heidegger "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* Albert Hofstadter trans. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971) p. 25-26 henceforth [PLT.].

also the point at which Wittgenstein becomes most pertinent. Dreyfus makes the same mistake, we might suggest, that those who argue for a private language make. They assume it would be possible to invent a private game and play it alone whereas Dreyfus seems to assume that one could develop expertise at a given skill simply through one's own interactions with things. If we assume a base level of stable a-historical things existing independent and prior to the complex of social practices it is clear why this perspective may seem reasonable. But we are always already enmeshed in social practices and it is through these practices that things come to appearance. Any skill learned "alone" or any game developed in private is already built on the vast edifice of social practices which bring their entire history with them. This suggests, however, that an anti-mentalism that gives preference to perception and bodily skills is not nearly enough of an anti-subjectivism to match Heidegger's real insights. We are not individuals, whether we differentiate based on cognition or body, but rather complex interacting social practices projecting history forward into the future and whatever is, is through and in these practices. It is worth noting that this point suggests a rather different criticism and recommendation for research into artificial intelligence. Specifically, what our attempts to arrive at thinking machines have missed is neither the right organizing and computing structures nor bodily awareness and orientation but rather an appreciation of all thought as a complex of social practices within a larger complex of further social practices. What attempts at A.I. have been missing are a robust community and history.

We might note that a focus on the social network of practices in preference to old conceptions of subjectivity offers us a new reason why the model of *phronesis* should be so valuable as an example of expertise for Heidegger. *Phronesis* is not important just

because it is a form of expertise that opens the door to reflecting on expertise in general, as Dreyfus suggests. Rather, *phronesis* as the ethical perception available to the person who is an ethical expert points to the central element of expertise which Dreyfus overlooks. For the Ancient Greeks the term ethical is derived from *ethos* which, even as it does today, suggests a collective communal cultural way of life. Aristotle's studies in ethics are meant to be the study of a group way of life, and he is very direct in insisting that the study of his ethics is worthless if one has not been brought up in a certain type of community with specific practices and history. Ethics is the study and perfection of an *ethos*, a conception which is foreign to the universalizing and abstracting ethical reflections of a tradition derived from thinkers such as Kant. *Phronesis* is not, then, the type of perception available to someone well practiced in ethics. It is, rather, the way in which the world appears from the standpoint of a collective *ethos*. Indeed, the perception opened up by expertise is the pure perception derived from the community which is constituted by a practice or set of practices.

Much of this project will be concerned with Heidegger's early engagement with concept formation and the origin of the categories and his later interest in the origin of practices and the totality of practices which he calls world. It is possible that it is precisely on these issues that Blattner and Dreyfus go astray, which leads to their pragmatist read of the primacy of practice. In Blattner's discussion of Heidegger's engagement with Kant, for example, Blattner insists that "neither Kant nor Heidegger says much that is very illuminating about" concept formation and event resorts to hand-



waving away, on behalf of Heidegger, the entire subject.<sup>21</sup> It seems odd to suggest that Heidegger doesn't have much to say, at least of value as far as Blattner is concerned, with the major subject which first really concerned him in philosophy and which, arguably, most of his other work concerned. Most of the major subjects of focus in this work, specifically Lask's principle of the material determination of form, Husserl's categorial intuition and Heidegger's formal indication, attestation, and the problem of world change, will concern Heidegger's perspective on concept and practice origin. I suspect we will see that Heidegger, in fact, has talked of little else besides these subjects. We should also see that, where Blattner sees Heidegger and Kant as both holding a abstractionist view of concept formation wherein concepts are created by abstracting away from experienced particulars,<sup>22</sup> this is precisely the view which Heidegger sees as one of the most basically distortive and mistaken assumptions about our relation to what is. Indeed, the appeal of both the principle of the material determination of form and categorial intuition rests in the way in which things, and not our minds, offer up their own formal or conceptual organization and Heidegger's own formal indication is the offspring and extension of these earlier views into a Realist Historicist context. If, then, Heidegger's most basic insights about the nature and origin of both concepts and practices have been missed by Blattner and, I would suspect, Dreyfus we shouldn't be surprised to find that they have misinterpreted what it means for practice to be primary in Heidegger's thought. We shall, then, turn now to a historical and textual investigation of the development of Heidegger's

---

<sup>21</sup> Blattner *Laying the Ground for Metaphysics: Heidegger's Appropriation of Kant* in CC. p.165-166

<sup>22</sup> Ibid p. 165

Realist Historicism beginning with a focus upon that work which pre-dated *Being and Time*.

## Chapter One: Phenomenology

“I seek not to instruct but only to lead, to point out and describe what I see. I claim no other right than that of speaking according to my best lights, principally before myself but in the same manner also before others, as one who has lived in all its seriousness the fate of a philosophical existence.”<sup>23</sup>

In our attempt to construct and clarify the Realist Historicism I claim is in the background of Heidegger’s work throughout his career we shall focus upon his mature theory of historical world change as it appears in his essay “The Origin of the Work of Art”. Our interpretation of that essay will focus upon his presentation of great art as an event of truth setting itself to work as the strife between world and earth. Our interpretation of this conception of art and our argument for the presence of Realist Historicism throughout Heidegger’s career requires that we map the development of Heidegger’s understanding of the central concepts out of which this presentation of art is formed. We must therefore trace Heidegger’s concept of truth as primordial disclosure, or clearing, and his concept of the world from their Husserlian roots in intentionality and categorial intuition, through the influence Dilthey and Lask exerted upon them, to their appearance in “The Origin of the Work of Art”. While the concept of earth appears as such for the first time within “The Origin of the Work of Art”, it too has an origin we can trace which grows from Heidegger’s appreciation of the hermeneutic limitations of all disclosure and the inevitability of prejudice or perspective. The earth begins to appear in

---

<sup>23</sup> Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1970) p. 18 henceforth [Cr.]

references to the reservoir of the undisclosed, untruth, or mystery which is fundamental and foundational for all limited disclosure. The formation which truth, earth and world take on in “The Origin of the Work of Art” involves a fourth and final key concept, namely *Gelassenheit*, letting-be or releasement. The problem of *Gelassenheit*, the question of how one can let things be what they are which had already been an issue in earlier works, arises within “The Origin of the Work of Art” specifically from the tension between world and earth, between the limiting and directing structures and horizons that define necessarily partial disclosure and the ambition to be open to the undisclosed in such a way as to let it be and appear as what it is. This very tension, the difficult relation between world and earth, will be seen as well to be a later return to Heidegger’s earlier reflections on the form-matter duplicity which was at the foundation of his addressing of the problem of the categories in his habilitation. Heidegger’s take on this issue will be seen to draw heavily upon Lask’s principle of the material determination of form.

What I intend to show is that the problem, or perhaps challenge, of *Gelassenheit* grows from Husserl’s phenomenological motto “To the things themselves!” and Heidegger’s appreciation of hermeneutic human finitude. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger defines phenomenology as the science which seeks to “...let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself...”<sup>24</sup> and in “The Origin of the Work of Art” we are told that “The work lets the earth be an earth.”<sup>25</sup> *Gelassenheit* is therefore both the goal and method of phenomenology, and in letting the

---

<sup>24</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time* John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson trans. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962) p. 58 henceforth cited as [ZS.]

<sup>25</sup> PLT. p. 45

undisclosed be precisely as the undisclosed, the work of art is an achievement of what phenomenology seeks to accomplish. This chapter will be concerned to trace the early formation of the aforementioned key concepts in Heidegger's work and their progression towards the writing of *Being and Time* with a specific eye for the difficulties that arise from them, leading eventually to pre-ontological understanding and world as they appear in *Being and Time* which will be the central focus of Chapter Two. Further difficulties arising from *Being and Time* will lead us to our discussion of Heidegger's post *Being and Time* work including, ultimately, "The Origin of the Work of Art".

### Section One: Phenomenology and the Neo-Kantian Challenge

"We stand at an abyss: either into nothingness, that is, absolute reification, pure thingness, or we somehow leap into another world, more precisely, we manage for the first time to make the leap into the world as such."<sup>26</sup>

The young Heidegger, the Heidegger of the 1919 war emergency seminars for example, presents us with a complex but fertile web of influences and ambitions. Educated in a Neo-Kantian atmosphere under the Neo-Kantian Rickert yet having taken on the mantle of the new phenomenological movement as the star student of Edmund Husserl, heavily influenced by the Neo-Kantian/Pragmatist hybrid Emil Lask, the historicist Wilhelm Dilthey, and the religious proto-existentialist Soron Kierkegaard while infatuated with the medieval worldview of the German mystic Meister Eckhart, Heidegger was to prove to be both more and other than all his various influences, teachers, causes and enemies. It is perhaps his position in the center of this rich web of

---

<sup>26</sup> Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* Ted Sadler trans. (New York: Athlone Press, 2000) p. 53 henceforth cited as [TD.]

complex struggles and contradictions which allowed him to see so clearly to the core flaws and virtues of both Neo-Kantianism and Husserlian Phenomenology.

At the risk of over-simplification, let us briefly attempt to characterize the environment out of which Heidegger's philosophy first began to develop. This will begin to highlight the very questions which would years later, though then understood perhaps in a different light, drive Heidegger's reflections on the riddle that art itself is. One might locate Phenomenology's birth in the Husserlian war cry "To the things themselves!", which itself immediately raises certain questions, especially within a philosophical culture dominated by Kantian epistemological concerns vying for dominance with positivistic philosophy of science. In the face of the work of Kant, the motto is clearly provocative. For Kant it is precisely to the things themselves that we can not get, insofar as any experience is already limited to what is made accessible by the a priori forms of intuition, space and time, and structured by the spontaneous organizing activity of the understanding according to its own categories. With the Neo-Kantian attempt to get rid of intuition in general and shift philosophical focus away from cognitive receptivity and towards active conceptualization, leading to Heidegger's observation that in the work of Paul Natorp we have a radical absolutization of mediation and theoretical activity the likes of which hasn't been seen since Hegel<sup>27</sup>, the idea of any thing-in-itself or irrational, as in not worked over by rationality, facticity begins to look more and more suspect.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 91

<sup>28</sup> It is this which Kisiel, following Istvan Feher, calls "...the problem situation in Neo-Kantianism and life-philosophy out of which Heidegger's thought arose: the resistance to Hegel's panlogism by insistence on the insuperable irrationality of the 'matter' given to thought." Kisiel, Theodore "Why Students of Heidegger Will Have to Read Emil Lask" in *Heidegger's Way of Thought* (New York: Continuum, 2002) p. 103 henceforth cited as [Kis. 2002].

Within this philosophical environment, then, the natural question concerns what sort of access we have to the things themselves and, beyond this, what the nature of these very things in question are and how knowledge achieved through access to them is to be transmitted or presented to others.

Of course, from a non-philosophical perspective there seems to be no more straightforward and commonsensical statement than that one should concern oneself precisely with the matters, or things, themselves which are of interest or concern. In a way the divide between these two responses to the motto can already guide our eye to what could be meant by the phrase. Insofar as Kant's hypothetical *thing-in-itself* is never an object of experience there is also a sense in which it is never really an object of concern. If the very matters themselves to which we seek to "go" are matters of direct importance to human life or the scientific undertaking then noumenal entities hidden behind a veil of concepts are of little interest, or at the very least become of interest only at the end of an investigation as a hypothetical product. What is of interest, perhaps, is the actual nature and structure of the experiences we do have. We can bracket, we can perform the phenomenological epoche, and thus leave out of consideration the nature of any given thing as it may be beyond our experiential encounter and consciousness of it and proceed to investigate what it is we actually do know and have experience of.

If the matters at hand might precisely be experience itself and the structures of consciousness then we should turn our gaze to them as they are in themselves. This sets the stage for the phenomenological battle with psychologism and the Neo-Kantians. As Heidegger states:

“The science of experience is a descriptive one. Every descriptive science ‘has its justification in itself’. The experiences of perception, of memory, of representation, of judgment, of I, you and us (types of experiences of persons) can thus be described. Experiences are not explained psychologically, nor referred back to physiological processes and psychic dispositions. No hypothesis are made about them, but we simply bring out what lies in the experiences themselves...”<sup>29</sup>

Part of the motivation for such an undertaking, for the phenomenological turn to epoche and description in contrast to either a positivistic or Kantian reductionism to hidden underlying transcendental, psychological, or physiological mechanisms, is a concern to avoid the assumptions that both Kantianism and physico-psychological explanations must already make concerning the nature of experience and everything with which experience and consciousness provide us. Before reducing representation to the categorial activities of the understanding, for example, one should perhaps look at the matters themselves with which such activity claims to be concerned, such as consciousness and representation themselves, which of course are already going to be providing us with the very data and direction we then use in reducing them to some other explanatory basis. There is a very real sense in which, in the case of the psychologists and Neo-Kantians alike, we have not fully come to know what it is we are even seeking to reduce or explain. With the subject so poorly formulated any attempt to explain it, or explain it away, is of course going to be presumptuous and groundless.

The important point to focus on in this swift sketch of the philosophical situation with which Heidegger’s early lecture courses were engaged is that, while there may be any number of ways to raise veils between experience and the worldly object of which it

---

<sup>29</sup> TD. p. 84



is the experience, we still assume that we can reflect and describe what occurs within our experience while whatever underground mechanisms that order or direct experience are rolling merrily along. Perhaps “reality” is inaccessible, but life as we live and experience it seems not to be, and it may be that a proper description of this living experience can dissolve the very assumptions which lead to the concept of the Cartesian theater or phenomenal/noumenal divide.

In his 1919 lecture course *The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview*<sup>30</sup> Heidegger discusses an important response to the very sorts of claims made by phenomenology I have just sketched on the part of the Neo-Kantian Paul Natorp. The response is to ask if perhaps conceptualization itself is distortive and destructive to the primordial substance of life and reality. The objection rests precisely on the fact that reflection is a theoretical de-vivifying of life experiences since “...in reflection they are no longer lived but looked at.”<sup>31</sup> The very activity of reflection alters the make up of the thing observed, in reflection upon lived experience we isolate and delineate bits of experience from other bits of experience. Heidegger quotes Natorp in observing that reflection is necessarily analytical.<sup>32</sup> Reflection creates a false atomism of experiences with each being taken from the natural flow which is the actual characteristic of life experiences as lived: “We set the experiences out before us out of immediate experience; we intrude so to speak into the flowing stream of experiences and pull one or more of

---

<sup>30</sup> TD.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 85

<sup>32</sup> “Reflection necessarily has an analytical, so to speak dissective or chemically destructive effect upon what is experienced.” Ibid.

them out, we ‘still the stream’ as Natorp says.”<sup>33</sup> This stilling of the stream is already an alteration of the matters themselves as they are when lived, as are all theoretical compartments. In this way the motto “to the things themselves” already represents an impossibility if the path to these things is going to be one of de-vivifying reflection, an objectifying looking.

This is only the first level of Natorp’s critique of phenomenology. Beyond the failure of the reflective method to capture experience as it is in itself, the claim of phenomenology to be purely descriptive only makes things worse. Description brings the critique to the level of language which is going to rely upon concepts and thus generalities: “For description also already proceeds via concepts: it is a circumscription of something into generalities, it is ‘subsumption’ (Natorp); it already presupposes a certain kind of concept-formation and therefore ‘abstraction’ (Natorp) and theory, i.e. ‘mediation’.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, even were the phenomenological method of reflection to arrive at experience as it is, the moment such reflection moved into the realm of speech, writing and ultimately description it will have once more turned the matter at hand into a collection of abstractions, constructions and generalizations. The stream of life, stilled in reflection, is fully objectified and dismembered in description.

The ultimate thrust of this entire line of critique is not to solve the problems raised. Rather, according to Heidegger, Natorp turns to affirming the inescapability of the theoretical and rejects as fantasy the phenomenological dream of any immediate experience or description. As Heidegger presents Natorp’s view: “If one wishes to make

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

experience into an object of science, it is impossible to avoid theoretization. This means, however, that there is no immediate apprehension of experience... Accordingly, Natorp says that there can be only a mediated apprehension of experiences.”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, for Natorp, the only possibilities for a science of experience is for it to be an analytic undertaking involving the rational reconstruction of lower level experiences which are really just basic abstractions and attempts at theoretizations requiring further logical improvement and clarification. The only way out of mediation and the ‘stilling of the stream’ is precisely through it: “Science provides experience of its objects by way of objectification.”<sup>36</sup> As already mentioned, Heidegger connects this counter method of rational reconstruction proposed by Natorp with the apotheosis of mediation found in Hegel, stating that Natorp’s system is “The most radical absolutization of the theoretical and logical, an absolutization that has not been proclaimed since Hegel. (Unmistakable connections with Hegel: everything unmediated is mediated.)”<sup>37</sup> Earlier in the same course Heidegger had made a similar observation, stating that “...the very idea of a system that would essentially absolutize the theoretical, is illusory. So, in one of the most difficult confrontations, we stand on the front against Hegel.”<sup>38</sup> Hegel himself, within his lectures on fine arts, had proposed an answer very similar to Natorp’s when facing something very much like Natorp’s objection. Hegel, having asserted that art itself requires and leads to a transformation into philosophy, himself raises the question how it could find this fulfillment and completion in being transformed into philosophy if the

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 85-86

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 88

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 91

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 81

thinking of art, meaning the interpretation or translation of art into philosophical concepts, precisely destroys that sensuous beauty which is the heart of art: “For the beauty of art does in fact appear in a form which is expressly opposed to thought and which thought is compelled to destroy in order to pursue its own characteristic activity.”<sup>39</sup> Hegel ties this idea, that to grasp the beauty of art in thought is to somehow destroy it, to the claim that the real itself is ungraspable in conceptual thought:

“This idea hangs together with the view that the real in general, the life of nature and spirit, is marred and killed by comprehension; that instead of being brought nearer to us by conceptual thinking, it is all the more removed from us, with the result that, by using thinking as a means of grasping what the live phenomenon is, man defeats his own purpose.”<sup>40</sup>

Hegel’s answer is to assert that thought is the essence of spirit, and that the expression is, in a sense, an improvement upon the thing expressed. When spirit translates nature into art, and later art into thought, the inner essence of each of the sublated elements is finally brought to fulfillment. Each later stage of the dialectic is more real than the former, and so the outcome of the rational reconstruction, be it performed by Natorp or Hegel, is closer to the absolutely real and unconditioned.

As we have seen, there are two key elements of Natorp’s attack with which Heidegger must concern himself. First, there is the problem of reflection being a de-vivifying theoretical mode of comportment. Second, there is the claim that language itself is abstraction, conceptualization, and thus alteration of experience as lived such that there can be no pure description. Heidegger, then, is faced with the problem of access to, or

---

<sup>39</sup> Hegel, *Hegel’s Aesthetics; Lectures on Fine Art* T.M. Knox trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 12

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

observation of, life and the problem of language's grasp of life. The answer to both of these questions rests in the realization that the divide these attacks assume between humanity and reality, thought and existence, language and life, is a false divide. The answer, inspired from the work of Dilthey, is that reflection and interpretation is an activity of life itself which is undertaken through language.<sup>41</sup> Life interprets itself and speaks, and these activities are intimately connected, indeed are continuous, with the nature of existence. As Heidegger expresses it in his 1923-1924 lecture course *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*: "In these two respects we saw at once that the world's being has the character of showing itself and that life's being entails a basic possibility of speaking about existence in such a way that being is pointed out by means of speech. The world's being and life's being have a quite specific connection with one another, thanks to speaking's being."<sup>42</sup> Phenomenology, then, can be set on solid ground in the face of Natorp's claim concerning the impossibility of escaping from analysis, abstraction, and mediation if we can base our descriptive science on the way in which the world has the character of showing itself through life's thought and speech.

Phenomenology must be understood, then, as an activity of life itself: "It is the primordial intention of genuine life, the primordial bearing of life-experience and life as such, the absolute sympathy with life that is identical with life-experience."<sup>43</sup> In order for phenomenology to be identified with life we must be assured of not forcing concepts or

---

<sup>41</sup> "The conviction that thought is inherently compatible with life is brought out most tellingly by the methodological principle of immanence, 'to understand life from life itself,' which Dilthey identifies as 'the dominate impulse in my philosophical thinking'." Kis. 2002 p. 93

<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research* Daniel Dahlstrom trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005) p. 33 henceforth cited as [IPR.]

<sup>43</sup> TD. p. 92

methods unsuited to the matters of concern onto those matters. As Heidegger puts it in *Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle*: “The addressing and interpreting of factual life actualized by factual life itself allow the ways of seeing and speaking here to be given to them in advance from objects in the world.”<sup>44</sup> The goal, then, is the same as that present in Dilthey’s principle of immanence where by we seek “to understand life from life itself” through concepts which are “the spontaneous articulations of the structural coherences and temporal continuities of life itself.”<sup>45</sup> This understanding of philosophy as born from the self-articulating and interpreting nature of existence such that, in its truest form, it can be seen to be continuous with the flow of life and not a stilling or de-vivifying Heidegger equates to the ancient Greek interpretation of existence which “...remains within existence, and this interpretation is this existence becoming explicit through the explication.”<sup>46</sup> In order to explicate the way in which philosophy grows from life, however, Heidegger will have to locate the origin of philosophical questioning in life rather than in a theoretical position from which official philosophical questions as objectively of concern are traditionally addressed and investigated. As Heidegger asserts: “The question is lived, is experienced.”<sup>47</sup> The need to explain how a question is lived and the origin of a question in life points us to Heidegger’s turn to hermeneutics which he will use in transforming intentionality into the structures of care and human temporality, issues which will be taken up more fully later in this chapter.

---

<sup>44</sup> Heidegger *Supplements* John Van Buren ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002) p. 123 henceforth cited as [Sup.]

<sup>45</sup> Kis. 2003 p. 91-92

<sup>46</sup> IPR. p. 42

<sup>47</sup> TD. p. 55

We must, then, first recognize that concepts, or the categories, are not an imposition upon experience by the understanding of the human mind. This point had already been of central importance in Heidegger's habilitation *The Theory of Categories and Meaning in Duns Scotus* where it is addressed in terms of the form/matter dichotomy as the "principle of the material determination of every form"<sup>48</sup> which Heidegger borrows from Emil Lask where each concept or category is determined by its content. This is not, however, to say that there cannot be a misapplication of concepts or a distortive stance towards any given matter. If philosophy is born of a natural movement of self-interpretation inherent in life which is born into language, the very power of language can become a danger to the disclosive movement of life. The critique leveled by Natorp against objectifying language is quite right insofar as language can indeed become reified and philosophy can degenerate to nothing more than a matter of "possession of words" which Heidegger identifies as the state of most of the philosophy of his time: "They [traditional philosophical concepts] signify the great danger that one philosophizes today in words rather than about things."<sup>49</sup> Language and philosophy both, when not understood in a way which uncovers their origin in the movement of life itself, tend toward deception and illusion: "Insofar as language is taken up in a traditional and not in a primordial sense, it is precisely what conceals things..."<sup>50</sup> It is from this danger, then, that the focus upon the things themselves must bring along a directive to the effect that one avoid all

---

<sup>48</sup> Sup. p. 64

<sup>49</sup> IPR. p. 7

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 22

concepts and methods, traditional or innovative, not dictated by the matters themselves.<sup>51</sup> This image of empty concepts set adrift from their material determination echoes a certain class of intentional acts found within the work of Husserl, namely acts of empty intending in which the meaning of the act is unfulfilled by intuition. In this sense, what we consider commonsensical philosophical concepts may indeed have grown from the ground of some valid material determination but, in being used in a purely empty form of intending in their transmission in tradition their original intuitive fulfillment is no longer activated which allows their form and application to change and drift.

In recognizing the growth of concepts from the soil of life we have given ourselves a new problematic. We can be assured of the faithfulness of phenomenology to the flowing life of existence only if we can be certain that the concepts we use are derived from the matters of concern, or can be reconnected to their origin, and this in turn raises the problem of our mode of access to living concepts or categories. If we accept the principle of the material determination of form, we may be assured that every concept was originally dictated by its content but this does not alleviate the danger that its content has long since been lost in the human tendency towards the repetition of formulas and functions the point of which have long been lost. How do we distinguish the authentic speech of life from the reified speech of traditional philosophy or theory? How do the things themselves dictate their proper concepts to us? Heidegger presents the guiding insight thus:

---

<sup>51</sup> “For our problem, the basic bearing of phenomenology yields a decisive directive: not to construct a method from outside or from above, not to contrive a new theoretical path by exercises in dialectic.” TD. p. 93



“The categories are not inventions or a group of logical schemata as such, ‘lattices’; on the contrary, they are alive in life itself in an original way: alive in order to ‘form’ life on themselves. They have their own modes of access, which are not foreign to life itself, as if they pounced down upon life from the outside, but instead are precisely the preeminent way in which life comes to itself.”<sup>52</sup>

However, it should be clear that this insight leaves unresolved what are the “modes of access” that the categories themselves as forms of life have. The answer to this question rests in an applying of Husserl’s insights concerning categorial intuition to Dilthey’s fundamental program of the derivation of concepts of life from life itself.

Natorp’s critique had two levels, first the claim of objectification at the level of reflection and then the further abstraction contained in language. We have already asserted that Heidegger locates the critique’s flaw in the assumption of artificial divisions between reflection and life, or humanity and reality. It is important to note that this general method of finding deeper unities where others assume dualisms progresses even further than the location of speech in life and concepts in existence itself. In fact, Heidegger wishes to locate the two levels of Natorp’s critique within the same activity of life. In other words, life speaks and in speaking it sees and directs its sight: “Whether or not it is vocalized, it is always in some way speaking. Language speaks not only in the course of the perceiving, but even guides it; we see through language.”<sup>53</sup> What has occurred here is in fact a move to a hermeneutic understanding of vision, whereby each seeing is a ‘seeing as’ and perception itself ends up being saturated with the categorial. It is an important point that this relation works both ways. Every seeing goes hand in hand

---

<sup>52</sup> Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle* Richard Rojcewicz trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) p. 66 henceforth [PIA.]

<sup>53</sup> IPR. p. 22

with the possibility of its expression and all speaking directs vision. Now, the Neo-Kantians would be happy enough to accept the hermeneutic assertion that every seeing is a ‘seeing as’, indeed a philosophical movement centered on the active conceptualizing activities of the mind to the point of an absolutization of mediation would have to be comfortable with such a claim, but the further claim that the categorial elements found in vision and speech derive from base facticity itself, namely from life, flies in the face of Neo-Kantian conceptualizing mediation. Through this insight we have moved to the heart of Heidegger’s answer to Natorp which goes beyond the basic insights drawn from Dilthey, namely his conception of understanding as hermeneutic intuition:

“The empowering experiencing of living experience that takes itself along is the understanding intuition, the hermeneutical intuition, the originary phenomenological back-and-forth formation of the receipts and precepts from which all theoretical objectification, indeed every transcendent positing, falls out. Universality of word meanings primarily indicates something originary: worldliness of experienced experiencing.”<sup>54</sup>

In preparation for a point that will become central in Chapter Two, it is worth noting that here, as early as his 1919 courses, Heidegger is joining and rejecting both the theoretical objectification he opposed in Neo-Kantianism and transcendent positing. We must keep this in mind for our later discussion of the transcendental and a priori. For now, though, in order to fully understand what it means to locate both language and conceptualization in the movement of life itself, to discover a philosophy born of existence, we must turn to Husserl’s categorial intuition and the path Heidegger followed from it to pre-ontological understanding and hermeneutics. Then, perhaps, we can hope to understand the leap

---

<sup>54</sup> TD. p. 99

whereby we find ourselves not in a reifying language depicting objects over against experiencing subjects, but rather within the world itself.

## Section Two: Categorical Intuition and Understanding

“We have gone into the aridity of the desert, hoping, instead of always knowing things, to intuit understandingly and to understand intuitively...”<sup>55</sup>

Within his lecture course *History of the Concept of Time; Prolegomena*, delivered at Marburg in 1925, Heidegger discusses in depth what he considers the three major discoveries of phenomenology and their importance. These discoveries, namely intentionality, categorical intuition, and the proper original sense of the a priori, are then transformed in various ways which form the basis of a rough version of what will later become *Being and Time*. We note a telling foreshadowing of the uses to which Heidegger will put Husserl’s work when, prior to his presentation of the discoveries, Heidegger comments that Dilthey was the first to recognize the importance of the *Logical Investigations*, the early work of Husserl in which these insights are presented. It was upon these insights which Dilthey, already an old man, sought to complete the goal towards which he had been driving throughout the course of his work: “Dilthey here found an initial fulfillment of what he had sought for decades and formulated as a crucial program in the Academy essay of 1894: a fundamental science of life itself.”<sup>56</sup> It is precisely this recognition of the promise of Husserl’s discoveries which Heidegger goes on to articulate and develop in the transformation of categorical intuition into a pre-

---

<sup>55</sup> TD. p. 55

<sup>56</sup> Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time; Prolegomena* Theodore Kisiel trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) p. 24 henceforth cited as [CT.]

ontological understanding and hermeneutic intuition from which the categories proper to the study of any given matter might be uncovered. In the course of this transformation Heidegger will have to reverse the founded/founding relation of categorial intuition and sensory intuition, which will bring him to the very foundation of the hermeneutic insights concerning the finitude and oriented nature of human disclosure which is expressed in the transformation of intentionality into the structure of care. This path will bring us fully to the concept of the world, discovered in our Being-in-the-world, which has the character of care. What we originally called the challenge of *Gelassenheit*, or how we can let anything be experienced as what it is as it is, will finally come into focus in our engagement with the concept of world which is co-determinate with, both determining and created by, all our ways of taking, interacting with, and talking over things, ourselves, and our concerns. This work, along with drawing out the limitations and implications these views necessitate, will take us through Chapter Two and prepare us to look closely at Heidegger's attempt, following *Being and Time*, to develop a philosophy of historical world change in line with his previous work concerning the nature of both concepts and practices. It will also be seen that this historical turn is a return to Heidegger's earliest concern with the issue of origins, specifically the origin of meaning whether that meaning is understood in terms and concepts and categories or practices and world. In order to better understand this path we will need to turn to Husserl, and the presentation of categorial intuition within his *Logical Investigations*.

The issue of categorial intuition is raised, for Husserl, within the framework of meaning fulfillment and perceptual assertions or observations. Husserl states that:

“Knowledge always has the character of a fulfillment and an identification: this may be

observed in every case where we confirm a general judgment through subsequent intuition, as in every other case of knowledge.”<sup>57</sup> The meaning of a perceptual assertion is fulfilled insofar as an intuition is provided in which the meaning content of the sentence can be identified with the content of the intuition. As Heidegger presents the issue; “Identifying fulfillment is what we call evidence. Evidence is a specific intentional act, that of identifying the presumed and the intuited; the presumed is itself illuminated in the matter.”<sup>58</sup> In this light the question is raised if even basic sentences allow for complete and adequate fulfillment, if even the most common sentences are such as allow for evidence. As Husserl puts the question in section forty of the sixth logical investigation: “Are there parts and forms of perception corresponding to all parts and forms of meaning?”<sup>59</sup> The example Husserl uses to demonstrate the difficulty of the issue is an apparently straightforward perceptual statement such as “This paper is white.” We do indeed have a sensuous intuition corresponding to whiteness. However, the statement also contains logical connectives, such as the copula “is”, which require fulfillment as well. Do we perceive the being of the paper? Or, taking the statement in a different sense, do we perceive the being white of the paper? As Husserl states: “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.”<sup>60</sup> In even the most basic sentence there exists a surplus of meaning that is unfulfilled by merely sensuous intuition: “The intention of the word ‘white’ only partially coincides with the color-aspect of the apparent object; a surplus of

---

<sup>57</sup> Husserl *Logical Investigations Vol 2* J.N. Findley trans. (New York: Routledge, 2001) p. 275 henceforth cited as [Hus.]

<sup>58</sup> CT, p. 50

<sup>59</sup> Hus. p. 272

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 277

meaning remains over, a form which finds nothing in the appearance itself to confirm it. White paper is paper which *is* white.”<sup>61</sup> As Husserl points out, only the meanings which refer to quality alone receive direct sensuous fulfillment in perception, all formal characteristics such as are expressed by formal words such as “the”, “some”, “not”, “which”, “is” and many others representing structural formal elements apparently receive no direct perceptual fulfillment.<sup>62</sup> If, as asserted, all knowledge has the character of fulfillment and identification, how are we to reassure ourselves of our knowledge of even so simply a statement as “This paper is white”?

The answer rests in distinguishing founding acts of sensuous intuition from founded categorial acts. The founded acts to which I refer are connective, relational, or formative acts in general which arise from an original sensuous intuition and make explicit what was implicit within the sensuous whole. Categorial intuition may, then, be formally defined as a perceptually founded act wherein formal aspects of meaning intentions find their fulfillment. The line of reasoning we have laid out thus far is fairly direct, sentences contain more than sensuously fulfillable content insofar as there is a meaning surplus found in the categorial elements of even basic perceptual assertions, thus there must be non-sensuous fulfillment at our disposal if even basic sentences are going to be able to be transformed into knowledge through evidentiary acts. This line of thought has been understood by many, in one form or another, including such thinkers as John Locke. The twist is Husserl’s answer to the demand for non-sensuous fulfillment. Where

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 273

<sup>62</sup>“Briefly we see that the case of structured meanings is not so simple as the case of a ‘proper’ individual meaning, with its straightforward relation of coincidence with perception.” Ibid. p. 273

someone like Locke posits the origin of the meanings of formal aspects of assertions in reflection upon mental acts performed on sensuous data, Husserl asserts that reflection upon mental acts would never provide us with knowledge of the meanings of categorial properties. While this method may be useful when actually seeking the meaning of mental acts, such as judgments where by we can perhaps reflect upon a moment of mental judgment and thus receive some fulfilling intuition of what a judgment is, the meaning of something like Being or “is-ness” can not be thus found in some mental act: “The thought of a Judgment fulfills itself in the inner intuition of an actual judgment, but the thought of an ‘is’ does not fulfill itself in this manner. Being is not a judgment nor a constituent of some inner object as it is of some outer object, and so not of a judgment.”<sup>63</sup> We can, then, arrive at the fulfillment of categorial elements of assertions through neither sensuous intuition nor reflection upon mental acts. What these categorial elements actually correspond to, Husserl asserts, are “states of affairs” of which we can gain intuitions based upon sensuous intuitions. We can now polish further our definition of categorial intuition. Categorial intuition is an intuition, founded upon sensuous intuition, granting knowledge of a state of affairs. As Husserl states:

“Not in reflection upon judgments, nor even upon fulfillments of judgments, but in the fulfillments of judgments themselves lies the true source of the concepts State of Affairs and Being (in the copulative sense). Not in these acts as objects, but in the objects of these acts, do we have the abstractive basis which enables us to realize the concepts in question.”<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 278

<sup>64</sup> Ibid p. 279

In narrowing in on a clearer understanding of Husserl's categorial intuition, we must now ask more clearly and directly what exactly we mean by categorial intuition as a founded act of perception.

Categorial intuition is founded insofar as it requires a perceptual intuition from which it can arise, we can not imagine a direct intuition of "is" without something which actually is given to us as existing through sensuous intuition. Another way to consider this point is to note that categorial elements, insofar as they are relational or connective etc., seem to require predicates or objects which are being related.<sup>65</sup> In this sense, then, we can delineate two levels of perception or intuition:

"Sensuous or real objects can in fact be characterized as objects of the lowest level of possible intuition, categorial or ideal objects as objects of higher levels...the object is also an immediately given object in the sense that, as this object perceived with this definite objective content, it is not constituted in relational, connective, or otherwise articulated acts, acts founded on other acts which bring other objects to perception. Sensuous objects are present in perception at a single act-level: they do not need to be constituted in many-rayed fashion in acts of higher level, whose objects are set up for them by way of other objects, already constituted in other acts."<sup>66</sup>

Categorial intuition, then, requires the base of sensuous intuition given at a single act-level, upon which objects with categorial aspects then arise. In such founded intuition, then, "...something appears as actual and self-given, which was not given, and could not have been given, as what it now appears to be, in these foundational acts alone. On the

---

<sup>65</sup> One is tempted to note here that, despite many empiricist claims to the contrary, it seems just as difficult to imagine a pure perception such as a simple sensuous intuition of yellowness. It is always a given patch of yellowness, with some sense of size and location, which undoubtedly seems to come to mind. One might claim that relational properties are as required for the possibilities of predicates as the reverse. This is part of the hermeneutic insight Heidegger will use in altering the concept of categorial intuition. Every seeing is also a seeing-as and a perceiving of some state of affairs. To speak of perception free of categorial elements seems meaningless.

<sup>66</sup> Hus. p. 282



other hand, the new objects are based on the older ones, they are related to what appears in the basic acts.”<sup>67</sup> The State of Affairs we intuit through categorial intuition arises from simply given sensuous intuition, and yet is a newly constituted object. From some direct experience of whiteness we discern the whiteness of a piece of paper, a piece of paper which is further intuited as there before us existing. It is important to stress the implications of this new object, we are not engaged in a simple combinatory activity involving atomistic data of sensory perception and we are not inferring conclusions from sensory data, we are directly seeing categorial aspects of objects. Husserl insists that “...we are here dealing with a sphere of objects, which can only show themselves ‘in person’ in such founded acts.”<sup>68</sup> Another way in which this can be considered is in terms of part to whole relations. Straightforward sense perception always only gives a homogenous unity, a unity which has not been arrived at through the unification of various atomistic perceptual data but which is there all at once without the need for any unifying act.<sup>69</sup> However, founded upon this straightforward sensory perception, we can have another intuition of elements related to each other within such a unity, similarly we can for the first time have an intuition of the unity as a unity;

“Only when we use the perceptual series to found a novel act, only when we articulate our individual percepts, and relate their objects to each other, does the unity of continuity holding among these individual percepts – the unity of fusion through their coinciding intentions – provide a *point d’appui* for a consciousness of identity.”<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p. 282-283

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> “The unity of perception comes into being as a straightforward unity, as an immediate fusion of part-intentions, without the addition of new act-intentions.” Ibid. p. 284

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 285

The recognition, then, of any sensuously given element as an element of a larger part, or as a unity made up of parts, is always a relational founded categorial act.<sup>71</sup> In the movement from the directly given perceptual whole to an intuition of its categorial relational elements we have moved, Husserl asserts, from the sphere of sensibility to that of understanding. As this language should suggest, however, in characterizing categorial intuition as understanding we have completed a revolution from Kant's original understanding of these sets of terms.

Within Kant the sensibility/understanding divide can be explicated in terms of the passivity with which the mind receives intuition and the active spontaneity with which it organizes intuition according to the categories of the understanding. With the presentation of categorial intuition, however, we have dissolved the divide between the passively receptive and spontaneously active. If the categories are no longer imposed, but rather experienced in perception and intuition, then the wall between the mind and the thing-in-itself has fallen. When we reflect upon Heidegger's early interest in Lask's principle of the material determination of form which he discusses in its connection to the theory of categories in Duns Scotus, which we mentioned earlier, we can see how exciting the claim that intuition, properly understood, can give direct perception of categorial forms was for Heidegger. Furthermore, recalling the need to locate the origin of philosophical concepts in life itself we had earlier discussed in Heidegger's taking up of Dilthey's project in answer to Natorp, we can now begin to see ourselves clear to the

---

<sup>71</sup> "It is clear, per contra, that the apprehension of a moment and of a part generally as a part of the whole in question, and, in particular, the apprehension of a sensuous feature as a feature, or of a sensuous form as a form, point to acts which are all founded: these acts are in our case of a relational kind." Ibid. p. 286

way in which the categories and concepts proper to any given subject matter can be arrived at. The matter in question does indeed provide its own categories, precisely through categorial intuition. There remains, however, one element of Husserl's presentation we still must explicate and upon which Heidegger's fruitful use of hermeneutic insights rests, and that is the manner in which States of Affairs are given in categorial intuition.

Categorial intuition, as founded intuition arising from a base of straightforward sensuous intuition, can be described as an act of explicating and articulating new objects out of the sensuously intuited. New objects are categorially intuited, but this intuition can be understood as articulation. This multileveled analysis of intuition, which brings understanding out of the mind and into the realm of what can be perceived by way of intuition, gives rise to the observation that a sensible object can be intuited by us in a variety of ways: "It can, first of all, of course, be apprehended in 'straightforward' fashion... The same object can, however, be grasped by us in explicating fashion: acts of articulation can put its parts 'into relief,' relational acts bring the relieved parts into relation, whether to one another or to the whole."<sup>72</sup> Husserl goes on to observe that, insofar as categorial intuition can occur in a variety of manners, or can to a certain degree be allowed not to occur at all, several different objects can arise from the same straightforwardly given sensuous intuitional base. The manner in which different categorial intuitions arise will be determined by the perspective or standpoint from which

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p. 286-287

we intuit, thus highlighting the possibility of various possible States of Affairs to be intuited from any given perceptual base due to the interpretive position of the viewer:

“According, therefore, to our ‘interpretative standpoint,’ or to the ‘sense of our passage’ from part to whole or contrariwise – which are both novel phenomenological characters making their contribution to the total intentional matter of the relating act – there will be two possibilities, marked off in a priori fashion, in which the ‘same relation’ can achieve actual givenness.”<sup>73</sup>

While Husserl’s example here focuses on the option between arriving at an intuition of the relation of a part to the whole or a whole to its part, either of which will grant a different actual phenomenological relation, he also provides examples where the alternatives provided by the variety of interpretive standpoints is more pronounced. In a State of Affairs involving a plurality of members of a given whole, one’s orientation towards one specific member of the whole rather than another will give rise to the intuition of a relationship which would be different had one picked out a different member as primary:

“Only when one member is picked out as principal member, and is dwelt on while the other members are still kept in mind, does a determination of members by members make its appearance, a determination which varies with the kind of unity that is present and plainly also with the particular members set in relief. In such cases also the choice of a principal member, or of a direction of relational apprehension, leads to phenomenologically distinct forms of relationship, correlatively characterized, which forms are not genuinely present in the unarticulated percept of the connection as a straightforward phenomenon, but which are in it only as ideal possibilities, the possibilities, that is, of fulfilling relevant founded acts.”<sup>74</sup>

What Husserl has, then, asserted is that the manner in which we approach any given straightforward sensuous intuition, which includes our interpretive position in relation to

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p. 287-288

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p. 288

it, determines the categorial elements which can arise from the given sensuous base. Here we have at least a slight appreciation for the determinative power of the hermeneutic (and might we hazard to say historical?) position of any potential categorial intuator. We can begin to see in this a further reason why this presentation of categorial intuition would have struck the young Heidegger as so exciting, and also why categorial intuition was able to play such a fundamental role in Heidegger's hermeneutic reforming of phenomenology. Indeed, once the founding/founded relationship between sensuous intuition and categorial intuition is reversed in Heidegger, with the determinative power of interpretive position for intuiting categorial elements and States of Affairs maintained, we have almost all of the necessary elements for Heidegger's hermeneutic understanding of philosophy. Further, this way in which categorial intuition discloses States of Affairs which are already implicit in straightforward sensuous intuition will be echoed, in importantly altered forms, in Heidegger's talk of the concept of a Situation in both his 1919 summer semester lecture course and in his discussion of the manner in which authenticity discloses a Situation in which one always already was in *Being and Time*. Now let us move on to discuss more directly what the young Heidegger was able to make of categorial intuition.

Within his discussion of categorial intuition in *History of the Concept of Time; Prolegomena*, large sections of which are taken almost verbatim from Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, Heidegger makes an observation which, while it can pass almost unnoticed, fundamentally turns Husserl's conception on its head: "What is primary and original here? It is not so much that we see the objects and things but rather that we first talk about them. To put it more precisely: we do not say what we see, but rather the

reverse, we see what *one says* about the matter.”<sup>75</sup> In the previous section of this work we have already discussed the way in which Heidegger, in *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, states that the being of the world and the being of life have a very specific connection and relation through the being of speaking. Language is the activity whereby existence, or being in the world, is disclosed to itself. It is important to note here that language is, first of all, fundamentally public, social and enmeshed in a cultural life world. Language is understood as a shared public activity of ostension whereby elements of the world are explicated, articulated, uncovered and disclosed. In this way speech is already an undertaking, a cultural activity of relating to the world that is wrapped up in our collective projects which have already disclosed specific ways in which the world might be and which are always already underway towards further articulation. As Heidegger observes in shifting the focus of an interpretation of categorial intuition: “This inherently determinate character of the world and its potential apprehension and comprehension through expressness, through already having been spoken and talked over, is basically what must now be brought out in the question of the structure of categorial intuition.”<sup>76</sup> For these reasons Theodore Kisiel sees in Heidegger’s take over of categorial intuition a move from identifying categories primarily as delineators of ontological regions towards instead identifying them as practices, projects and projections which then delineate ontological regions when taken in a theoretical manner:

“Heidegger will view these categories not only as contexts or regions of being but also, more temporally, as projects that already anticipate and guide our understanding of objects that appear in their respective regions... Categories are

---

<sup>75</sup> CT, p. 56

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

first of all incipient presuppositions of an operative context that carry us forward in the movement of interpreting that context. Categories are at work before they are seen, and we attempt to see them to put them to work all the more effectively...<sup>77</sup>

If, in fact, we see what one says about matters then we have located categorial determinations in language and we have further located language within the context of cultural practices. In doing so we have de-theorized categorial intuition by locating it back into the flow of life and in doing so we have reversed the founding/founded relation between sensory and categorial intuition: “But if intuition in general can thus be taken back to a more fundamental operative context, then sense intuition is itself a founded mode of knowledge.”<sup>78</sup> An observant reader will, however, noticed something unusual that has occurred here. Our talk of categorial *intuition* now seems out of place, for of course we are no longer discussing anything of an intuitive nature at all. Rather, the work which categorial intuition did for Husserl is now done, for Heidegger, by our shared involvement in a way of life made up of practices, commitments, and projects. What Husserl locates in consciousness Heidegger is able to locate in our being involved in the world with others. In this way, as Kisiel points out, the supposedly cognitive which was formerly assumed to be foundational is in fact founded upon active engagements in the world: “If non-cognitive comportment underlies our more cognitive behaviour, if our more cognitive stances are drawn from our non-cognitive comportment, then this expository movement is a mode of knowing more basic than intuition.”<sup>79</sup> Here we see, then, an early formulation what was discussed in our Introduction as Blattner’s Primacy

---

<sup>77</sup> Kis. 2003 p. 96

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

of Practice. At this point, however, we will pause to ask a troubling question. If the founding/founded relation has been reversed, and the categorial has been located in speech and projects, are we not simply left with some form of social constructivism wherein our experience of the world is culturally determined and this determination either constructs experience or constrains and directs it in such a way that we are thrown back into the divided world of Kant, once more forever removed from the world as it is? Our answer to this question will rest in Heidegger's discussion of the new understanding phenomenology allows us of the original sense of the a priori.

While the categorial intuition of Husserl has been turned on its head, it is important that we not forget certain key aspects we brought out in its discussion. When considering the hermeneutic aspects of Husserl's understanding and of the manner in which one's point of view effects the categorial intuition which discloses a given state of affairs, it was important to note that the effect of various view points on the availability of given categorial intuition in no way suggested the subjectivity of said intuitions. In the same way that a sensuous intuition might alter as I move my perspective and yet not thus suggest that the intuition originates from me, so too the relativity of categorial intuition to hermeneutic interpretive position does not suggest the origin of the categorial in my inferential or judging faculties. We can, then, round out this chain of points by extending the discussion to Heidegger's location of the categorial in speech and the shared assumptions and foundations of our collective activities. Heidegger states that the structure of categorial intuition must now be altered to match the insight that the "determinate character of the world and its potential apprehension and comprehension"



arises through its already having been talked over.<sup>80</sup> This “having been spoken and talked over” need not be radically different with respect to constructivism or subjectivism from a table having been seen from a certain perspective. Neither suggests that the table or its characteristics are constructs of subjectivity or veils before the form of the thing in itself. The world is disclosed precisely in the “having been spoken and talked over”, in our projects and activities the world appears for us, but this is not to say that the determinative power of hermeneutic position should be turned into a concern about our being limited to “mere appearance”.

Following his discussion of categorial intuition in *History of the Concept of Time; Prolegomena* Heidegger attempts to return to the original, or primordial, meaning of the a priori. This presentation, he states, will be shorter than that dedicated to either intentionality or categorial intuition because it is the one which still requires the most work insofar as it is only limitedly clarified by phenomenology and still enwrapped in traditional lines of investigation. In fact, to fully clarify the nature of the a priori Heidegger points us to the end of the entire path of his inquiry, which will be the appropriate exposition of the nature of time. We, in turn, will put off a complete investigation of the status of the a priori in Heidegger until Chapter Two when we will be able to engage with the full scope of Heidegger’s texts. However, in the short discussion Heidegger presents, we can clarify the manner in which his new understanding of categorial intuition is attempting to avoid any of the old epistemic problems and concerns, such as our earlier concern that we have landed ourselves in a form of social

---

<sup>80</sup> CT. p. 56

constructivism. Phenomenology has shown, Heidegger claims, that "...the apriori is not limited to the subjectivity, indeed that in the first instance it has primarily nothing at all to do with subjectivity."<sup>81</sup> This is so because Husserl's presentation of categorial intuition has shown that, "There are sensory ideas, ideas whose structure comes from the subject matter's content (color, materiality, spatiality), a structure which is already there in every real individuation and so is apriori in relation to the here and now of a particular coloration of a thing. All of geometry as such is proof of the existence of a material apriori."<sup>82</sup> The material a priori, and its disclosure through categorial intuition, can then be found, as it were, out in the world itself. Heidegger's talk of sensory ideas, and a material a priori, are meant to point towards a deeper unity prior to the a posteriori division of sensation from understanding or mind from world:

"In the ideal as in the real, once we accept this separation, there is in reference to its objectivity something ideal which can be brought out, something in the being of the ideal and in the being of the real which is apriori, structurally earlier. This already suggests that the apriori phenomenologically understood is not a title for comportment but a title for being. The apriori is not only nothing immanent, belonging primarily to the sphere of the subject, it is also nothing transcendent, specifically bound up with reality."<sup>83</sup>

As we had earlier suggested, but can now state baldly, categorial intuition as understood by Husserl and applied to the question of the a priori demonstrates through the presence of the categorial in intuition a primordial unity between understanding and intuition. In de-theorizing this conception, and locating the categorial in the speech and activity of life, we then find the entire complex intuition/understanding structure, and indeed the

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p. 74

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

subject/object structure it presupposes, founded upon a lived unity of life and world through which what is, is disclosed. It is along these lines, then, that we can understand Heidegger's answer to that other important Neo-Kantian, Rickert, later in the same work where he discusses the three primary discoveries of phenomenology. In response to Rickert's claim that phenomenology fails to be a true philosophy of the immediate, along similar lines to those critiques already attributed to Natorp, Heidegger states: "In opposition to this, it must first be stated generally that phenomenology does not wish to be either a philosophy of intuition or a philosophy of the immediate. It does not want to be a philosophy at all in this sense, but wants the subject matters themselves."<sup>84</sup> This makes perfect sense insofar as intuition and conception of the immediate, both, are already derivative of our lived engagement in the world. Phenomenology, then, seeks to study what Husserl understood as the a priori structures of intentionality which underlies all intuition or understanding, or what Heidegger will come to understand as the background understanding of being-in-the-world and Dasein's care structure. In Heidegger's case the extent to which these remain a priori, and in what sense a priori, will be an issue of no small consequence.

### Section 3: Intentionality, Care, and Gelassenheit

"It could be shown from the phenomenon of care as the basic structure of Dasein that what phenomenology took to be intentionality and how it took it is fragmentary, a phenomenon regarded merely from the outside."<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 88

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p. 303

Within *History of the Concept of Time; Prolegomena* Heidegger discusses intentionality first of the three discoveries he attributes to Husserl. Why, then, have we come to discuss it last? The answer is that, in a sense, we have been discussing it all along and now, duly prepared, we can bring all our early concerns into focus through the subject of intentionality and its correction and completion as care. All the problems with which we have been concerned thus far, Natorp's charge concerning the distorting nature of phenomenology and the impossibility of the unmediated, Heidegger's discussion of the birth of authentic philosophy from the self articulating speech of life, Husserl's insights concerning categorial intuition and finally Heidegger's relocating of this insight into lived projects, have all dealt more or less directly with what Kisiel characterizes as the primal relationship (or *Urverhaltnis*) of categorial form and matter. This same primal relation will be rethought and revolutionized in the strife of world and earth in "The Origin of the Work of Art". This primal relation of form and matter, certainly nothing new within the history of philosophy especially since the work of Kant, was in a sense renovated in the work of phenomenology in the concept of intentionality.<sup>86</sup> Intentionality itself, however, was due to be revolutionized in Heidegger's anti-theoretical returning of it to life in the form of Dasein's care structure.

---

<sup>86</sup> "This original domain is structured by the *Urverhaltnis* (primal relationship) of categorial form and matter, which for Heidegger (as we shall see) reflects a truncated noematic version of the phenomenological *Urverhaltnis* of intentionality. The categorial form reflects or indicates a certain *Bewandtnis* (relevance, bearing) of the matter, the 'circumstances' or 'appliant implications' of the matter itself, just as in *Being and Time* the tool is defined by *Bewandtnis* (appliance) in and through the referential structures of the environing world. Finally, the priority of this original realm is such that even the cognition of it always contains a precognitive lived element, such that it is simply 'lived through' and not itself known." Kis. 2003 p. 103

Before we move directly into the subject of intentionality we should note a few further points concerning the connection of the form/matter relationship and our overall project. We have mentioned Heidegger's assertion of the principle of the material determination of every form, and the manner in which categorial intuition and its renovation as lived understanding provide the very mechanism whereby a subject matter determines the way in which it is conceptualized, addressed, or dealt with. What was at stake in Natorp's claim concerning the impossibility of the unmediated is precisely the possibility of any starting point from which the material determination of form can get off the ground. The absolutization of mediation, in either Neo-Kantian or Hegelian philosophy, is ultimately the denigration, if not complete abolition, of a determining ground which goes hand in hand with the dismissal of the Myth of the Given that will be presented later by Sellars. If the rational is the real then any determining ground is always going to be seen as simply the incomplete or inchoate fodder for negation from whence the rational can ultimately arise or as a myth which we can never actually isolate. As mentioned earlier in relation to Natorp, each higher level of expression and articulation is, in a sense, more real and complete than the earlier level from which it took its start. If we do not accept this prioritizing of mediation we are left with an insurmountable facticity, a determining material which gives rise to our forms and our activities, conceptualizing or otherwise, but which is not itself rationally formed. As Kisiel characterizes it: "These more surcharged manifestations of 'irrationality' or 'brute facticity' thus mark the entry into history of the unexplainably new, unprecedented and

creative.”<sup>87</sup> As the Introduction to this work has already made clear, this issue will be central to our interpretation of “The Origin of the Work of Art” and also, therefore, to our conception of Realist Historicism. Is the world which is set up by art a new enframing or gathering of elements which were already there in the world, thus providing a further mediation of the already mediated, or do we have in the work of art the possibility of an irruption and “the entry into history of the unexplainably new, unprecedented and creative”? As I hope now to show, it is indeed our very dependence upon facticity which places us within the hermeneutic situation that is characterized in Heidegger’s discussion of the care structure which ultimately is Being-in-the-World. It is for this reason alone that *Gelassenheit* can have any meaning and also why it should be a challenge. It is precisely towards the entry of the new to which we must be open.

As has already been stated, the phenomenology of Husserl has its own way of clarifying and solving the problems involved in the dualism of conceptual form and matter. You will recall that categorial intuition, in dissolving the boundary of Kant’s passive faculty of intuition and the active faculty of conceptual categorizing and ordering, was already a radical answer to Kant’s formulation of the matter/form dualism in terms of the blindness of intuition without concepts and the emptiness of concepts without intuitions.<sup>88</sup> Beside this innovation, Husserl’s conception of the intentionality of consciousness also seeks to lift us out of the morass of the old epistemology centered critical philosophy by reformulating the very problems which gave rise to that philosophy, or perhaps that it helped give rise to, from the more primordial point of

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p. 104

<sup>88</sup> “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.” CPR. A51 B75

intentionality as the being of consciousness. It should be no surprise to us, then, that Heidegger's early interest, attested to in his habilitation, in the form matter relation appears in conjunction with his growing recognition of the promise of phenomenology's intentional revolution. We shall have to look to how it is that intentionality reformulates the subject/object and matter/form dualisms, each of which reflect each other on separate levels, and how Heidegger himself transforms the insight of intentionality.

An observant reader of the work which has led up to this moment will have noted repeated changes in formulation of the central issues in question. Originally with our discussion of Natorp our question, or rather what we presented as Heidegger's question, had been how phenomenology can be understood as not distorting the "things" which it sought to describe. In other words, first we were dealing with a relation between "things" and a philosophical mode of conceptualization and discourse. In response to this we discussed Heidegger's location of philosophy in life and the connection between language, experience, and expression. At this second level the relation in question seemed primarily to be that of life and thought, and then the relation between thought and language. Following this we shifted our focus to the observation of how conceptual elements which apparently serve to order our experience of "things" are given to us with the same sensual intuition with which we experience the things themselves, the key stipulation being that a founded act of categorial intuition rests on the founding act of sensual intuition. At this third level we were dealing with the relation of concepts to sensory intuition within an experiencing consciousness. Heidegger's relocating of categorial intuition within the engaged activities of life returned us once more, however, to the second level of living-existence, actual language use and expression, and involved

activity in the world. Finally we began to discuss the issue of the material determination of form and we arrived at a fourth formulation of the issue with which we are grappling, one which rests on an abstract level such that it can be retro-fitted to each of the formulations already under discussion. I would like to point out that this moving from one level of discussion to another (i.e. philosophy and things; life, thought, and language; concepts and sensations; form and matter) is justified insofar as each of these problematic relations, generally appearing in a dualistic form, shares the same structure as the others and is transformed from one level to another in Heidegger's returning of theoretical philosophy to life. As we shall see, the relation of subject and object, concept and sensation, mind and world, all can be reformulated in terms of intentionality. As Heidegger asserts: "We must learn to see the data as such and to see that relations between compartments, between lived experiences, are themselves not complexions of things but in turn are of an intentional character. We must come to see that all the relations of life are intrinsically defined by this structure."<sup>89</sup> Beyond this, intentionality itself can be further removed from the arid realm of the theoretical gaze through locating it in the Care structure of Dasein. My method of presentation thus far is justified, then, in at least two senses. First, it follows the very method of relocating theoretical problems in the soil of life which Heidegger uses, the path of which is ultimately our focus. Second, it provides discussions of the same underlying subject from several different levels and perspectives. We must do more to make our case, however. How are the problematic relations of subject to object, concept to sensation, and mind to world, to say nothing of

---

<sup>89</sup> CT. p. 36



philosophy to “thing” which includes each of these, changed by intentionality and how is intentionality changed into Care?

Intentionality, most directly stated, is the assertion of the directedness and aboutness of all conscious experience. As Heidegger states it: “*Intentio* literally means *directing-itself-toward*. Every lived experience, every psychic compartment, directs itself toward something.”<sup>90</sup> Rather than simply an observation concerning some characteristic or property of the mind, Husserl locates this directed-about-ness in the very essence or ontological nature of consciousness itself.<sup>91</sup> Even beyond this, as our most recent quotation suggests, Heidegger wishes to locate intentionality as the fundamental structure of all lived experience and not “a coordination relative to other realities, something added to the experiences taken as psychic states.”<sup>92</sup> Understanding the primordial ontological nature of intentionality will be fundamental for our understanding of how it represents a transformation of the old problem of the relation of subject to object. Our preparation for discussing the subject can be guided by criticisms leveled against intentionality. In Neo-Kantian criticisms leveled by Heinrich Rickert, and discussed by Heidegger in *History of the Concept of Time; Prolegomena*, intentionality is identified with a dogma ridden tradition derived through Brentano from Scholastic philosophy.<sup>93</sup> We must, then, pause

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p. 29

<sup>91</sup> “Intentionality in Husserl cannot be taken as a property of consciousness, i.e., as a character which is unrelated to the mode of existing of consciousness, as simply a modality of the contents of consciousness. It is precisely the very mode of existence of consciousness that the notion of intentionality tries to characterize.” Levinas *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology* Andre Orranne trans. (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1985) p. 41 henceforth cited as [Lev.]

<sup>92</sup> CT. p. 29

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p. 28 and p. 32-36

here to consider first what intentionality is mistakenly taken to be by Neo-Kantians and then the important role it actually plays in the work of Husserl and Heidegger.

The dogmatic form of intentionality, used by the Neo-Kantians as an example of the failed attempt to use intentionality as an answer to the problem of mind's relation to world, rests on the assumption that the outwardly directed nature of the mental and its aboutness somehow assure us of a dependable relation to the physical world as it is outside of us and independent of our minds. Intentionality taken, then, as a relation between mind and world appears as a dogmatic assumption of the very answer to the epistemic problem it claims to then demonstrate. This mistaken view of the role of intentionality in Husserl and Heidegger rests on the description of intentionality as a relation between mind and world, and not rather as the primordial structure of experience, whether experience is taken in a psychical sense or Heidegger's sense as lived involvement. As Heidegger puts it: "What makes us blind to intentionality is the presumption that what we have here is a theory of the relation between physical and psychic, whereas what is really exhibited is simply a structure of the psychic itself."<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless, intentionality taken as a structure of the psychic with no reference to physical externality at all still represents an answer, or renovation, of the mind/world subject/object epistemic challenge. To see how this is we will have to consider Husserl more fully.

In the context of categorial intuition we have already discussed the subject of sensuous intuition and the state of affairs we end up actually perceiving. The experience

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 35

of states of affairs contains, beyond pure sensuous intuition, the categorial elements that alone allow the occurrence of what we recognize as experience of objects. Without these categorial elements we would have simple sensuous bombardment. In order not to confuse different senses of the term, we might now wish to change our terminology to reflect the difference between Husserl's position and that of classic empiricists such as Berkley or Locke. What we might call sensory or sensuous intuition in orthodox empiricism, identified as seemingly caused from some external source due to its incorrigibility and the passivity with which the mind experiences it, can be placed in contrast with what we might term hyletic data for Husserl. One reason for making this distinction rests in the fact that, granted the existence of categorial intuition, incorrigibility and the passivity of a receptive mind are no longer unique defining factors of the sensory as compared to the conceptual or categorial. There must, then, be different internal criteria of distinction between the hyletic and other forms of data, for Husserl. As Levinas clearly explains it in his book *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*:

“To oppose the hyletic data to the sensations of the sensualists, we must still emphasize that the character which gives unity to these contents which are grouped under the concept of *hyle* is not the purely extrinsic character of being provided by the senses. This was sufficient for empiricism. But for us this unity proceeds from an internal character which permits us to extend the notion of *hyle* beyond sense-data to the sphere of affectivity and of will... We can distinguish in consciousness an animating act which gives to the hyletic phenomena a transcendent meaning: they signify something from the external world, they represent it, desire it, love it, etc. This act is an element which has a mode of existing identical to that of hyletic data, i.e. it is conscious and constituted in immanent time; it knows itself in the implicit manner which is characteristic of

*Erlebnisse*. Yet it gives meaning to the flow of consciousness. It intends something other than itself; it transcends itself.”<sup>95</sup>

The point to stress is that the meaning giving act which provides a transcendent meaning to hyletic data does not itself rest in some relation between the mind and world, rather as Levinas asserts, this act has the same mode as the reception of hyletic data itself.

Consciousness transcends itself in a manner free of any need for us to look to the physical to define this transcendence, the transcendence occurs internally. Intentionality as the very nature of consciousness points to the nature of consciousness as self-transcending.

Levinas clarifies this position by stating:

“But Husserl also attacks a theory which would see in intentionality a new element, a bridge between the world and consciousness... intentionality is not the way in which a subject tries to make contact with an object that exists beside it. *Intentionality is what makes up the very subjectivity of subjects*. The very reality of subjects consists in their transcending themselves. The problem of the relation between subject and object was justified by a substantialist ontology which conceived existence on the model of things resting in themselves. Then, any relation to something alien was extremely mysterious. As we have shown, Husserl, by overcoming the substantialist concept of existence, was able to demonstrate that a subject is not something that first exists and then relates to objects. The relation between subjects and objects constitutes the genuinely primary phenomenon in which we can find what are called ‘subject’ and ‘object’.”<sup>96</sup>

It is not, then, that some thing or substance known as “mind” is, or perhaps is not, in some complex relation to some thing or substance called “physical world”. Rather, the very nature of subjectivity is to be engaged in self-transcendence because both subject and object arise primordially within intentionality and thus within relation to each other. Intentionality, then, is primary and previous to any mind or world and it is from

---

<sup>95</sup> Lev. p. 39

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p. 41

intentionality that any concept of mind and world, subject and object, arise. It is precisely this point Heidegger makes when he asserts that "...there is a connection between presuming and presumed, or *noesis* and *noema*..."<sup>97</sup> or when he identifies "...*intentionality as a reciprocal belonging-together of intention and intentum*."<sup>98</sup> Outside of skeptical epistemology and epistemic philosophy there is no zero point from which a mind substance is faced with the input of sensory data which it somehow must infer or judge to be a correct or incorrect representation of some external physical substance. Rather, both artificial theoretic concepts of mind and physical matter or thing-in-itself derive from the two poles of the original primordial intentional being of consciousness. The intended is given in the intention.

Just as in the case of subjects and objects, intentionality also works as the origin of form and matter. Heidegger states that "...every intention has within it a tendency toward fulfillment and its specifically proper way of possible fulfillment..."<sup>99</sup> this also means that every form, taken as a mode of relating to something intentionally, has internal to it a connection to its appropriate matter. However, our previous discussion of language's ability to persist as tradition alone in connection with the possibility of empty intending free of the corrective of material attestation suggests that form alone can not be taken as determinative of matter. It is form, as the bearer of a tendency toward fulfillment, which depends upon its proper matter for completion. In this sense we can uphold the principle of the material determination of form as a corrective to empty

---

<sup>97</sup> CT, p. 45

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p. 46

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. p. 44

expression or intending, but this does not imply a real ability to separate *intentio* and *intentum* such that one might become absolutely prior to the other. To imagine the possibility of a real separation between form and matter is to ignore the primordially of intentionality and the very idea of hermeneutic intuition, which we have come to identify as pre-ontological understanding, Heidegger's bold 1919 statement of which first set us along our path: "The empowering experiencing of living experience that takes itself along is the understanding intuition, the *hermeneutical intuition*, the originary phenomenological back-and-forth formation of the receipts and precepts from which all theoretical objectification, indeed every transcendent positing, falls out."<sup>100</sup> We must always remember that it is precisely this vision of the hermeneutic intuition which caused Heidegger to assert at the very close of his first 1919 seminar that "Life is historical; no dissection into essential elements, but connection and context. Problem of material giving is not genuine, but comes only from theory."<sup>101</sup> This may rightly give rise to the impression that our subject matter has become blurred. We state that intentionality is primordial, but within this primordial relation the material side is to be understood as having priority over form. At least part of the cause of confusion here has been due to our focus on extrapolating the Husserlian structure of the insights which Heidegger will make his own. It is now important for us to test this general form of the primal relation with the matter itself that is to fill it out, namely Heidegger's understanding of facticity. This requires us to turn to Heidegger's transformation of intentionality into care structure.

---

<sup>100</sup> TD. p. 99

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

The move from intentionality to care is, first of all, a move from the epoche purified realm of consciousness to the realm of world enmeshed activity. As Heidegger notes, the very basic activities of interest to intentional analysis, such as the most basic experiences of perception, are to be understood in terms of the purposeful world engagements from which they arise:

“Natural perception as I live in it in moving about my world is for the most part not a detached observation and scrutiny of things, but is rather absorbed in dealing with the matters at hand concretely and practically. It is not self-contained; I do not perceive in order to perceive but in order to orient myself, to pave the way in dealing with something.”<sup>102</sup>

The same observation was central to the de-theorizing of categorial intuition whereby the categorial elements of experience were taken out of a purely intuitive context and shown, rather, to arise from shared understandings drawn from activities in the world. Things are already implicitly presented to us as organized into ontological regions, complete with conceptual structures, in our everyday activities and dealings with them. Reality comes to us, as it were, having already been thoroughly talked, and worked, over. This is not to say that we are always already biased, as it were, but rather that only through active involvement does ‘what is’ come to expression at all. The thing to note in the now familiar movement we have just made is that, in moving from consciousness to enworlded engagement, we have revealed the primal relationship characterized in intentionality to be a temporal, and indeed historical, one. We are always already living in the understanding of a meaningful world provided us through language and shared

---

<sup>102</sup> CT. p. 30

practices, which is precisely what turns categorial intuition into a **pre-ontological** understanding. As Heidegger observes:

“But what is meant by intentionality – the bare and isolated directing-itself-towards – must still be set back into the unified basic structure of being-ahead-of-itself-in-already-being-involved-in. This alone is the authentic phenomenon which corresponds to what inauthentically and only in an isolated direction is meant by intentionality. I refer to this here only in passing in order to mark the place from which a fundamental critique of phenomenological inquiry finds its start.”<sup>103</sup>

As this quote suggests, the unified basic structure which all lived comportment share and through which they themselves are connected, is the structure of always already being engaged in practices, articulations and involvements which similarly are always already directing us towards various anticipated outcomes and actions. We are, then, always a step ahead and behind of ourselves, stretched out through time as meaningful directed movements. This is, at least partially, what is meant by being-ahead-of-itself-in-already-being-involved-in. A key element of Heidegger’s discontent with the original Husserlian sense of intentionality rests in its apparent prioritizing of theoretical comportment as the model of all intentional comportments. He states:

“1. with respect to *intentionality* insofar as this is always construed (less explicitly than implicitly) as *specific theoretical* behavior. Characteristically, intentionality is translated for the most part as meaning, intending something; one speaks of willing, loving, hating, and so forth as meaning something. Through this fixing of usage, a definite prefiguration of perspective creeps into every intentional analysis...for every intentional context of a complicated sort, *theoretically*

---

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. p. 303-304. Please note that it is, as it has been throughout the course of this work, not our intention to necessarily assert the correctness of Heidegger’s critique of Husserl. Husserl, of course, provided abundant analysis of the fundamentally temporal nature of intuition through his discussion, for example, of anticipations, protentions, retentions and internal time consciousness in general both before and following the break with Heidegger. What is important for us is to make clear the important elements of Heidegger’s understanding of the break, not to take sides about who was correct in the interpretation of the work of the other. There can be no doubt that Heidegger drew many of his insights concerning the temporal nature of care from Husserl’s anticipations, protentions and retentions. Similarly, there can be no doubt that for a long time Husserl was uninterested or unwilling to consider this temporal element in terms of its enworlded, social or historical context.



*meaning something* forms the *foundation*, that each judgment, each instance of wanting, each instance of loving is founded upon a *presenting* that provides in advance what can be wanted, what is detestable and lovable.”<sup>104</sup>

Intentionality conceptualizes all human comportment in terms of assertion and meaning relations. An intentional relation contains an implicit meaning, or anticipation, which can be fulfilled through various evidentiary acts, imploded through lack of fulfillment, or emptily intended. In this way intentionality, taken as the primal relation which all living comportments contain, locates all human activity and emotion within the realm of epistemology. Everything, all action and feeling, ends up being analyzed on the level of meaning and fulfillment. Meaning, however, seems to be in most cases more a medium through which we move and which is both set up and assumed through all of our activities than anything from which we are separated as the asserting subject is from his assertion. The disengaged image summoned up by the prioritizing of the theoretical suggests that, while of course all consciousness is intentional, nonetheless we can separate ourselves from any given intentional act or complex of them. This alone helps to explain why Husserl assumes an epoche is possible and Heidegger finds the idea impossible. For Heidegger meaning comes from our involvement in the world, ultimately meaning is world, and so any attempt to bracket the world will either be destined to fail or will leave one in an absolute void. Recall, for example, Heidegger’s valorizing of what he took the Greek interpretation of existence to be: “The Greek interpretation of existence remains within existence, and this interpretation is this existence becoming explicit

---

<sup>104</sup> IPR. p. 209

through the explication.”<sup>105</sup> There can, however, be no explication that is independent of the existence which is achieving explication in the process and from which the process arises. Intentionality understood in an epistemic form based upon the model of assertion, then, destroys the promise that intentionality originally had by reintroducing the very subject/object dichotomy it had offered to dissolve by giving the impression that asserter and assertion, or subject and intention, can be divided to say nothing of the divide between the asserted meaning and object meant.

Much of this critique of Husserl deals more with a feeling and with a misplaced stress or, as Heidegger admits, with an implication, and not with Husserl’s official position. As Levinas has helped us to just recently show, there is much in Husserl that seems to precisely avoid the problems Heidegger sees. If subject and object arise from the primordial relation of intentionality, such that their nature is to be fundamentally related, there can’t be the sort of epistemic divide based on the model of assertion which Heidegger fears. However, if this is so the outcome of the various phenomenological epoches seems endangered. It is possible that Husserl intended for the epoche to demonstrate, at the end of the day, that the world has never actually been bracketed at all because, in setting aside the question of the existence of subject independent “things” we have discovered that the question was mistaken to begin with. It was an illusion, and not the world, we bracketed.<sup>106</sup> If this is so, however, it seems that Heidegger as well is

---

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. p. 42

<sup>106</sup> For example, in response to Heidegger’s criticisms Husserl states in *Phenomenology and Anthropology* that; “Renouncing the world or ‘bracketing the world’ does not mean that the world ceases henceforth to be thematic, but rather that it must now be our theme in a more profound way because a whole new dimension has been added. We merely relinquished the naïve attitude in which we allowed experience to present the world as existing and being thus-and-so.” *Existentialism; Basic Writings* Charles Guignon and Derk

correct and it is as world-engaged and both temporal and historical that comportment must be considered independent of the empty rhetorical or, perhaps more kindly stated, methodological gesture of the epoche.

In order to bring into focus the shift that has occurred in the move from intentionality to care we must characterize one of the key subjects of central concern to us which it touches upon. We can approach the subject by asking how Husserl's intentionality and Heidegger's care differ in their conception of the "matter" side of the matter-form dichotomy. Within Husserlian intentionality the matter is the various forms of fulfillment each intention allows. One could also reverse the order of the relation and think in terms of *hyletic* data as matter, for example, and the categorial acts which provide the *hyletic* with a meaning and context as the form. Either way the conception of matter found in Husserlian intentionality, despite the very form/matter dichotomy's deeper grounding in intentionality, remains very much within the traditional structures and metaphors which had dominated epistemic philosophy for so long before Husserl. Within Heidegger's formulation of care, however, the primacy of matter is rediscovered in our always already finding ourselves within a meaningful world and engaged in ongoing projects. This is one formulation of facticity within Heidegger, our sheer having-already-been-involved-in. This shifts the talk of 'matter' from some focus upon sensual intuition or *hyletic* data, to the transmissions obtain from history and tradition implicitly

---

Pereboom ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995) p. 285 Later he continues, saying: "...when I turn away from the naïve exploration of the world to the exploration of the self and its transcendental ego-logical consciousness, I do not turn my back on the world to retreat into an unworldly and, therefore, uninteresting special field of theoretical study... We must never lose sight of the fact that this transcendental phenomenology does nothing but interrogate just that world which is, at all times, the real world for us, the only one which is valid for us, which demonstrates its validity to us; the only one which has any meaning for us." (Ibid p. 288-289)

embodied in our possession of a language and cultural practices. We are, then, always already oriented and directed to 'what is' and 'how it is' through our involvement in a living world. This is facticity, the 'matter' which must have primacy over form insofar as it will always already direct our ways of taking things. This innovation will go hand in hand with the discovery of new problems for the activity of philosophy which will be answered through Heidegger's method of historical de-struction of traditional concepts.

Before we move on to make more specific the new problems which have grown from Heidegger's answer to old conceptions of matter and form, we must first pause to note what a strange reversal and interweaving of concepts has occurred here, and perhaps to clarify this tangle. You will remember that categorial intuition was the reception of the categorial forms which organize experience from the base of founding sensuous intuitions. Heidegger relocated form giving categorial intuition in worldly activity and language while also reversing the relation between sensations and concepts so that, as he put it, we don't so much say what we see as we see what people say. Here, surely, we seem to have denied the principle of the material determination of form insofar as it is language, and the conceptualization embodied in language, which determines to some degree sensations. Now we find that facticity, i.e. matter, rests in the way in which we are already delivered over onto certain articulating activities and interpretations of 'what is'. First it seemed that form determined matter, and now it seems that our always already implicitly having certain forms precisely is matter. There is only one way that this bizarre tangle, this apparent confusion of terms, can be straightened out and that is to return to one of the earliest points we made concerning Heidegger's early work. In answer to Natorp, Heidegger had asserted that phenomenology is not distortive and language is not

an abstracting medium because the ‘object’ of phenomenology is existence, which is self articulating and self interpreting precisely through the being of language. Phenomenology can thus be born from the movement of life itself as a manifestation of its primordial self articulating being. The important turn to notice here is that, faithfully following Dilthey, life simply is the most fundamental ‘matter’, and life is to be identified with self articulating and interpreting such that language too is ‘matter’. We are thus led into the unusual circumstance where we can assert that our implicit inheritance of categorial forms is facticity. What an analysis of this very facticity will give rise to, in *Being and Time* for example, are the structures of care and worldhood which have apparently been present throughout the course of the historical sending. The very fact of our always already being delivered over to our historical context, for example, is a formal structure of Dasein’s being which only becomes clear in the analysis of our embeddedness in a world. These structures are only known through a phenomenological investigation of the everydayness which is the onward movement of historical life. However, the very particularity of the source from which such formal structures are derived and Heidegger’s own rejection of the transcendental argument method of inference still leaves as a major issue, especially for us, the sense in which the structures discovered in everydayness can be asserted to be universal.

Within *Introduction to Phenomenological Research* Heidegger provides us with five key characteristics of care.<sup>107</sup> First, care is disclosive. It brings into the realm of existence what it is concerned with. The concept of bringing into the realm of existence

---

<sup>107</sup> IPR. p. 45

should not be taken to mean that care creates its object ex nihilo, rather we should recall the original sense of the word ex-istence as a standing-forth. Care causes its object to stand forth into appearing, thus it discloses its object. As Heidegger asserts: “Care is nothing subjective and does not feign what it takes care of; care allows it rather to come to its genuine being.”<sup>108</sup> Secondly, care involves one in an ongoing explicating of what it has disclosed to begin with. Thirdly, care manifests in specific forms of holding onto and maintaining what has been disclosed and the way in which it has been disclosed and articulated. Fourthly, care commits one to holding to the disclosed and articulated object of care such that it leads to the extrapolation of normative principles from the disclosed domain which further seek to legislate over other cares and future disclosures. Fifthly, and most importantly for the issue currently at hand, care manifests in a loosing of itself in its own unconditional setting up, articulating, maintaining and interpreting of its own object. What these characteristics reveal is that every care is both a way of seeing while also being, in some sense, blinding. Heidegger therefore asserts that “...each care qua care neglects something.”<sup>109</sup> This makes perfect sense when we recall language’s role of both embodying pre-ontological understanding and, as such, disclosing a world while language also runs the risk of becoming, as it were, an empty intending or empty care where the voicing of tradition continues independent of any experience of the realities which it had once disclosed. As Heidegger states:

“As a result, care, residing in this manner, from the outset becomes devoid of need in the sense that it does not interrogate at all what it works with (the entire fundamentum of ancient ontology) as to its suitability and its origin; it does not

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 43

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p. 62

inquire at all into the suitability of what this care again and again sets as its task. That means, however, that the tradition is not itself seen as tradition at all. If what a tradition befalls and how it does so are kept in view, then the tradition is explicit. Insofar as that is not the case and the traditional is taken over in such a way that the entire work of founding is taken over, it is apparent that the tradition has been lost sight of.”<sup>110</sup>

Facticity, the way in which we always already find ourselves engaged in a tradition, can either provide us with the authentic material determination from which the articulation of life can proceed or can be taken over in an inauthentic empty way such that the possibility of future disclosure is foreclosed. By authentic material determination I mean an engagement with the matters themselves of concern or a vital tradition which is still in contact with these matters through a connection to the wellsprings of that tradition. In this way facticity or tradition can *provide* us with a connection with those things with which it claims to concern itself. Alternatively, the traditional can be *taken over* or *taken up* simply as empty phrases, statements and terminologies repeated about as if meaningful without a connection to the real experiences or wellsprings from which they originated. This is precisely the issue that was of concern to the young Heidegger when he frequently criticized the philosophy of his day for degenerating into empty talk.

This is a problem I have already mentioned in passing in various forms, it is the problem of how *Gelassenheit* or “...the possibility of letting the entity be encountered in its character of being...”<sup>111</sup> is possible in the face of falling, or existence’s fundamental tendency to loose itself within its own self-satisfied and pre-directed care structure. It is precisely because we are always already directed towards beings in a certain way,

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. p. 216

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 208

because we are always already engaged in a certain manner of disclosive interpretation, that any disclosure at all is possible and also that the simple act of letting something be experienced out of its own being can be the fundamental goal, method and problem of phenomenology. Once we understand the historical nature of facticity, however, the answer which will guide Heidegger throughout the course of *Being and Time* begins to become clear. The primordial material determination of our future categorial forms, namely the tradition we are provided with in our facticity, is also precisely what can deceive us into empty talk. The answer, then, is to re-achieve the fundamental determination through a destructuring, or destruction, of the empty elements of the tradition which blind us. As Heidegger states: “In order to get at the matters themselves, they must be freed up and the very process of freeing them up is not one of a momentary exuberance, but of fundamental research. The seeing must be educated and this is a task so difficult that it is hard for it to be overemphasized since we are, like no other time, saturated by history and are even aware of the manifoldness of history.”<sup>112</sup> Historical destruction, directed towards the freeing up of things from the sedimented layers of traditional conceptualizations, is not itself *Gelassenheit* but rather the preparatory stage necessary in order for any releasement, or letting be, to allow things to provide their own articulation through the individual’s active, but now open, engagement with it.

You will recall my earlier discussion of facticity as both determining and irrational, insofar as it has not previously been worked over through human categorizing rationality. Our question now should be in what sense the pre-ontological understanding

---

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p. 212



which we always already have through being engaged in traditional activities and language is irrational in the sense that facticity is supposed to be irrational. Talk of irrationality here must, of course, seem strange especially since Heidegger purposefully avoided the use of the term 'rational'. Our engaged involvement in a meaningful life world is the foundation for all meaning, in what sense then can it be labeled irrational? However, Being-in-the-world and the implicitly pre-ontological understanding it contains is not something we are taught. It is never made entirely explicit and never justified. It is always a partially inchoate and partially articulate sense of what is and how it is to which we are delivered over and from which all our other articulates and activities grow. As such, the founding determining matter of pre-ontological understanding is not itself rational in something like the Neo-Kantian sense. Heidegger, in *Being and Time* to which we soon turn, calls it a ground which is also an abyss (*abgrund*): "...a 'ground' becomes accessible only as meaning, even if it is itself the abyss of meaninglessness."<sup>113</sup> In this sense, then, as that grounding beyond which no further grounding is possible pre-ontological understanding is indeed irrational facticity, by Neo-Kantian standards, which is never able to be brought into full articulation.

It is important to note one last point, a sort of swaying between temporal orientation that has occurred in our discussion. It is clear that human facticity, understood as our always already having a pre-ontological understanding and active involvements due to our membership in an ongoing active life world, has a rather specific past oriented nature. Our facticity is, in a sense, our existence as finite elements of history, our always

---

<sup>113</sup> SZ. p. 194

already being caught up in the story. The interpretation of *The Origin of the Work of Art* hinges, however, on the idea made explicit earlier by Kisiel that facticity can be understood as the possibility of the unprecedented new irrupting into the historical movement. This is a future oriented perspective. Historical destruction, similarly, seeks to free up the purity of the original transmission from history yet it also allows us to finally be open to the new articulation of a thing provided by the thing itself. It seems clear that there is a tension involved here between the manner in which our temporal historical being alone allows anything to show up for us and the manner in which Gelassenheit can be understood as an openness to future possibilities. It is my sense that this tension takes on different forms within the work of Heidegger and one of the major transitions occurring in his work following *Being and Time* involves a greater focus on a future orientation concerned with the rise of the new in history. This, in order to understand *The Origin of the Work of Art's* innovation, we shall have to turn now to looking at the role of world and history, future orientation and past orientation, and the related issue of the a priori in *Being and Time*.

## Chapter Two: *Being and Time* and Beyond

The path we have tread thus far has taken us from Heidegger's earliest concerns with the origin and nature of the categories through his renovation of Husserl's phenomenology in the face of Natorp's criticisms to the view that matters of concern dictate how we are to relate to them through the manifestation of historical practices. In other words, we now have the basic elements of our Realist Historicism. What remains, however, is to address how this Realist Historicism appears in Heidegger's *Being and Time* and then to trace what key additions occur due to Heidegger's interest in historical world change during his middle and late periods.

It is worth noting that much of our focus in our interpretation of *Being and Time* and connected works will be on providing a reading which cuts against the grain of many previous interpretations of the work. Specifically, it will be our concern in the sections which follow not just to trace key elements of Realist Historicism but also to work out the implications such a position has for the interpretation of Heidegger's seeming interest in universal a priori structures and a transcendental project. Ultimately, we will hope to show that Heidegger's early commitments to Realist Historicism necessitated an alteration, and at times complete rejection, of concepts such as the universal a priori during the period of *Being and Time* and after. This will mean that we must present a reading of *Being and Time* which understands the work as not engaged in traditional transcendental argument and, despite providing outcomes which are described as

essential, a priori and transcendental, as not aiming at or achieving a-historical universal truths in the traditional sense.

This chapter will be divided into three sections, the first two of which will present Heidegger's understanding of meaning in *Being in Time* in terms of a totality of historical practices and involvements which he calls the world and methodological considerations addressing how, for Heidegger, we come to know the nature and structures of worlds in general, which Heidegger calls worldhood. In the course of these sections it will be important to note the way in which *Being and Time* seeks to present descriptions of the content of particular experiences and not arguments for inferences from particular experiences. Indeed the contrast here is between phenomenology, which must show or bring to disclosure what it would claim, and transcendental argumentation which resorts to reasoning from particulars to arrive at what must be the case "in order that" things appear as they do. The last section of this chapter will focus upon the question of whether worldhood and temporality in *Being and Time* are to be understood as a priori universal transcendental structures. Our ultimate goal will be to show that Heidegger has so dramatically reconceptualized the a priori and transcendental that, despite appearances to the contrary, he is not positing a-historical universal structures to which Realist Historicism as we have presented it would deny us access.

## Section 1: Three Worlds, Worldhood and Sign

“Whenever we encounter anything, the world has already been previously discovered, though not thematically.”<sup>114</sup>

The project of *Being and Time* can only get off of the ground because of the central insight we have already discussed, namely the transformation of categorial intuition into pre-ontological understanding. As we have discussed, Heidegger found Husserl’s concept of categorial intuition so exciting because it provided a way in which the matters of concern for philosophy could provide their own categorial organizing principles directly rather than our imposing them, deriving them from abstraction, or inferring them indirectly. The challenge, posed by Natorp, of how phenomenology might proceed without distorting through its very reflective activity and descriptive language the matters it treated was answered through the use of a de-theorized categorial intuition. This rooting of categorial intuition in the flow of life itself transforms it into pre-ontological understanding, that sense of things which we always already have through our concerned involvements with them. Any matter we might choose to discuss or investigate is available as a matter of concern only because it has already been encountered in human practices and ‘talked over’ through social speech. This goes as well for the most primordial matter of concern, namely Being. As Heidegger states: “Inquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought. So the meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way. As we have intimated, we always conduct our activities in an understanding of Being. Out of this understanding

---

<sup>114</sup> SZ p. 114

arise both the explicit question of the meaning of Being and the tendency that leads us towards its conception.”<sup>115</sup> As this quotation suggests, it is not just that our involvements have already provided us with some grasp and orientation towards Being, but further as was already foreshadowed in Heidegger’s answer to Natorp, the very activity of explicating and clarifying this implicit sense is actually just an intensification of an already inherent activity of the matter in question. As Heidegger later states: “But in that case the question of Being is nothing other than the radicalization of an essential tendency-of-Being which belongs to Dasein itself – the pre-ontological understanding of Being.”<sup>116</sup> As already made clear, Natorp’s objections must assume first that the inquiring philosopher and the object of inquiry are separate and second that the language and concepts used for the inquiry are foreign to the object of inquiry. Heidegger, however, has already described how language arises from existence, and thus is not foreign to it, and how philosophical phenomenological explication is a manifestation of an inherent tendency of existence itself which is also the matter into which one enquires. We are, then, well prepared for the move which turns the question of Being into an analytic of Dasein.

The general method of *Being and Time*, then, is going to be to show that we already have a sense of the matter under discussion and then to proceed to clarify and correct this sense through phenomenological investigation and description. In other words, the various sections of *Being and Time* begin with formal indications of the matters which are then followed by phenomenological attestations which fill out and

---

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. p. 25

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p. 35

complete the formal indications.<sup>117</sup> What we now come to see is that *Being and Time* is composed of a subtle and complex interplay between form and matter which is precisely what we would expect from our earlier discussions of hermeneutic intuition as pre-ontological understanding and the lived explication of this understanding. But what has priority here? We must remember Heidegger's adoption of the principle of the material determination of form which asserts, in contrast to the absolutization of mediation and the theoretical we find in Natorp and earlier in Hegel, that mediating formal aspects must arise from the matters themselves which they form and be answerable to those matters. This, indeed, had earlier seemed like the very heart of phenomenology itself. We might have reason to suspect that this principle is not maintained in *Being and Time*, especially when we repeatedly find that an opening move of a given portion of enquiry is an appeal to a formal indication, and that the outcome is often the discovery of essential formal structures. What role does matter play here?

The answer lies, of course, in pre-ontological understanding. Where do our formal indications come from? They come from the way in which the matters themselves have already been opened up to us through our involvement with them. It is only insofar as we understand this that we can accept there being any starting point for the project at all, and

---

<sup>117</sup> See, for example, page 150; "The answer to the question of who Dasein is, is one that was seemingly given in section 9, where we indicated formally the basic characteristics of Dasein. Dasein is an entity which is in each case I myself; its Being is in each case mine. This definition indicates an ontologically constitutive state, but it does no more than indicate it." See also p. 311 where, following a description of the formal structures of Being-toward-death Heidegger insists "The question of Dasein's authentic Being-a-whole and of its existential constitution still hangs in mid-air. It can be put on a phenomenal basis which will stand the test only if it can cling to a possible authenticity of its Being which is attested by Dasein itself. If we succeed in uncovering that attestation phenomenologically, together with what it attests, then the problem will arise anew as to whether the anticipation of death, which we have hitherto project only in its ontological possibility, has an essential connection with that authentic potentiality-for-Being which has been attested."

for each lesser movement within the project. The guidance we gain from formal indication is derived from our lived engaged activities, and these activities are not impositions upon reality but rather arise from it. We must say then that reality expresses itself through our activities. This makes clear that the foundation for *Being and Time* is not the imposition of forms but rather the expressions of life. These expressions can be formalized, and once this has been done they can guide our enquiry, but they are always also later subjected to the demand for attestation. Again form must submit to matter. This movement is nicely demonstrated through the nature of anxiety in *Being and Time* which will later be discussed as a prime example of our grasping of formal elements, or essential structures, arising through the most radical confrontation with the matter of a radically particular experience.

Pre-ontological understanding, both the foundation and beginning of *Being and Time*, is itself founded in the fact that Dasein is Being-in-the-world. In other words, we find ourselves always already engaged in a framework of meanings consisting of practices, ways of speaking, goals and in general all that goes into making up our concerned engagements. It is through these engagements that we know both ourselves and anything else, which is why Heidegger can assert that:

“From what we have been saying, it follows that Being-in is not a ‘property’ which Dasein sometimes has and sometimes does not have, and *without* which it could *be* just as well as it could with it... Taking up relationships towards the world is possible only *because* Dasein, as Being-in-the-World, is as it is. This state of Being does not arise just because some other entity is present-at-hand outside of Dasein and meets up with it. Such an entity can ‘meet up with’ Dasein only in so far as it can, of its own accord, show itself within a *world*.”<sup>118</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid p. 84



In order to fully explicate this point it will be necessary to fully grasp Heidegger's concept of world. Let us make clear, then, how it is that world appears in *Being and Time*.

Chapter Three of Division One of *Being and Time* begins with an explication of three different meanings for the word "world", and a shift of focus to the concept of worldhood. The first and second meanings presented for "world" are what we might consider the commonsense understanding of the word. The first meaning is that world is the totality of actual existing entities which can be simply present to one. The second meaning understands world as the being of the totality of entities, in other words as the ontological categorial elements of everything which exists. This second sense, in turn, can be limited to characterize various ontological regions, understanding ontological regions in the sense discussed by Husserl and the Neo-Kantians both to signify domains such as the world of mathematics, empirical experience, consciousness, or values.<sup>119</sup> It is this sense of world with which much of Heidegger's early work concerning concept formation and the categories was first concerned. However, in his rejection of the theoretical and his turn away from the theoretical excesses of both Husserl and the Neo-Kantians he had to return these abstract ontological regions to the soil of life which gives rise to his third sense of world, which is the sense he uses for the word throughout *Being and Time*.

---

<sup>119</sup> For examples of Heidegger's wrestling with this sense of world see especially his second seminar *Phenomenology and Transcendental Philosophy of Value in Towards the Definition of Philosophy*. Note in particular his discussion of the way in which the "problem of form" in Lask and Rickert leads to "the problem of categorial divisions into regions" (p. 105) and his discussion of Rickert's division of the region of values from the region of Being in an attempt to make logic, as the science of value, independent from ontology (p. 162).

Where the second categorial sense of world concerns itself with examples such as “the ‘world’ of a mathematician”<sup>120</sup> the third sense uses examples such as “the public world” or “one’s ‘own’ closest (domestic) environment”<sup>121</sup>. The move here should be familiar, even as Heidegger did when he returned theoretical philosophical language and concept formation to the activities and practices of life itself, he now returns technical ontological regions to the lived worlds of concern. This move makes the third sense of world ontic-existential, in other words this term applies to various particular existing life-worlds. It is this third sense which Heidegger states will be the meaning of the word world throughout *Being and Time* unless otherwise noted.<sup>122</sup>

Following his explanation of the three senses of “world” Heidegger goes on to discuss a fourth sense to be considered. This fourth sense is that of “worldhood” which he identifies as an ontologico-existential concept. As ontologico-existential it is located not in particular existing ontic characteristics of worlds, particular structural characteristics of actual worlds are identified as simply modes of worldhood, but rather in the formal characteristics of any world in general. We can see, then, that there can be a plurality of worlds, where world is understood in the third sense as a lived life world, but there appear to be structures which are necessarily present in any given such world and which are shared by all worlds which make up worldhood. It may be profitable for us to pause and ask ourselves what the difference is between the second sense of world and worldhood proper. Both concepts are labeled ontological by Heidegger, meaning both

---

<sup>120</sup> SZ p. 93

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> “We shall reserve the expression ‘world’ as a term for our third significance. If we should sometimes use it in the first of these sense, we shall mark this with single quotation marks.” Ibid.

deal with ontological characteristics which can then be discovered in actual existing particulars. I have already suggested that the move from the second to the third sense of world was a characteristic movement whereby Heidegger reoriented a theoretical distortion by relocating it within the lived experience from which it takes its origin. This would seem to go hand in hand with our discussion in the previous chapter about the way in which Heidegger reconceptualizes ontological regions as arising out of, or being disclosed by, actual lived practices and engaged activities. Thus the activity of the mathematician opens up the ontological world of mathematics, with the apparently ontic here receiving the priority. This is all good and well, but what sense are we then to make of the movement to worldhood? First of all, the second sense of world is obviously concerned with the ontological characteristics of a particular world, and not worlds in general. But secondly, and I think more importantly, the movement from the third sense of world to worldhood represents Heidegger's general strategy of reclaiming the a priori or ontological level following a debunking of empty metaphysical conceits through a returning to life as lived. What is going on might, then, be characterized in this way. First we mention, only to dismiss, ready made traditional ontological assumptions such as the existence of a unique realm of mathematical entities, and we move instead to the level at which lived activities and commitments may or may not open up such a world. At that level we encounter the actual life-worlds which the previous theoretical (neo-Kantian and Husserlian) modes of addressing worlds or ontological regions had covered over. From this base, renewed through a movement not unlike Heidegger's historical de-structuring, we then arrive at new insights about the necessary ontological structures of any given world. Now, in what sense this a priori ontological level is to be taken as universally

necessary and a-historical remains a troubling question for us. For now we shall put this question off until the second half of this chapter and we shall discuss worldhood as if it were to be taken in a universal sense. Once we have more fully address the question of the status of the a priori in *Being and Time* we will be able to renovate this preliminary articulation.

It is apparently, then, to the structure of any and all possible worlds that Heidegger addresses his attention for the rest of Chapter Three of Division One. We might pause at this moment, however, and inquiry how we are going to arrive at knowledge of the necessary ontological structures of world. The first part of the answer to this question will rely upon pre-ontological understanding through the assertion that we always already have a non-thematized knowledge of both our world and the nature of worldhood in general. This will lead to a phenomenological analysis of how our world is actually experienced from which will be derived certain basic structures of worldhood. Following this, later in *Being and Time*, it will be inquired how we can be certain of the characteristics we have derived from our experiences. Is there not a moment when we fully experience the form of worldhood itself deprived of any distorting content of a particular life world? The answer to this question will be found in the phenomenological attestation that anxiety provides to the formal indications derived from our everyday lived experience in, say, a workshop. Our challenge will be to clarify how what is going on in *Being and Time* sticks to Heidegger's earlier commitments to the material determination of form which is central to our understanding of Realist Historicism. Before we get to this, however, we shall have to discuss what Heidegger actually ends up asserting are the structures of worldhood.

Heidegger bases his analysis of our experience of world upon the concept represented by the German word *Zeug* which can be translated as “equipment” or “gear”. What Heidegger has in mind, however, is not just a discussion of that limited class of objects we experience which can be generally labeled equipment, although he does indeed take something like a hammer as very useful as an example. Rather, equipmental being is taken to be the fundamental being of everything we encounter in concerned Being-In-The-World: “We shall call those entities which we encounter in concern ‘*equipment*’.”<sup>123</sup> Why and how this is the case, why everything experienced through care should be considered in the light of equipmental being, we shall have to seek to clarify. One of the first enlightening observations which Heidegger brings to mind when turning his attention to equipment is that there can never really be a single equipment or gear, as the word in both English and German suggests insofar as the word always seems to represent a collective. Any given entity experienced as equipment is always experienced within a larger context including other items of equipment and various goals or projects: “Taken strictly, there ‘is’ no such thing as *an* equipment. To the Being of any equipment there always belongs a totality of equipment, in which it can be this equipment that it is...Equipment – in accordance with its equipmentality – always is *in terms of* its belonging to other equipment: ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room.”<sup>124</sup> In this way, when we consider any particular experience of equipmentality an arrangement of equipment arises in which each element mutually depends upon and refers to the others.

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. p. 97

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

The equipmental arrangement or context can be described in terms of various intentional relations which, it is later demonstrated, each have the intentional characteristics explicated in care. It is useful, here, to recall Heidegger's assertion from *History of the Concept of Time; Prolegomena* that relations between intentional relations themselves have the form of intentional relations. It is precisely this which is demonstrated in the structure of worldhood which arises from the analysis of equipmental being. Every piece of equipment is the equipment it is due to a relationship Heidegger characterizes with the phrase *in-order-to*. The in-order-to of a piece of equipment is that for which the equipment is suited, that which provides it its usefulness or serviceability. A hammer is a hammer insofar as it exists in-order-to strike various other things and generally provide a force to drive them into something such as wood. It is *good for* something. This relation, as an assignment of something to something else, thus marks the very nature of equipmentality as one of reference beyond itself and existence in a larger interconnected context.

The in-order-to relation is, in turn, found to exist itself in a large intentional relationship. A given piece of equipment can only appear as good for some specific use in terms of the goal which makes that use necessary or useful. Every in-order-to is motivated, then, by the work which it aids in producing. This work, the goal of the activities made possible through the usefulness of the equipment, is that *towards-which* the useful activity is aimed. A hammer, then, is useful in-order-to hammer things which itself is only meaningful in the light of that completed work, say a cabinet, towards-which our activities aim. It is important to note, then, that the work, a concept that will be very important in "The Origin of the Work of Art", carries along with it the entire equipmental

context, and thus the world, in which it is made: “The work bears with it that referential totality within which the equipment is encountered.”<sup>125</sup> Work and hammer alike, then, bring with them and make possible the meaningful totality that is the equipmental context that is world: “The context of equipment is lit up, not as something never seen before, but as a totality constantly sighted beforehand in circumspection. With this totality, however, the world announces itself.”<sup>126</sup> Continuing the pattern that should now be clear the work and this further towards-which relation themselves end up being in an intentional relation: “The work to be produced, as the ‘*towards-which*’ of such things as the hammer, the plane, and the needle, likewise has the kind of Being that belongs to equipment.”<sup>127</sup> Each intentional relationship fits into a large one, and so each level of equipmentality points beyond itself to another. Where, however, is this structure to find its end?

The end to this pattern is found precisely at that level where purposes and practices can reflect upon themselves, namely at the level of Being-in-the-world itself, or *Dasein*:

“But the totality of involvements itself goes back ultimately to a ‘*towards-which*’ in which there is *no* further involvement: this ‘*towards-which*’ is not an entity with the kind of Being that belongs to what is ready-to-hand within a world; it is rather an entity whose Being is defined as Being-in-the-world, and to whose state of being, worldhood itself belongs... The primary ‘*towards-which*’ is a ‘*for-the-sake-of-which*’. But the ‘*for-the-sake-of*’ always pertains to the Being of *Dasein*, for which, in its Being, that very Being is essentially an issue.”<sup>128</sup>

The import of this final move to the *for-the-sake-of-which* is that it shifts the dependence of one intentional relationship or intentionally motivated practice onto a self-referential intentional being whose intentional directedness is precisely dependent upon its own

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. p. 99

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. p. 105

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. p. 99

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. p. 117

taking a stand concerning itself. In other words, every specific tool and both the possible works which provide it its usefulness and the wider arrangement of equipment are only meaningful in terms of that practice and work which has itself as its own issue and for its own goal. Here we should hear clear echoes of an Aristotelian understanding of *phronesis*. As Taminaux describes the deficiency of other forms of practices such as *techne* and the specific characteristics of *phronesis*: “But it [*techne*] is a deficient excellence, since its end is a product, or *ergon*, outside the agent... *Phronesis*, practical judgment, is the highest deliberative virtue insofar as neither its principle, its *arche*, nor its end, its *telos*, fall outside the agent himself.”<sup>129</sup> The move to Dasein as grounding the equipmentality of equipment is a similar move, a move away from works external to the agent and to a stand that the agent must make upon its own being which is undecided and ‘an issue’ for it. The for-the-sake-of-which represents, then, the level at which our various practices ground out in the basic roles which we can live and fill. These are roles which are offered us by our history and cultural traditions, roles into which we can be born and drift or roles which we can understandingly face up to and choose for ourselves from the possibilities offered us. The totality of the equipmental context, then, depends upon the foundational roles and practices which characterize Dasein itself at the most basic level. One is a philosopher, carpenter, father, radical individualist, or citizen and only in light of these ground commitments does the workshop, lectern, school house or pen get its meaning.

---

<sup>129</sup> Tam. p. 155



We should pause here to stress some important elements of what we have said so far. We must first remember that while we have been discussing examples of what is actually considered equipment in our day to day world, Heidegger insists that equipmental being is the being of all things experienced through care. It is not just a hammer or a given work whose completion we are driving towards that appears as it does because of our base commitments and practices, rather the entire totality that is our world arises from, and is constituted of, these practices and commitments. We must recall here, then, everything that we have said about the movement from categorial intuition to pre-ontological understanding. Our ways of being are ways of disclosing the world. As we have already said, care discloses the world in a specific way. This disclosive force of care, in the context of Heidegger's discussion of equipmentality, is discussed in terms of "letting something be involved", a phrase with echoes of *Gelassenheit* which we would do well to note. How, then, do we understand involvement and letting something be involved in this context?

We had stated in the past that the world can be understood as a framework of interpretation which structures our experience, or opens up the space which allows for our experience. The details of the structure of that framework have now been fleshed out in terms of the intentional relationships of the in-order-to, towards-which, and for-the-sake-of-which. What it means, then, to say that all entities encountered in care have the being of equipmentality is that they all are meaningfully experienced only insofar as they fit into the structure so far set forth. Of course, a careful reading of what we have already said will suggest that the term "structure" is more than a little misleading. While what we are discussing may indeed be a structure, it is a structure of commitments and projects

which carry themselves forward and stretch back within a temporal unfolding. That what we are tempted to refer to as a “structure” in *Being and Time*, bringing with it all the traditional concepts of constant stable presence which is associated with the image of *structure*, is actually a description of key elements of temporally unfolding events or practices will become more important later when we grapple with the status and nature of “essential structures” in the work as a whole. For now it is enough to stress that to say that something is disclosed by a world is to say it plays a role in this temporal unfolding of projects. In order to be meaningfully experienced something must be involved in the practices and commitments which are a world: “When an entity within-the-world has already been proximally freed for its Being, that Being is its ‘involvement’. With any such entity as entity, there is some involvement. The fact that it has such an involvement is ontologically definite for the Being of such an entity, and is not an ontic assertion about it.”<sup>130</sup> This quotation suggests the danger engendered in the very terms we are driven to use in this context. There is not first some thing which is then involved in the structure of world. Rather, only as involved in the structure of projects which is the world does anything show up at all. Something’s being involved, then, is also the disclosure of that entity. Dasein, as the entity that cares, the entity which takes a stand concerning its own being and in doing so involves itself in projects and commitments or finds itself always already involved in them through its history, is what allows for anything to show up as meaningful. Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, is then a letting-be-involved which allows a thing to show up as it is: “Ontically, ‘letting something be involved’ signifies

---

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. p. 116

that within our factual concern we let something ready-to-hand *be so-and-so as* it is already and *in order that* it be such. The way we take this ontical sense of ‘letting be’ is, in principle, ontological.”<sup>131</sup> Letting be involved can, then, take on both an ontic sense insofar as my project of writing this work has in this actual context let this entity be experienced as the computer on which I write, and it can be understood ontologically insofar as involvement, or equipmentality, is the Being of what is experienced as meaningful through care.

We might, then, distinguish different modalities of *Gelassenheit* we have encountered so far. We have discussed the issue of de-structuring which takes apart reified traditional ways of talking and thinking things over which have come to conceal, rather than disclose, the things with which they are concerned. De-structuring, then, serves the role of clearing away the empty talk which, though it may once have arisen from the matters themselves, no longer arises from an authentic experience of the matters of concern. This de-structuring can also be considered a certain type of freeing up of the matters of concern from restrictive previous interpretations. We now have an alternative modality of *Gelassenheit* which is a freeing in a different sense. Heidegger asks: “Our analysis hitherto has shown that what we encounter within-the-world has, in its very Being, been freed for our concerned circumspection, for taking account. What does this previous freeing amount to, and how is this to be understood as an ontologically distinctive feature of the world?”<sup>132</sup> The answer is that this freeing occurs through something always having been assigned or referred already to certain uses, goals and

---

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. p. 117

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. p 114

projects. This is precisely the freeing up to which Heidegger referred when, in his early work, he asserted that we do not say what we see but rather see what one says and, we might add, what one does. This, then, is a freeing through being involved, a letting being through engagement. In this sense, then, *Gelassenheit* is not a removal of concealing masks but rather a positing of revealing roles.

In focusing just upon the language of *Being and Time* it becomes possible to lose sight of the original view that allows for the validity of the project of *Being and Time* at all. Specifically, the view that our practices, including the totality of them, arise from the things themselves which these practices concern. If we just focus upon the total structure of worldhood in *Being and Time* it becomes possible to worry that this structure completely objectifies the particulars which it gives rise to, be they tools or humans. This view of human engagement in the totality of practices which is world objectifying and determining in a negative sense the inhabitants of a given world can't be simply entirely correct since, at some time and level, the world in question arose as a true disclosure and expression of those entities which appear within it. However, it does seem possible that a world may have become almost entirely corrupted through the distortions of time. This is a concern which the early Heidegger was clearly deeply engaged with and moments of *Being and Time* still reflect this concern. However it is not until after *Being and Time*, for example in the "Origin of the Work of Art" and much later and more dramatically in "The Question Concerning Technology" that the danger of falsified or falsifying worlds, and their rectification, becomes most explicitly formulated. In Heidegger's post-*Being and Time* works which concern themselves more with the way in which worlds themselves originate and change Heidegger will more directly address the objectifying

implications of the view that all entities experienced through care have equipmentality as their nature. When Heidegger turns to the study of art, for example in “The Origin of the Work of Art” it becomes more and more important that things need not be either works or equipment, but rather might themselves have the being of an event which either gives rise to a new world or radically changes the previous one. Here, then, the dynamic becomes one of changing the totality of which something is a part rather than simply being determined by that totality. We must, however, keep in mind that this is a return to one of Heidegger’s earliest interests.

There is one final element of worldhood which we must note before we move on. This last element is the role played by a certain type of *setting-up*. Our focus upon this issue is directed by an anticipation of the important role that setting-up plays in “The Origin of the Work of Art”. Anyone reading *Being and Time* with an eye towards the later work on art should be struck by the appearance of this central element in the precise part of *Being and Time* which concerns itself with the structure of worldhood. Setting-up is discussed by Heidegger in this context in connection with the way in which the structure of worldhood is one of referring various entities one to another, and all to various goals and projects. This referring, and indeed those things freed up through our letting them be involved, are aspects of experience which, when everything is going smoothly, generally recede into the background. When tools are working well they becoming just another element of the flow of our projects, we don’t notice them: “But the Being of what is most closely ready-to-hand within-the-world possesses the character of

holding-itself-in and not emerging...”<sup>133</sup> This holding-itself-in ends when the tool breaks or something goes wrong in the meaningful context of the world. Suddenly we see the workshop, or the world, rather than simply working with and in it. This moment of breakdown serves as a foreshadowing of the later role of anxiety which ultimately discloses the structure of worldhood, but there is another way in which an equipmental context or world can be disclosed as a totality: “Accordingly our circumspective dealings in the environment require some equipment ready-to-hand which in its character as equipment takes over the ‘work’ of *letting* something ready-to-hand become conspicuous.” This special equipment Heidegger will discuss as the sign which is established or set up for the purpose of revealing:

“But even when signs are thus conspicuous, one does not let them be present-at-hand at random; they get ‘set-up’ in a definitive way with a view towards easy accessibility...In this mode, signs ‘get established’ in a sense which is even more primordial. In indicating, a ready-to-hand equipment totality, and even the environment in general, can be provided with an availability which is circumspectively oriented; and not only this: establishing a sign can, above all, reveal.”<sup>134</sup>

The setting up of a sign, then, serves to bring into circumspective conspicuousness the world itself. When we come to our interpretation of “The Origin of the Work of Art” we will see that there is at least two senses in which a work of art can be said to set up a world, the promethean and revelatory. The promethean work of art gives rise to an entirely new, or dramatically different, world as fundamental break and new beginning within history. The revelatory work of art, on the other hand, reveals the world which was

---

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. p. 111

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. p. 111

already in implicit in our activities. We might now assert that Heidegger discusses the setting up of a sign here in *Being and Time* very much along the lines of the revelatory interpretation. Further, the very discussion of a sign as a type of equipment set up for this specific reason leads fairly easily to reflections upon the role played by a work of art. When we read the following statement by Heidegger with his later work on art in mind we begin to suspect the forms his thoughts concerning the setting up of a world took at this time:

“Signs of the kind we have described let what is ready-to-hand be encountered; more precisely, they let some context of it become accessible in such a way that our concerned dealings take on an orientation and hold it secure. A sign is not a Thing which stands to another Thing in the relationship of indicating; it is rather an item of equipment which explicitly raises a totality of equipment into our circumspection so that together with it the worldly character of the ready-to-hand announces itself.”<sup>135</sup>

It is hard to read this passage and not see prefigured Heidegger’s critique of aesthetics or his assertion that a painting is not simply a depicting. We can almost hear his unusual analysis of Van Gogh’s shoes forming here.

Our discussion of the role played by a sign in revealing the totality of an equipmental context, or world, echoes Heidegger’s later statement in “The Origin of the Work of Art” that: “...there must always be some being in the open, something that is, in which the openness takes its stand and attains its constancy...”<sup>136</sup> and it is precisely this quotation that Hubert Dreyfus presents as Heidegger’s general sense of the role of art before moving into his discussion of cultural paradigms. Dreyfus understands cultural

---

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. p. 110

<sup>136</sup> Hof. p. 61

paradigms as a gathering and uniting of previously scattered or inchoate cultural practices. This gathering makes explicit to a people an exemplar around which they can be united and against which they can judge and understand themselves. What is missing in Dreyfus' interpretation, and what has been at stake in my interpretations thus far, is an understanding of art as a way in which categorial intuitions, or rather Heidegger's categorial disclosive practices which are what a world is composed of, come to be. Dreyfus' gathering, however, fails to appreciate the fundamental level at which art can be an event of the disclosure of the radically new. For Dreyfus, what arises is always a new unity of previously present elements or, in the connected work of Julian Young which seeks to present an exclusively revelatory read, a new disclosure of previously inchoate background practices.<sup>137</sup> With the understanding of worldhood from *Being and Time* now present to us it is clear why Dreyfus thinks the way he does. In fact, it would be possible to construct Dreyfus' entire understanding of art from just the material in *Being and Time*. This leads us to ask, did Heidegger not change at all from *Being and Time* to "The Origin of the Work of Art"? Our suspicion is that Heidegger did indeed change, but that change was a renewal of his earliest commitments and concerns which had grown haze, although never entirely lost, in *Being and Time*.

How could we construct Dreyfus' understanding from *Being and Time*? First, we understand world as a texture of practices, commitments, goals and referrals of entities to these elements. At the base level is the for-the-sake-of-which, which consists in the various roles that Dasein can occupy. Now, it is clear from this that the unifying of

---

<sup>137</sup> See Young, Julian *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001) henceforth cited as [Young.]



scattered practices into a new possible role, into a new conception of what one can be and what possibilities are open to one, indeed gives rise to a new world from old elements. When George Washington was faced with political leadership following the revolution he had to carefully gather together various previously scattered roles into the new role of president, while rejecting against opposition the assertion of the old role, or old elements, of royalty. This gave rise to a very particular framework of understanding for both American politics and America's people. Similarly, much of the history of art is dominated by the slow movement away from the role of the skilled craftsman and towards the construction of the new role of the "artist". This role, however, was found in the uniting of strange elements of several other cultural roles including that of the priest and prophet along with leftovers of the expert and craftsman.

We can see, then, how the worldhood presented in *Being and Time*, with social roles and practices for its foundation, would suggest that the way in which a work of art sets up a world must be through social practices and roles. When we further consider the work performed by the sign when, in its being set-up, it brings to circumspection the world we seem to have all the necessary elements to explain Dreyfus' view. While there is no sense of this in the passages dealing with the sign in *Being and Time* we can see the step from a sign which reveals what is, as in Julian Young, to a sign which brings into focus specific practices previously unnoticed and so gives rise through this shift in focus to a new world. However, our question should be, why should the shift from a sign which reveals what was already there to one which rearranges what was there to set up a new structure not take the full step to a sign which sets up new practices which were not previously there? If we think back to where we began, Heidegger was originally

concerned with how we can conceptualize matters with concepts that suit those matters, rather than importing or imposing inappropriate forms upon them. The answer came first through categorial intuition, which was taken as the first inkling of a way in which matters might dictate their own forms. This became pre-ontological understanding when it was recognized that it is our activities and ways of talking over the world which disclose reality to us. But, as our talk of facticity suggested, we are not master of our activities, as the original connection between categorial intuition and pre-ontological understanding should well suggest. We find things already disclosed to us in our being thrown into a history and culture. However, it is not just that things have always already been spoken of and practices are always already underway. It is rather that our practices, as forms of disclosing and being with the matters they concern, arise from those matters themselves. Practices can become hollow, speech can become reified, but when they were still vital they were born of life or existence itself, born of the matters they concern, and not simply applied. In other words, perhaps it is not just practices which are already floating about that we have to deal with, rather perhaps what is can disclose itself in new practices. Indeed, this seems to be precisely what Heidegger was looking for to begin with in his earliest work, this is what we would expect from the principle of material determination of form.

Our engagement with the Dreyfus McDowell debate in the introduction of this work should be recalled at this point. My dissatisfaction with Dreyfus as presented there, far from focusing on his interpretation of “The Origin of the Work of Art”, had to do with his lack of appreciation for the point that, for Heidegger, everything we experience comes to be experienced through historical social practices. Practices just are our access to

reality. In the models of skillful coping presented by Dreyfus it seemed feasible to assume that what was going on was a skill-learning body adjusting to a fairly stable external environment. However, this body-environment model simply repeats the mistakes of old subject/object epistemologies while leaving out the “myth of the mental”. The subject may be coping body, and not mind, but there is still a sharp divide between the two which must be addressed. It is a similar point that is at stake in the interpretation of “The Origin of the Work of Art” towards which we are working. Why for Dreyfus and Young, we might ask, should art only accomplish the revealing of previously existing practices or a reorganization and restructuring of previously existing practices? Especially why should this be the case considering Heidegger’s earliest interest in models of concept and practice origin which precisely wouldn’t fit this model? The answer to this question, it seems to me, is to be found in the two inadequate bases of the views of Dreyfus and Young. First, there is the question of historical plausibility. In looking back over history we don’t seem to find the completely radical breaks and ruptures one would expect to occur with the rise of totally, or even mostly, new worlds. Of course, if such ruptures occurred, they would be interpreted over and concealed by the world we currently occupy. The problem with incommensurable worlds is that they can’t recognize themselves as such. Of course, Heidegger’s later work at reconnecting to the “other beginning” of western history, as found in the *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, may precisely we read as the attempt to bridge a radical rupture at the heart of western history. In contrast interpretations of the pre-Socratic philosophers as, say, proto-scientists or partial-platonists is a perfect example of our presence in one historical world totally determining our interpretation of elements left from another historical

world. The second issue is that of causal explanation. Given many current assumptions found within contemporary philosophy and science it can seem necessary to explain events in terms of what came before them. If an event of art gives rise to a new world one may wish to know what caused this new event of worlding. If this is the case, Dreyfus' story of changes in the relation between practices gives a very nice causal story for how art can do what it does and what makes it do so in any given case. However, insofar as world is the most primordial level of disclosure and our understandings of causal explanations and relations are themselves dependent upon our specific world, demanding causal connections beyond the boundaries of given worlds amounts to assuming a world independent fairly stable environment in which worlding itself occurs. This amounts to denying the primordially of world and leads to the assumption that some things, perhaps basic laws of physics or logic, will remain present throughout all worlds. This, of course, is precisely the assumption which I criticize in Dreyfus' answer to McDowell. Only if we assume a fairly stable world independent to the coping body can Dreyfus' talk of, for example, coping computers make sense. Coping, then, would occur both within a world and at a level which is more primordial than world. This just gives us the same old epistemic problems, and the ontological assumptions which support them, and can't be justified from within Heidegger's project. We will return to this point in chapter three.

However, it should be noted that I feel there is an extent to which the importance of originating events in Heidegger's thought is lost sight of in *Being and Time*. At the very least large sections of *Being and Time*, like the section dealing with signs we have discussed, can be interpreted just in terms of human practices already in existence determining how things show up. Indeed, one might even develop a tension between the

various senses of *Gelassenheit* we have discussed. There seem to be several ways to let things be. De-structuring perhaps frees things up, as I suggested earlier, so that they can then give rise to new forms in which they can be disclosed. Letting-be-involved, on the other hand, discloses through a freeing up which is a providing of form. By involving things in our practices we do indeed free them up to be experienced, but we may also be concealing them in inappropriate determinations. The echoes of this earlier concern of Heidegger's, indeed one of his earliest and most central concerns, seem to be missing or at least not duly stressed in *Being and Time*. More specifically, in *Being and Time* the main concern seems to be the covering over of Dasein's Being without much reference to the covering over of other possible matters of concern. It is a return to this concern with the origin of our practices, I submit, which occurs in the movement from *Being and Time* to "The Origin of the Work of Art".

## Section 2: Anxiety and the Problem of World Change

"With the temple, a 'bit of the past' is still 'in the present'."<sup>138</sup>

"What is 'past'? Nothing else than that **world** within which they belonged to a context of equipment and were encountered as ready-to-hand and used by a concerned Dasein who was-in-the-world. That **world** is no longer."<sup>139</sup>

I had stated earlier that there are two ways in which Heidegger believes we can come to know worldhood. The first, offering intimations or formal indications of what will later be filled out, is the method employed in the passages discussed so far. This method is that of drawing from descriptions and analyses of our everyday experiences the

---

<sup>138</sup> SZ p. 430

<sup>139</sup> SZ p. 431

pre-ontological understanding of worldhood which we always already have but which we are rarely, if ever, aware of. It is important to note the sense in which this is not argumentation, especially not transcendental argumentation, in the traditional sense. This method remains within the tradition of phenomenology insofar as the formal indications which guide it are arrived at through a careful attention paid to our daily lives and the pre-ontological understanding these indications direct us to is supposed to be discernible within our lives, perhaps given the guidance of careful phenomenological description. This is precisely the role of attestation which balances the direction provided by formal indication. The second method, which itself serves to provide a dramatic attestation to the earlier indications, is the experience of anxiety in which the formal structures of worldhood appear emptied of all content. As already suggested, this later experience of anxiety has already been foreshadowed by the way in which equipment only ever really obtrudes upon us when something has gone wrong. Only in moments of breakdown, or when brought forth by signs, do the background elements and intentional/care structures of experience rise to our attention. This point, the way in which the very forms that alone allow for meaningful experience themselves only rarely appear, will become important later when we discuss two senses of the undisclosed. For now what is important is for us to briefly present the nature of anxiety and Heidegger's response to it.

Anxiety, then, will be the attestation to the indications already provided about worldhood. It can do this because the experience of anxiety, what is commonly considered an objectless fear, in fact discloses the structure of our relational existence as Being-in-the-world. Anxiety is, according to Heidegger, mistakenly considered an objectless fear because it seems to demonstrate a certain indefiniteness such that: "That

in the face of which one has anxiety is not an entity within-the-world.”<sup>140</sup> This apparently objectless fear demonstrates the inconsequential nature of any determinate object in the world, leaving all worldly objects irrelevant in the fact of the experience. Ultimately, “...the totalities of involvements...within-the-world, is, as such, of no consequence; it collapses into itself; the world has the character of completely lacking significance.”<sup>141</sup> This experience of the utter insignificance of any given entity, commitment or practice effectively leaves only the structure of worldhood itself in our view such that “...the world in its worldhood is all that still obtrudes itself.”<sup>142</sup> What this ultimately reveals, however, is that it was the world and, more specifically, ourselves as Being-in-the-world which anxiety was anxious in the face of to begin with. The sheer thatness of our being, and the fact that the meaning of everything else depends upon the stand we take concerning our being, is that in the face of which we flee.

In this way anxiety provides attestation of the structures already discussed, but furthermore it demonstrates the reality of pre-ontological understanding insofar as we ‘fear’, in anxiety, a situation we only really come to experience in anxiety. We must always already be aware, through pre-ontological understanding, of the structure of worldhood in order to flee from it through most of our activities and fear it in the experience of anxiety. Furthermore, the experience of the worldhood of the world both makes clear to us the role that taking a stand concerning our lives plays in the structure of a meaningful world while also depriving us of all such stands we had willingly or

---

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. p. 231

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

thoughtlessly made in the past. We are left, then, with the demand and necessity of once more taking upon ourselves roles which can provide unity and meaning to the world. These roles, however, can only be those provided us by our thrownness into a historical context. This is where we discover the role of resoluteness, the call to a commitment which, once made, will provide a for-the-sake-of-which and thus once more disclose the situation in which we find ourselves.

It is important that we pause here and note one of those points of emphasis which changes from *Being and Time* to some of Heidegger's later work. In the face of anxiety, resoluteness is left with the roles made possible by Dasein's context and history. There is no assertion of a wild leap into a radical creative newness. Authenticity is not the achievement of some dramatic unique position, but rather a taking up as one's own roles, provided by history and tradition, which previously one may thoughtlessly have drifted in or out of. It is our thrownness and the They which provide us all our possibilities. It is important, here, to note two strains in the argument I am attempting to make. First, there is the debate about whether past and current practices are necessarily the origin of all future ones. Second, there is the related debate about whether these practices come from ourselves or the self-disclosing of the undisclosed in the form of the worlding of a world. These two debates are related in a basic way. The very assertion that authentic Dasein does not leap into some newly created unique role supports my own position, derived from the material determination of form, concerning the origin of our practices in the matters with which they are concerned. The question we need to ask at this point is why we should always be dependent upon current and past possibilities. Is it not possible that, even as I assert traditional practices arose, new practices can arise from authentic



experiences of the matters themselves? Although we do not have a strong reason to assert this from *Being and Time*, I believe a firm understanding of the second debate greatly clarifies my position concerning the first.

There is an objection to my project thus far. In the preceding paragraph I spoke of ontic practices as if they were the forms, and then of the matters they concern as determining them. One might perfectly well admit this, and then point out that there is a higher formal level I have ignored. The determination of ontic practices by ontic matters might be compared to Heidegger's second sense of world, namely specific ontological regions such as the world of mathematics. Given practices determine given worlds and, I am asserting, rise from given matters. But Heidegger has just spent a good portion of his book discussing worldhood, which is a formal characteristic of all possible worlds. This structure precisely does not seem to be dictated or determined by any specific matter.

But is this really so? Do we find Heidegger anywhere prioritizing the formal as determining its content in opposition to Lask's principle of the material determination of form? This question is worth asking insofar as the distinction between prioritizing matter determining form or form determining matter can be seen as the ground out of which an acceptance or rejection of the possibility of the traditional conception of the transcendental will grow. To clarify this point let me first make a distinction between two senses in which one might assert Lask's principle of the material determination of form. First, the principle might be taken in a methodological and epistemic sense. We have often used this sense of the principle in discussing the idea that things must dictate their own manner of conceptualization, or how we are to relate to them. Accordingly to this understanding, if we are to arrive at the appropriate ways in which to relate to things we

must be sure not to force or impose foreign manners of relating upon them. This understanding of the principle is, however, grounded in both Lask and Heidegger upon a deeper ontological understanding of the principle. At this level the principle means that the nature of form, whether understood in terms of the categories, concepts or practices, is to temporally originate from and be dependant upon that which form forms. Steven Crowell summarizes this point in the work of Lask by discussing the idea of form as “involvement” (*Bewandtnis*) of matter:

“With... *Bewandtnis*, Lask seeks to indicate how form is bound up with material if it is not to be seen as a cognitive synthesizing of material. Categories do not synthesize material since they are nothing but a certain way of being *of* material, a certain objective *Bewandtnis*. Categories reflect or indicate the “condition” of their material, the “circumstances” or “involvements” of the material itself.”<sup>143</sup>

In this way, then, we see that for Lask and, I claim, for Heidegger the nature of the formal is to exist as a way of being of the matters the formal concerns. This ontological insight into the nature of practices, and the concepts and categories we derive from practices, points to why we might be tempted to dismiss the traditional conception of the transcendental as mistaken. For what is the transcendental if not that which is presumed to always hold true of all possible things irrespective of particular ways of being, and how is this possible if not because some given formal elements are understood to organize any matter whatsoever. In other words, the traditional conception of the transcendental understands the transcendental level of reality to be the level on which form structures matter and not vice versa. We can understand this, for example, in terms of the basic structures of subjectivity in Kant’s transcendental idealism or as the basic

---

<sup>143</sup> SM p. 47

constitutive activities of the transcendental ego in Husserl. In either of these cases the transcendental functions as a stand in for determining, and not derived, form. With these two senses of the principle of the material determination of form in mind, then, we can return to the question whether we ever find Heidegger prioritizing the formal over the material. If we do find this then we may be able to find a traditional understanding of the transcendental in Heidegger. If we do not find this, then we are right to suspect that Heidegger is attempting a radical break from, and both a rejection and redefinition of, the previous transcendental ambitions of the philosophical tradition.

The first intimations of worldhood we arrive at through the analysis of actual lived worlds, the world of a workshop and the like. Here we maintain the good phenomenological practice of allowing our experiences of the matters themselves to guide our philosophizing. In the course of this method do we discover that form is determinative? Only if we wish to assert a simplistic social constructivism whereby humanity's practices determine how things show up and these practices are created by humanity itself in leaps of arbitrary creation. This, however, we have rejected in asserting the connection between pre-ontological understanding and categorial intuition as well as in focusing on the way in which we are always delivered over onto something else, generally our thrownness, for our possibilities. Finally, what do we find in the more dramatic phenomenological attestation which is anxiety? Certainly not that some form determines the matter of experience but rather that anxiety, which I would contest is a most potent example of determining matter, does away with all our ontic ways of interpreting things and itself discloses, or determines, the most extensive formal element we find in *Being and Time* i.e. worldhood. Anxiety attests to the fact, more clearly than

anything else, that all our finite formulations, interpretations, practices, goals, and roles can be overthrown by something over which we have no control: “Anxiety thus takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself, as it falls, in terms of the ‘world’ and the way things have been publicly interpreted... Anxiety individualizes Dasein for its ownmost Being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities.”<sup>144</sup> This same point is echoed in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer on Heidegger when he discusses disposition and ground mood, of which anxiety is one particularly potent example, as the ultimate determining ground and limit in *Being and Time* beyond which one can not go:

“In one of the most brilliant phenomenological analyses of *Being and Time*, Heidegger analyzed this limit experience of *Dasein*, which comes up upon itself in the midst of beings, as ‘disposition’ (Befindlichkeit), and he attributed to disposition or mood (Stimmung) the real disclosure of Being-in-the-world. What is come upon in disposition represents the extreme limit beyond which the historical self-understanding of human Dasein could not advance.”<sup>145</sup>

Anxiety’s individualizing power, then, puts an end to any form of absolute social constructivism while its casting us back upon the possibilities of the public They puts an end to any sort of solipsism. What we are ultimately left with, though it will only once more become clear (or at least clearer) following *Being and Time*, is the determination of matter.

There is a definite progression concerning these themes in *Being and Time* we would do well to notice. In the sections dealing with worldhood it is very possible to be under the false impression that we are absolutely free to radically create any for-the-sake-

---

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. p. 232

<sup>145</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg *Heidegger’s Ways* John W. Stanley trans. (Albany: State University of New York Press 1994) p. 99-100 henceforth [HW.]

of-which we like, and thus determine an individualized world structure for ourselves. There is a hint of this when we concentrate on just the section discussing the setting up of signs, we are struck by the vague sense that setting up signs is something we do ourselves from some sort of individual freedom. The presentation of worldhood, which indeed is just one element in the progressing explanation of the unitary experience of Being-in-the-world, then moves on to discuss the equally determinative elements of being-with-others and the They. It is with this addition that we begin to see the way in which we are always delivered over to something else for our possibilities. But, at this point, it is tempting to assert some sort of current social constructivism whereby whatever the They currently says determines what is. Section Five of Division Two of *Being and Time* then goes on to orient the possibilities of any current They, or authentic Dasein, within the wider determinations of historicity. As Guignon notes: “Needless to say, Heidegger does not believe that any commitment is as good as any other... At the end of *Being and Time*, he turns to an examination of how a clear-sighted grasp of the current situation is bound up with an understanding of our belongingness to a shared ‘heritage’ and our participation in a communal ‘destiny’.”<sup>146</sup> In the course of this final turn to history, however, Heidegger also finally comes face to face with the problem of world change, a problem which points to the need that “The Origin of the Work of Art” will attempt to fill.

The movement of *Being and Time*, which constantly locates more isolated phenomena within the larger context which alone makes each meaningful or allows for their being, eventually arrives at the dependence of any given social role on the

---

<sup>146</sup> Guig. 2000 p. 91

historicality of a community. As I have stressed, there is no originating leap for an authentic individual, but there is also no such leap for a community. Rather, the very destiny of a community is wrapped up in that community's own role within the larger context of its history and heritage. The fate of Dasein is unified with the destiny of a community: "But if fateful Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, exists essentially in Being-with-Others, its historizing is a co-historizing and is determinative for it as destiny."<sup>147</sup> It is important for us to note that world, then, is always also historical. In our Being-in-the-world we find that we also encounter the having-been of previous worlds: "Along with any factual Dasein as Being-in-the-world, there is also, in each case, world-history. If Dasein is there no longer, then, the world too is something that has-been-there."<sup>148</sup> This, of course, raises the question of the rise and fall of worlds in general.

It is striking that, in working up to a discussion of this issue in Section Five of Division two, Heidegger uses an example which he will use in the exact opposite sense in *The Origin of the Work of Art*. I refer to his discussion of the Greek temple: "Thus 'the past' has a remarkable double meaning; the past belongs irretrievably to an earlier time; it belonged to the events of that time; and in spite of that, it can still be present-at-hand 'now' – for instance, the remains of a Greek temple. With the temple, a 'bit of the past' is still 'in the present'."<sup>149</sup> This passage is striking for several reasons in light of the role the temple will play later in Heidegger's post-*Being and Time* concern with historical world change. First we should note that it appears in a section dedicated to laying out the

---

<sup>147</sup> SZ p. 436

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. p. 445

<sup>149</sup> Ibid p. 430

ordinary, and generally confused or mistaken, view of history. In this sense, then, the dual being of the temple expresses a paradox the solution to which will be an understanding of historical world change. Insofar as the temple, even if in ruins, is still here now, in what sense is it past? Only in the sense in which its world is past:

“What is ‘past’? Nothing else than that world within which they belonged to a context of equipment and were encountered as ready-to-hand and used by a concerned Dasein who was in-the-world. That *world* is no longer. But what was formerly *within-the-world* with respect to that world is still present-at-hand... But what do we signify by saying of a world that it is no longer? A world *is* only in the manner of *existing* Dasein, which factually is as Being-in-the-World.”<sup>150</sup>

It is, then, the paradox of the temple which directs our attention to the fact that we have experiences which point to worlds that, in some sense, no longer are. The second striking element about the presence of the temple as an example here is that, as I mentioned, it will play the opposite role in “The Origin of the Work of Art”. In *Being and Time* the temple appears as a referent to a world which is no more, it is a harbinger of the past. Later, however, the temple will be depicted in the role it played in Ancient Greece as the establishment of a world and, I am claiming, the irruption of the new into history as such. This point, the changing role played by the temple, nicely brings into view at least one of the many shifts in focus which occur from *Being and Time* to “The Origin of the Work of Art”, namely, the move from a backward looking tendency towards a questioning as to the rise of the new. It is interesting, as well, to note that the general path we traced in Heidegger’s pre-*Being and Time* work moved from the decided forward looking concern with how we might allow matters to give rise to their own conceptualizations (the

---

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. p. 432

problem of the categories and categorial intuition) to the de-structuring of reified ways of taking things until finally settling on the focus on heritage in *Being and Time*. It is important for precisely this reason to stress, then, that the way in which the problem of historical world change arises in *Being and Time* is very different from the way it will later be discussed in “The Origin of the Work of Art”. First we are troubled by the fact that world can be something which is past while later we find the focus on the question of how worlds arise. As I had remarked in passing in the first chapter of this work, we seem to see in the overall path of Heidegger’s thought a tendency to shift back and forth between the determinative power of history, a past orientation, and the irruptive power with which the new rises into history, an orientation towards the future. Ultimately in *Being and Time*, the problem of world death is left mostly unaddressed: “...if we were to follow up the problem of the ontological structure of world-historical historizing, we would necessarily be transgressing the limits of our theme...”<sup>151</sup> This promissory note, however, was to be fulfilled later through a discussion of art and the setting up of a world, though in a rather different tone and with a gaze cast in a different direct than we find in the original raising of the problem.

We can take at least one key message from the general structure of Heidegger’s attempt to understanding Being through an analytic of Dasein. This message is that apparently discrete entities or phenomena, when phenomenologically investigated, are time and again discovered to be part of a larger event from which alone they derive their being. Whether we are making the mistake of discussing “one equipment” or an

---

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. p. 441



“individual Dasein”, we end up ultimately locating an understanding of the entity in the larger context, be it equipmental totality or Being-with-others in the They. My use of the term “event” for these larger contexts rests, of course, of Heidegger’s ultimate temporalizing of the very phenomenon of the world or Dasein. Each given world context or community of practices itself depends upon the ongoing temporalizing of the event from which they arise. This is ultimately what it means for Heidegger to state “... if fateful Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, exists essentially in Being-with-Others, its historizing is a co-historizing and is determinative for it as destiny.”<sup>152</sup> Dasein and its world alike are caught up in the larger happening out of which each arise. This point, however, should dissuade us once and for all from prioritizing any current collection of possibilities at the risk of underestimating the role of the ongoing event understood as either a historical sending or self-disclosing future.

### Section 3: Phenomenology, the Problem of Universals, and the A Priori

“It (the apriori) is not inferred indirectly, surmised from some symptoms in the real, hypothetically reckoned, as one infers, from the presence of certain disturbances in the movement of the body, the presence of other bodies which are not seen at all.”<sup>153</sup>

“Genuine theory of knowledge is accordingly possible only as a transcendental-phenomenological theory... instead of operating with inconsistent inferences leading from a supposed immanency to a supposed transcendency (that of no matter what ‘thing in itself’, which is alleged to be essentially unknowable)...”<sup>154</sup>

The interpretation of *Being and Time* we have presented thus far seemingly leaves us with the following picture: meaning consists of a unified total structure of historical

---

<sup>152</sup> SZ p. 436

<sup>153</sup> Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* p. 74

<sup>154</sup> Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* p. 85

practices involvement in which alone allows anything to be meaningful and, further, the structures of a given world and worlds in general can be known either by coming to see what is basic and shared within our everyday particular experiences or through the more dramatic revealing which occurs in the singular particular experience of anxiety. This picture leaves us with the following problematic question: how can a general or universal structure of worlds, i.e. worldhood, be known *as* general and universal through individual particular experiences? What type of argumentation is Heidegger proposing or presuming for this universal knowledge? As I see it, there are two possible answers to this question. Either Heidegger is engaged in Kantian style transcendental argumentation where we posit transcendental structures based upon their inferred necessity given the way things appear within our actual experience or the universal is disclosed directly to us in particularly important experiences without the need of inference. As we already stressed in the first chapter, the early Heidegger rejects the assumption that we arrive at generality through inference or abstraction. Heidegger's early conclusions concerning the origin and natural of categories and concepts was that they arise from experience itself according to the model of Lask's principle of the material determination of form and Husserl's categorial intuition. What this meant was that both practices and concepts arise, in an epistemic and ontological sense, from the things they concern. This is a position which repudiates the cognitively focused transcendental tradition derived from Kant. To interpret Heidegger as suggesting that our everyday experiences give us good grounds to infer the structures of worldhood is to miss the fundamental, and unique, realization he derives from his earliest influences. This, as I suggested in the introduction to this work, is the mistake Blattner makes when he claims that Heidegger's presentation of concept

formation is abstractionist like Kant's. This would mean that concepts are formed through human cognition by holding particular elements of individual experiences to be general characteristics of a class. This, however, is not true of Husserl, Heidegger or phenomenology in general. Rather, the development of phenomenology was revolutionary precisely because it rejected both Kantian abstractionism and inference to transcendental structures in favor of direct experience of the general, universal and transcendental. The answer, then, seems to be the second option, namely that a special class of experiences give direct experience of the transcendental. This, I argue, is the paradox at the heart of early phenomenology. How can particular experience give rise to general knowledge? It seems clear that it must for Husserl, and many would claim that the same goes for Heidegger. In this section I will attempt to demonstrate how and why Husserl's ambitions for transcendental experience, rather than argumentation, fail and why we should not presume Heidegger to have failed in a similar fashion. Rather, through a careful analysis of Heidegger's own use and discussion of concepts like the a priori and transcendental, we will hope to show that Heidegger has radically altered the topic in complete rejection of the transcendental tradition.

Phenomenology, both Husserlian and Heideggerian, can be understood as a radical form of empiricism. Empiricism, however, has tended to be a rather difficult thing to conjoin to any position seeking to assert the reality of universals. With the nominalism of Berkley and Hume the existence of any genuinely universal thought is problematized and the question of human access to universals remains a key problem of philosophy of science under the guise of the well-known problem of induction. This doubt as to the status of the universal, and thus of the necessary, is one of the main motivations for the

transcendental turn in Kant. Our question, then, centrally concerns the distance or proximity of phenomenology to either bare empiricism or the transcendental tradition following Kant. Our answer will rest in presenting a closer proximity to empiricism, although a rather dramatically rethought empiricism in Heidegger's case, than is commonly appreciated.

In order to lay the groundwork for concerns that will be important later on, I will present briefly and schematically a basic doubt one might feel in the face of transcendental arguments. The nature of such arguments is to move from the way in which things appear to those truths that must be the case in order for things to appear in the way they do. The doubt does not so much concern the legitimacy of the transcendental move as the power and scope of transcendental conclusions. Kant, for example, believes he can draw conclusions not just concerning what must currently be the case in order for things to appear as they currently do but rather also concerning what must necessarily be the case for anything to appear at all. In this last sentence I have purposefully stressed the temporal orientation of the situation because it is hard to see how one is to justify, based on present experience, extra-historical conclusions. I may be able to be convinced that space and time are currently the only two pure forms of intuition, but how can I be sure they are necessarily the only two possible? Similarly, I might be convinced that Kant's table of categories is complete for the nature of present, and even past, experience but how is this completeness to be extended into the future? Clearly, here, I am drawing on Hume's own sense that our assumption that the future will conform to the past is illegitimate, and I am suggesting that this objection is still valid in

the face of Kant's transcendental arguments. As we will see it is possible to make a similar point against Husserl's own position concerning transcendental experience.

We can understand the move from Kant to Husserl as a move from transcendental argumentation to what Husserl describes as transcendental experience, an experience opened up, for example in Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*, through the method of phenomenological reduction and eidetic variation. In this we can see what I mean when I refer to phenomenology as radical empiricism, in comparison to Kant's arguments derived from experience Husserl offers us transcendental experience independent of argumentation and able to provide direct evidentiary experience. Far from argue to 'what must be the case in order that' Husserl instead offers us the possibility of an immediate experience of the transcendental constitution of reality. Of course the move from transcendental argumentation to transcendental experience opens up the possibility of an even more direct assault from the concerns which led Hume and Berkley into nominalism, specifically the concern both that experience is always of particulars and that a present experience can not justify a future certainty. Husserl is, of course, well aware of the need to secure the limits of the knowledge drawn from transcendental experience when he both begins and ends the *Cartesian Meditations* with a call for a critique of transcendental experience.<sup>155</sup> This critique is not, however, provided and we

---

<sup>155</sup> In section 13 of the Second Meditation Husserl specifically sets aside questions relating to the limits of transcendental knowledge, something he leaves for a second stage of phenomenological research which "would be precisely the *criticism of transcendental experience* and then the criticism of *all transcendental cognition*." Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* p. 29 Similarly, he ends the Fifth Meditation with the following reminder: "We have trusted transcendental experience because of its originally lived-through evidence... Meanwhile we have lost sight of the demand, so seriously made at the beginning – namely that an *apodictic* knowledge, as the only 'genuinely scientific' knowledge, be achieved; but we have by no means dropped it." Ibid. p. 151

are left with the statement that we have “trusted”<sup>156</sup> transcendental experience for various good reasons but have not yet reached “...evidences that, on the one hand, carry with them – as we now must say: apodictically – the insight that, as ‘first in themselves’, they precede all other imaginable evidences and, on the other hand, can be seen to be themselves apodictic.”<sup>157</sup> In order to flesh this point out we will have to look more closely at Husserl’s use of apodicticity.

The concerns I have been dwelling on as to empirically derived universals Husserl very clearly has in mind as well. One of the central insights of Husserlian phenomenology, which is also to play a major role in Heidegger’s own phenomenology, is an understanding of evidence as a way in which things come to appearance. Thus, in the first Cartesian meditation Husserl states,

“Any evidence is a grasping of something itself that is, or is thus, a grasping in the mode ‘it itself’, with full certainty of its being, a certainty that accordingly excludes every doubt. But it does not follow that full certainty excludes the conceivability that what is evident could subsequently become doubtful, or the conceivability that being could prove to be illusion – indeed, sensuous experience furnishes us with cases where that happens.”<sup>158</sup>

The concern here is now familiar, specifically that what is certain now through the evidentiary mode in which something has appeared may not always remain certain.

Recall, for example, our claim that while we may be convinced that time and space are the only two pure forms of intuition now, we need not be convinced that they are the only two possible forms or that they will remain the only two forms. As Husserl notes,

---

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. p. 16

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p. 15

“Moreover, this open possibility of becoming doubtful, or of non-being, in spite of evidence, can always be recognized in advance by critical reflection on what the evidence in question does.”<sup>159</sup> True apodictic evidence, Husserl asserts, goes beyond this and gives us what it is that I have been claiming empiricism, transcendental argument or phenomenology have a hard time giving us, specifically an evidence which “...is not merely certainty of the affairs or affair-complexes (states-of-affairs) evident in it; rather it discloses itself, to a critical reflection, as having the signal peculiarity of being *at the same time the absolute unimagineness (inconceivability) of their non-being*, and thus excluding in advance every doubt as ‘objectless’, empty.”<sup>160</sup> Now it is precisely this level of apodicticity that Husserl has generally failed to achieve. Or, to put it more precisely, unimagineness in the present need not equal absolute unimagineness or inconceivability. I will seek to make clear that the method of transcendental experience and the study of the transcendental ego can never hope to achieve this level of apodicticity.

Research into the structures of transcendental experience is, at the same time, research into the constituting activity of the transcendental ego from the perspective of the transcendental ego. The transcendental ego is encountered in that self-experience which remains when one’s own life and history, i.e. one’s psychological self, and all existence claims concerning either the self or the world have been bracketed in what is called the phenomenological reduction. This bracketing insures that whatever is experienced in this purified realm is secure independent of any doubts concerning the

---

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p. 15-16

existence or ontological nature of external reality or internal particulars. The structures and processes experienced, then, in this transcendental realm are logically prior to both worldly and personal experience and thus are also ultimately constitutive of them. This research into the flow of experience independent of questions of what it is experience of or who it is experience to is only the first level of reduction and leaves us only with experience of specific transcendental processes active in particular experiences. Husserl wishes to rise above this level of the particular through the methodology of eidetic variation. The move to the eidetic reduction or variation changes the level of phenomenological description from the realm of the purely empirical experience of the transcendental realm, characterized generally by a passivity in the face of the processes experienced, to an active investigation or analysis performed through imaginative variation. Rather than simply taking note of what occurs in the transcendental realm we attempt to push the processes of this realm to their limits. Given a specific phenomenon in empirical transcendental experience eidetic variation will then imaginatively freely vary the details of the phenomenon. This process will serve to make clear, then, what is merely particular about the phenomenon and what universal or necessary. For example, we can vary the content of a specific perceptual phenomenon in order to discover what is particular in this given case of perception and what must, or can not, be the case of any perception whatsoever. We move, as Husserl puts it, from actual perception to the realm of the as-if.<sup>161</sup> This reduction, then, provides us with eidetic universality, which Husserl also calls an intuitive and apodictic consciousness of essential and necessary

---

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. p. 70



universality.<sup>162</sup> It also allows us to enter a further purified realm with an ego that is even more, as it were, transcendental. Specifically the eidos ego and the eidetic realm both of which deal with the possible rather than the merely actual.

The reasoning behind Husserl's achievement of the universal should be clear here. Those structures of experience ascertained through eidetic variation are necessary insofar as they are experienced to hold for any and all cases of changing particularity. Similarly, the free variation of the transcendental ego itself which Husserl also offers as a possible avenue of research is meant to secure the fact that what is true of the eidos ego is true of any experience of transcendental ego at all rather than simply this given case of transcendental experience. As Husserl stated these points in his earlier *Logical Investigations*,

“If we ponder on the peculiarity of eidetic abstraction, that it necessarily rests on individual intuition, but does not for that reason mean what is individual in such intuition, if we pay heed to the fact that it is really a new way of conceiving, constitutive of generality instead of individuality – the possibility of universal intuitions arises, intuitions which not merely exclude all individuality, but also all sensibility from their intentional purview.”<sup>163</sup>

This, then, does indeed seem to give us a certain type of universality. It can't, however, be the universality of a perfect apodictic knowledge as I shall attempt to make clear. It is first worth noting that the power of the method of variation to provide access to truly necessary structures presupposes that we know before hand that the power of variation, call it imaginative power, does not differ from one de facto experience of the transcendental ego to another. This might mean, either, that I must be assured that your

---

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. p. 71

<sup>163</sup> Husserl *Logical Investigations* vol. 2 p. 306

ego, purified through phenomenological reduction, does not have any further imaginative power than mine or that my transcendental ego won't get better, or worse, at variation from one moment to another. To put it simply, why should what is unimaginable now remain unimaginable forever? If a critique of transcendental knowledge were to be carried out the veracity of a claim concerning the stability of the power of variation would have to be one of its central concerns. Another way to make the point would be to note that while eidetic variation may reveal the limits of the transcendental ego's constituting activity it does not reveal the origin or nature of these limits. How are we to know that the transcendental ego will stick to the limits to which it currently holds itself? If these limits are not self-imposed, what then is their nature and origin such that we may be assured of their constancy? Husserl gives us no guarantee of the temporal constancy, or perhaps the a-temporality, of what is given to us *now* as universal.

We have already mentioned the centrality for phenomenology of Husserl's insight that universality and apodicticity are modes of givenness and now we shall seek to tie this insight into our discussion of the issue of universality in Heidegger. To begin with our discussion will focus upon two already familiar points. One, the centrality of Husserl's presentation of categorial intuition in the *Logical Investigations* for Heidegger's development of his own methodology, especially formal indication, and two, Heidegger's claim in *Being and Time* that we can know the fundamental structures, called worldhood, which apply to all possible worlds. Our question is, then, given Heidegger's reformulation of Husserl's phenomenology what access could we possibly have to anything like the structures of worldhood? I hope to make clear in what follows why I

find this to be a more pressing question than has generally been acknowledged and why Heidegger may appear to repeat Husserl's failure without, in fact, doing so.

If we recall Heidegger's discussion of categorial intuition and the sense of the apriori in his lecture course *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* we can see fairly swiftly what it was about Husserl's later work that Heidegger felt the need to reject, and also the way in which Husserl's transcendental path to the universal, whether we find it adequate or not, can not possibly be Heidegger's. To briefly review material from chapter one, Husserl's conception of categorial intuition is his answer to the problem of how each key element of even fairly basic perceptual statements can receive evidentiary fulfillment in experience. In seeking fulfillment for statements such as "this paper is white" or "this page is part of this book" we run into the difficulty that, while the whiteness of the paper can be given in straightforward sensuous intuition the *being* white does not seem sensuously experienced any more than the page's being a part of a whole is given directly in sensuous experience. Husserl's answer, following his rejection of more traditional answers to the problem, is that categorial elements are given in experience through intuitions founded on straightforward sensuous intuitions. The key to this insight's importance to Heidegger is the manner in which it locates the origin of concepts not in some sort of active imposition from the mind or activity of abstraction on the part of consciousness but rather in the deliverances of experience themselves. This allows him to assert of the apriori, as well as the categorial/conceptual, that it

"...is not limited to the subjectivity, indeed that in the first instance it has primarily nothing at all to do with subjectivity. The characterization of ideation as a categorial intuition has made it clear that something like the highlighting of

ideas occurs both in the field of the ideal, hence of the categories, and in the field of the real.<sup>164</sup>

This goes hand in hand with a rejection of the methodology of transcendental argumentation, “It (the apriori) is not inferred indirectly, surmised from some symptoms in the real, hypothetically reckoned, as one infers, from the presence of certain disturbances in the movement of the body, the presence of other bodies which are not seen at all.”<sup>165</sup> When we combine this with Heidegger’s early interest in Emil Lask’s principle of the material determination of form, a perspective from which conceptual forms are understood to arise epistemically and ontologically from the matters they concern, we begin to see several key elements of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* perspective. We also see the way in which Husserl’s later identification of the apriori with the realm of a transcendental ego will be deeply unsatisfactory for the anti-subjectivist Heidegger.

Our early focus on the lack of any assurance of temporal consistency in Husserl’s conception of universals should prepare us to note in Heidegger that the understanding of practices as arising from the historical disclosure of the matters of concern themselves provides scant justification for claiming any access to the a-historical. What could Heidegger mean, then, in asserting that we have access to structures which are shared by all possible historical worlds? We are left with two possibilities, neither of which need be exclusive. Either, Heidegger is guilty in *Being and Time* of being carried away by various transcendental Neo-Kantian ambitions such that he has overlooked the limitations of his

---

<sup>164</sup> CT. p. 74

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

own methodological convictions which he will better recall in his later works concerning historical world change such as “The Origin of the Work of Art”. Or he may be appealing, in his apparent talk of universality, to a new understanding of the universal and essential whereby these are modes in which things disclose themselves but modes which are themselves open to temporal variation. In this second option we clearly see the influence of Husserl and his understanding of apodicticity as a mode in which things can appear, and it is consistent with his attempt to understand the term essence in a verbal way in terms of historical events.<sup>166</sup> Worldhood, then, may disclose itself in the mode of universality yet, even as was the case in Husserl, this mode of disclosure cannot insure that this universality is a-temporal. In this way, then, we can unify the universal in Heidegger with a lack of any certain a-historical knowledge and perhaps without the ambition to achieve the a-historical we find in Husserl. I would like to turn, then, to a wider investigation of Heidegger’s position before, during and after *Being and Time* concerning the a priori, transcendental and universal in order to expand upon this interpretation.

In chapter one we had spent some time focusing upon a quotation from Heidegger’s 1919 lecture course in which he asserted that in hermeneutic intuition, which consisted of the back and forth movement of a living engagement with the world, we arrive at knowledge of the lived and living categories “...from which all theoretical objectification, indeed every transcendent positing, falls out. Universality of word

---

<sup>166</sup> See, for example, Heidegger’s 1949 addition to his essay “On the Essence of Truth” found in Krell, David Farrell (ed.) *Martin Heidegger Basic Writings* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993) henceforth cited as [BW.]

meanings primarily indicates something originary: worldliness of experienced experiencing.”<sup>167</sup> As we mentioned then, even as early as 1919 Heidegger associated, and equally rejected, the absolutization of mediation found within the work of Natorp with the abstractionist inferring of transcendental structures found in Kant. Then, in the early draft of *Being and Time* found in the form of the lecture course *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, Heidegger asserts that the a priori “...is not inferred indirectly, surmised from some symptoms in the real, hypothetically reckoned, as one infers, from the presence of certain disturbances in the movement of the body, the presence of other bodies which are not seen at all.”<sup>168</sup> In both the early Heidegger and the Heidegger of the writing of *Being and Time*, then, we find a rejection of Kantian transcendental argumentation on the basis of Husserl’s categorial intuition and the changes Heidegger makes to it. To start, then, we know that Heidegger’s understanding of the universal and a priori is going to be opposed to both transcendental argumentation and the subjectivist tradition which understands our access to the a priori as dependent upon the a priori’s own dependence upon subjectivity. Heidegger’s a priori, then, will be both immediately accessible and also indifferent to the subject/object distinction. One way we can make this clear is to stress that the a priori for Heidegger will be neither a characteristic of humanity nor something which is independently true of all things. What remains, then, is precisely that which allows both humanity and the things of our concern to appear at all, specifically the totality of involvements and historical practices within which both subjects and objects appear. What is a priori, then, is the world. When we consider that

---

<sup>167</sup> TD. p. 99

<sup>168</sup> CT. p. 74

Heidegger at the time of his development of *Being and Time* equated Being and the a priori, “This already suggests that the a priori phenomenologically understood is not a title for comportment but a *title for being*,”<sup>169</sup> then our equating of the world and the a priori receives attestation in Heidegger’s post *Being and Time* work the *Letter on Humanism* when he equates Being with the historical clearing of disclosure which is made up of our meaningful practices, “...so is Being essentially broader than all beings, because it is the clearing itself.”<sup>170</sup> We can, then, assert of the a priori that it is the totality of historical practices which open up a meaningful disclosive space which, in turn, allow things to appear.

Now it should be stressed that our practices are a priori in a rather specific sense. First, it should be clear that a specific practice, and even a specific totality of practices, is going to fail to have always already existed for any person, thing or experience in general. In other words, specific practices and worlds, understood as the a priori, are none the less not a-historical. A practice and world is a priori, then, in the sense that whatever shows up for us shows up within, and because of, a collection of practices in which it appears. In other words, the practice or world must already have been for the given thing to have shown up to begin with. Hermeneutically put, it is our anticipations and projections, embodied in our practices, which are necessary for anything to show up at all and so there will always be a set of practices which were the a priori disclosive clearing for a specific thing or experience. As we can see, this a priori is clearly a particular and

---

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> BW. p. 240

not a universal. When something shows up in a practice it shows up along with what must be the case for *this particular* disclosure. Now, as discussed previously, something like anxiety can disclose to us our world deprived of any content, thus disclosing the structure of our world. This particular disclosure contains what was necessary for anything at all to have shown up for us in our world previously, i.e. the a priori for our world or the worldhood of our world. Following from Husserlian transcendental experience, what we find here is anxiety playing the role of the various Husserlian epoches with worldhood appearing as a particular in the mode of a universal. But, as my previous critiques of Husserl should make clear, we still have found nothing to insure us of the immutability of this a priori structure in the future or in the cases of worlds to which we have not been privy. What is more, I believe Heidegger knows this perfectly well. To make this point I will have to discuss the differences between the a priori, universal and transcendental.

There is a certain irony contained in what the history of philosophy has done to the term a priori which Heidegger often seems to have clearly in mind. Specifically, the a priori has the specific temporal and historical sense of “the prior” while ultimately coming to mean, within the history of philosophy, the a-historical. This transition is fairly easy to explain insofar as the a priori was meant to signify that which, hypothetically, could be known previous to, and thus without, any experience whatsoever. The a priori is, then, the non-experiential. Heidegger, however, chooses to play upon this seeming accident of history by focusing upon the temporal implications of the term. When



Heidegger defines the a priori as “that which already always is the earlier”<sup>171</sup> we are likely to suspect that he wishes to stress the paradox of the timeless temporality of something being both earlier and “always already” earlier as if it were something that indeed happened historically but always just a moment before. It is my claim that the reason Heidegger was so fond of the phrase “always already” was because it stressed the phenomenological foundation of the appearance of a-temporal knowledge in particular temporal deliverances. What we take to be a-temporal is temporally experienced as having already happened or already being the case.

Heidegger’s sense of the a priori, then, purposefully avoids the traditional sense of non-experiential in preference for the temporal sense of “prior” and the paradox of the experiential “always already”. As already mentioned, everything will have something which is a priori for it, specifically the practices which allow that thing to show up in the first place, and while these practices will be fundamental for the thing in question they need not be particularly important or interesting in themselves. For example, our postal practices are a priori for the existence and appearance of postal stamps as we know them but this a priori is not of general metaphysical or epistemic interest. When we turn to talking about the “always already” we begin to bring in a sense of the universal, meaning something which holds true in every particular case of a given class of events or things. It is my sense, however, that the universality of the “always already” is a rather limited and weak one. Specifically, as the past orientation of the “already” would suggest, the always already leaves open the chance of radical change to the seemingly universal in the future.

---

<sup>171</sup> CT. p.73

One way to understand this point is to note that a dramatic change in the totality of practices which allow something to come to meaningful appearance would dictate a fundamental change in the thing in question itself. It would no longer *be* the same thing and so the “always already” still holds true. But this, however, provides us with a rather weaker form of a priori knowledge than is generally sought by those interested in a priori conditions. How much does it really earn us to say, for example in a Kantian context, that any knowledge and experience which contains pure forms of intuition other than just space and time would no longer be “knowledge” and “experience” as we originally meant it? This may, indeed, be true but the real question is whether we can know that such knowledge and experience is possible or impossible in cases other than our own or in either the future or the past.

The missing link in the transcendental tradition between what seems necessary and actual ahistorical necessity, whether derived through inference from a given experience or through an appearance in the mode of necessity and universality in a given experience, is actually an assumption and little else. The assumption is that of structure, it is assumed that there is something fundamental and permanent which justifies the appearance of necessity. Either the structure is assumed to reside in the unchanging nature of subjectivity or the unchanging nature of reality itself. This assumption is what leads us to the transcendental.

In Heidegger’s enigmatic *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* we find several observations which can serve to bring what we have said about the temporal nature of the a priori and the idea of things appearing in the mode of universality while not claiming true a-historicity into focus. First we should note that one way to clarify

the point about transcendental structure we just made above is to assert that generally talk of the transcendental relies, often perhaps unintentionally, upon essentialist and substantialist assumptions. The assumption that transcendental structure remains the same throughout all time is grounded on the idea that there is something which underlies all the various changes a thing can undergo, i.e. substance, with essence playing the role of those particular things which must remain the same for the thing in question to remain despite change. In this sense, then, Kant's assumption that the transcendental activity and limitations of human cognition do not, and can not, change is purely within the tradition of Descartes description of the thinking self as a thinking substance, with certain implied immutable characteristics understood as essential to it. The lack of any explanation for the limits and structures of the transcendental ego in Husserl force us to the same conclusions. The deliverances of eidetic variation can only be assured of ahistorical universality if we assume that the transcendental ego is that which consistently stands-under (sub-stance) all other experiences while remaining unchanging in certain essential characteristics. Ask why the essential doesn't change, however, and the only answer is that this is precisely what it means to be essential. Heidegger, however, offers a break not only from the subjectivist tradition in philosopher but also from the substantialist tradition. This move appears in the *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* in the form of Heidegger's replacing the term essence, from the Latin *essentia*, with the German noun *Wesen* derived, from Heidegger's perspective, from the verb *wesen*.<sup>172</sup> While the

---

<sup>172</sup> For a clear discussion of this issue see the translators' forward to the Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly translation of the *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, especially p. xxiv – xxv henceforth cited as [Cont.]

German noun *Wesen* can accurately be translated as essence, if we look at the verb form we find, instead, the sense of “abiding”, “enduring” or “whiling”. It is this point which justifies the translators of *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* to translate *Wesen* as “abiding sway” and *wesen* as “abiding swaying”. It is to this point that I was directing our attention earlier when I suggested that understanding Heidegger’s new sense of the a priori and transcendental may depend upon his understanding of essence in a verbal way. He presents this verbal understanding of essence clearly in the 1949 additional note to his essay “On the Essence of Truth”: “In the question of the truth of essence, essence is understood verbally... Truth signifies sheltering that clears as the basic characteristic of Being.”<sup>173</sup> Here, then, we clearly see the assertion that the clearing of worldhood, already identified with the most primordial level of truth and thus Being, must be understood as an event, as an ongoing sheltering which clears or brings to disclosure. The entire work of the *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* moves within this verbal understanding of essence which is identical with a rejection of substance ontology where substance is understood as the stable thing which underlies and makes events possible.

From within the perspective of this event ontology, then, Heidegger will be concerned to explain and diagnose the historical conceptions that have given rise to the dominance of substance ontology. The key historical path will be, then, the conception derived from a certain reading of Plato of Idea as substance, and the former as continual presence. As Heidegger asserts of the Greek word Idea, “The word does not want to

---

<sup>173</sup> BW. p. 137

indicate the relation to the ‘subject’ – if we would think in terms of modernity – but rather the *presencing*, the shining forth of the view in the look and exactly as that which *at the same time* provides *stability in presencing*. Here is the *origin of the differentiation* between... (*essentia*) and... (*existentia*) in the temporality of the *idea*. A being is in constant presence, *idea*...<sup>174</sup> From this perspective, then, the story of western culture and philosophy is the story of first understanding *idea* to mean constant presence and then the story of a forgetting the very temporal nature of “constant presence”. *Idea* stops being, then, the event of continual presencing and becomes instead the atemporal, ahistorical and timeless. This dominance of presence, and its becoming atemporality, originates from a more primordial understanding, expressed for example in the Anaximander fragment to which Heidegger directs us as the oldest saying about being<sup>175</sup>, of coming into being and passing away as the base level of reality in contrast to presence. Yet, once a certain mode of coming into being and passing away gains dominance, i.e. presence, the primordial disclosure of the transitory is concealed, “One might believe that the experience of transitoriness, of coming into existence and of passing away, has suggested and demanded a point of departure in constancy and presence, as counter-claim. But why should what comes into existence and passes away count as non-being? Only when beingness is already established as constancy and presence.”<sup>176</sup> Here we see a parallel with what Heidegger will call, in “On the Essence of Truth”, the untruth which is the ground of truth, or the undisclosed which is the basis for all disclosure. We will return to

---

<sup>174</sup> Cont. p. 145-146

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. p. 133

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. p. 137

this point later when we more closely trace Heidegger's transition from *Being and Time* to "The Origin of the Work of Art". For now the important point is that essencing (*wesen*) is concealed by the idea of stable atemporal substance and essence (*essentia*) when *Idea* is identified with a continual presencing which becomes simply unexplained universal presence.

The bridge between what we have just said and our previous discussion of the a priori and transcendental structures should be clear. Heidegger's interpretation of the a priori in temporal terms, an interpretation which he was already engaged with before the writing of *Being and Time*, is clearly in line with his understanding of essence as originally a presencing which becomes, forgetfully, conceived of as atemporality. It is because of this identification of the a priori with the essentialism found in the metaphysics of presence derived from Platonism that Heidegger can assert that "The a priori is really only there where idea is..." and that "What in *Being and Time* gets started as 'understanding of being' seemed to be merely the extension of this priori representation – but it is something entirely different"<sup>177</sup> and finally that "strictly speaking one cannot speak of the transcendence of Da-sein; in the context of this approach [i.e. that of *Being and Time*] representation of transcendence in *every* sense must *disappear*."<sup>178</sup> In order to clarify these claims, claims which certainly seem to necessitate a read of *Being and Time* which places it beyond the transcendental tradition, we need to look at five senses of the transcendental Heidegger offers based upon his reading of the

---

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p. 155

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. p. 152

history of idealism and essentialism<sup>179</sup>. Then we can seek to connect this perspective to the earliest insights of Heidegger we have discussed, specially the ontological sense of the Lask's principle of the material determination of form.

The first sense of the transcendental Heidegger discusses in *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* he calls the ontic sense. This is the use of transcendental that speaks of a specific being which goes beyond all other beings. Here he has in mind the concept of the creator as found in much Christian thought. The second sense is the ontological sense that Heidegger identifies with the traditional understanding of the a priori. Here we find that which surpasses all particular beings because it is most general and common (*koinon*) to all of them, i.e. beingness as the general, “categories – ‘above’ and ‘prior to’ beings, *a priori*”<sup>180</sup>. The third sense brings us to *Being and Time* and is described by Heidegger as the fundamental-ontological sense which returns us to the original meaning of the word “transcendence” understood as “surpassing as such”. In other words, Heidegger had in *Being and Time* described Dasein as that being for whom its being is an issue and that being which stands-out, i.e. ex-ists, into the clearing which is the understanding of being. Together this problematic concern with one's own being and the aware projection into a meaningful clearing should bring to mind our earlier discussion of how the totality of involvements which is world is grounded in that being which can be directly concerned with its own existence as a filling of social roles and practices. Dasein's transcendence is, then, its projecting of itself upon those practices and roles it has inherited and is, as such, the foundation for all meaning. The “surpassing as

---

<sup>179</sup> For these five senses of the transcendental see Ibid. p. 151

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

such” comes in, however, insofar as Dasein as projecting upon possibilities always fails to simply be a given possibility or any collection of them. Dasein is an ongoing event of projective practices, and as such it never entirely *is* but, as Heidegger says, always has its being still to be. It is at this point, however, that Heidegger claims that once this understanding of transcendence is appreciated all senses of transcendence must disappear for “strictly speaking one can not speak of a transcendence of Da-sein”<sup>181</sup>. Before we attempt to say why precisely this is so we will briefly mention to final two senses of transcendence. The fourth use of the term begins, Heidegger claims, primarily with Descartes and represents the way in which objects transcend subjectivity such that how the subject can “go out” or “go over” to the object becomes a problem. Heidegger points out that his conception of Being-in-the-world has already left behind this conception and the concern connected with it. Finally we have the most general sense of transcendence as a departure from beings into some radical unknown beyond the realm of beings. This, Heidegger suggests, is the founding ambition of metaphysics in the bad sense, i.e. a desire to escape from the fundamental finitude of human concerned being.

How, then, does the fundamental-ontological sense of transcendence we find in Dasein’s concerned relation to itself and its world lead to the conclusion that all senses of transcendence, even this one, must disappear? This problem is, indeed, the very issue we discussed in the previous chapter when we asked whether our experience of worldhood in anxiety should be understood as a pure experience of form independent of determining matter. It is possible to read *Being and Time* as offering something like a mystical

---

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. p. 152



experience of the transcendental level at which Dasein, as an empty need to be, finds itself faced with disengagement from all history or involvement. This reading, I suspect, is what concerns Heidegger at this moment in his post *Being and Time* reflections. In contrast to this reading, Dasein's transcendence can be read as simply the recognition that there is no disengagement from history and involvement. Rather, what one sees in the vision made possible through a resolute response to anxiety is one's identity with one's generation and that historical moment's larger place within an ongoing history. In other words, Dasein's finite transcendence is not really a surpassing at all but rather a recognition of the impossibility of surpassing. This point can be discussed in terms of understanding as much as in terms of anxiety. As Heidegger states, Dasein's transcendence can be identified with its understanding of being. When we recall Heidegger's identification of Being with the meaningful clearing of practices which is world, we might understand Dasein as something other than world especially insofar as "to understand something" seems to suggest to us the image of having some distance from what we understand which allows for us to grasp it. But Heidegger's conception of understanding, drawn as it is from a practical engaged rather than cognitive ability to make one's way around something, suggest the opposite image. To understand Being is precisely to be engaged in and with it, to be world insofar as we are Being-in-the-world. Dasein's understanding of Being, then, is to be the ongoing projection of historical practices which negates any possibility of surpassing the world, i.e. any meaning of transcendence at all.

How are we to read, then, *Being and Time*'s search for a priori essential structures? As mentioned, we can focus on the a priori as a specific mode of

temporalization which points to the necessity of certain practices for those things which show up through a practice to have come to disclosure at all. This points back, in turn, to a verbal understanding of essence as the way in which something abides for the time that it does abide. Clearly, then, Heidegger's conclusions as to essential structures will be derived from particular things appearing in the mode of universality, i.e. essencing. However, this essencing as historical event will always remain open to alteration. As Guignon points out, Heidegger seeks neither "a transcendental position outside of our everyday, public understanding" nor does he strictly operate "within a regional framework"<sup>182</sup> of meaning. Rather his project involves an ever deepening of the pre-ontological understanding already contained in our daily lives through the clarification of the formal indications provided by the things themselves, through their essencing, with which we are engaged in our daily concerns. This method allows for him to bridge regional frameworks and find deeper trans-historical essencing. As for the hope for an ultimate uniting ground or structure for all these essencings, I suggest that Heidegger's own diagnosis of the mistaken assumption that, for transitoriness to exist, there must first have been constant presence should suggest the unjustifiability of any assumption of a universal ground. What, given the historical nature of all essencing, could lead us to justify a faith in the ahistorical? Rather, we can seek to delineate more and less primordial essencings, removing in the process traditions which have become reified and empty, and we can remain alert for ways in which things might essence in a new way. This, however, must remain historical throughout.

---

<sup>182</sup> Guignon, Charles *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983) p. 210 henceforth cited as [PK.]

### Chapter Three: “The Origin of the Work of Art” and Realist Historicism

Thus far we have demonstrated how one can derive Heidegger’s realist historicism from the early influences upon Heidegger’s thought and his own drive to craft a phenomenology free of the theoretical excesses he saw in the work of Husserl. Beyond this we have attempted to demonstrate the presence of this realist historicism in *Being and Time*, a task that required us to craft the foundations of an anti-transcendental read of *Being and Time*. It is this part of our project which is likely to prove the most controversial. Now, however, we must finish sketching the historical trajectory of Heidegger’s earliest concerns by interpreting the transformation to Heidegger’s thought which occurs in the 1930s in line with the reading we have offered of *Being and Time*. We will offer a reading of Heidegger’s supposed “turn” which sees it as a return to Heidegger’s pre-*Being and Time* realist historicism free of *Being and Time*’s obfuscating transcendental language. It is this language, although not the actual details of his attempted reclamation of it, which I claim Heidegger came to associate with a subjectivist and decisionist misreading of *Being and Time*. In the course of telling this story, however, we will be faced to witness the moments when Heidegger himself gets caught in the misreading of *Being and Time* which I had previously associated with his getting carried away by neo-Kantian transcendental ambitions. The first section of this chapter, then, will be dedicated to this reading of the path from *Being and Time* to “The Origin of the Work of Art”. The second section of the chapter will focus upon an interpretation of

“The Origin of the Work of Art” as an exemplar of realist historicism which, despite Heidegger’s “turn”, can be read as consistent with his early work, *Being and Time*, and his later works which are more explicitly interested in the historical event nature of truth. The final section of this chapter will be dedicated to discussing concerns with realist historicism generally. Specifically I will address whether the position I have crafted for Heidegger falls into a reflexive paradox, whether Kantian or Husserlian understandings of regulative ideals can answer my claims that transcendental argumentation or experience both are inadequate for providing ahistorical certainty, and finally how my reading of Heidegger relates to the transcendental historicism reading offered by Guignon and Crowell and the ontological historicity discussed by Iain Thomson.

#### Section One: Truth and Untruth; The Reservoir of the Undisclosed

“In its full existential-ontological meaning, the proposition that ‘Dasein is in the truth’ states equiprimordially that ‘Dasein is in untruth’.”<sup>183</sup>

“The first beginning is not mastered; and the truth of be-ing, in spite of its essential shining, is not expressly grounded. And this means that a human fore-grasping (of asserting, of tekne, of certainty) sets the standard for the interpretation of the beingness of be-ing. But now the great turning around is necessary, which is beyond all ‘revaluation of values,’ that turning around in which beings are not grounded in terms of human being, but rather human being is grounded in terms of be-ing.”<sup>184</sup>

Any interpreter of the works of Heidegger must face with trepidation a discussion of the path he took from the 1927 publication of *Being and Time* to the final version of the three lectures which make up “The Origin of the Work of Art” in 1936 and finally the publication of these in 1945. To travel the path through this period is to traverse the

---

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. p. 265

<sup>184</sup> Cont. p. 129

region of Heidegger's authoritarian rectorship at the University of Freiburg and his overt membership in the Nazi party. Indeed, it is possible to see in this period Heidegger's own self-assertion as the intellectual representative of the Nazi party within German academia. This is a subject over which scholars of Heidegger's thought must struggle and a subject upon which a final verdict can never be given. In Heidegger we face the horror of history, the possibility that we may ourselves fail in the most terrible way possible the promise of our own thought. Heidegger's Nazism is a subject upon which I have often thought, and about which I have generally been loath to speak or write. Nothing comfortable can be said about it. It is woefully inadequate to attempt to explain what Heidegger may have hoped to accomplish, as if possible good intentions could be measured against the unspeakable acts of the Nazis. It is tantamount to intellectual suicide to holistically dismiss all of Heidegger's work as somehow Nazi or proto-Nazi. It is too simple, too pacifying for our own conscience, to claim the ability to disconnected completely Heidegger's social actions from the content of his thought as if he himself hadn't asserted the unity of community practice and philosophical disclosure. Whether in order to determine what to dismiss or in order to understand the full course of Heidegger's thought, one must enquiry as to the relationship between the specifics of his philosophy and his role as the Nazi Rector of Freiburg. In this work we will not be able to address this issue fully, indeed many books have been inadequate to the task and many will prove to be inadequate in the future. What we can do, however, is address those elements of the issue which touch upon our specific goal to craft an understanding of the realist historicism found throughout Heidegger's career. This will naturally fit into our attempt to read the period of the 1930s in terms of what Heidegger changed in his thought and

what he kept. My ultimate story will be one of Heidegger's flirting with a subjectivist decisionism derived from a misunderstanding of *Being and Time*'s project, a subjectivism which easily contributed to Heidegger's own conception of himself as the leader of the German university system in its fight against nihilism. This subjectivism will be a move away from *Being and Time*, although I suggest it is derivable from a misreading of the work, and the changes which occur near the end of the 1930s will be a return to a realist historicist reading of *Being and Time*. Thus, the "turn" in Heidegger's thought actually consists first in a turn away from his earliest commitments and then a turn back to his original insights.

In addressing the period of the 1930s there are several key works and paths of investigation one might use to organize and guide the interpretation. These include the 1933 "Rectoral Address" and the 1935 lecture course "Introduction to Metaphysics", both of which will represent for me the subjectivist detour Heidegger's thought at the time took. However, before this there is an anti-subjectivist deepening of Heidegger's earlier commitments found in a new understanding of the "undisclosed" which Heidegger offers in the 1930s essay "On the Essence of Truth". During what we might call the subjectivist period stretching from 1933 to the end of 1935 we also find the first version of the "The Origin of the Work of Art" presented as a lecture in November of 1935 under the slightly different title "On the Origin of the Work of Art". Following 1935 we have three important paths we can follow in understanding the change in Heidegger's thought. These paths are the writing of Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* which began in 1936, Heidegger's lecture courses on Nietzsche which span from 1936-1940 and finally Heidegger's final lecture version of "The Origin of the Work

of Art” in 1936 and the publication of it in 1945. Depending on which of these developments we choose to focus upon, our reading of when Heidegger’s thought underwent particular alterations will be different. For example, Iain Thomson reads the mistake of Heidegger-as-Rector to be his belief in a fundamental ontology that could ground and reorient the various regional ontologies of the sciences. This, in turn, contributes to Heidegger’s authoritarian attempt to reorganize Freiburg’s university departments. Thomson, because he focuses primarily on the changes apparent in Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning)* in order to locate Heidegger’s rejection of his philosophical and political failure, arrives at the year 1937 as the point at which Heidegger’s Nazi period was philosophically over.<sup>185</sup> Alternatively, because he is engaged in a careful analysis of the shifting and inconsistent positions and tones discoverable throughout the course of Heidegger’s Nietzsche lectures, David Krell offers the year 1938 as the symbolic moment of Heidegger’s rejection of the Nazis. It is in 1938 that Heidegger stops working on the edition of Nietzsche’s works that he had been preparing due to Nazi interference and censorship. It is at this point, Krell claims, that “as the Party insists on sanitizing the Nietzsche edition, purging from it Nietzsche’s anti-anti-Semitism and anti-Germanism, Heidegger opts for Nietzsche...”<sup>186</sup> For our purposes the key year will be 1936, the year when the final version of “The Origin of the Work of Art” is given with distinct anti-subjectivist changes from the earlier versions.

---

<sup>185</sup> See Iain Thomson *Heidegger on Ontotheology* chapter 3 and an earlier version of this same argument in Dreyfus and Wrathall ed. *A Companion to Heidegger* “Heidegger and National Socialism”.

<sup>186</sup> David Krell ed., *Nietzsche Volume One and Two* p. xxv

There are at least three major interpretations of Heidegger's 1930s period which it will be useful for us to orient ourselves in response to. First, there is Julian Young's claim that Heidegger's mistake was to assert that world could be created in a Promethean moment. Young's work has been influential upon our own interpretation insofar as he views Heidegger in the early 1930s as drifting away from *Being and Time* and then returning to his earlier commitments. In a sense we agree with this position, but disagree with the details of what the position of *Being and Time* is supposed to be. Other disagreements will become clear as we go along. The second view of the subject is that of Jacques Taminiaux with whom we find ourselves in perfect agreement. We shall see, however, that Young's own reading of Taminiaux is in sharp contrast to our own. From Taminiaux we have drawn our claim that Heidegger's mistake in the early 1930s was to be lured into a subjectivist decisionism. Finally, there is the position offered by Iain Thomson that we have already mentioned. We shall reserve discussing Thomson's interpretation until section three of this chapter as it bears upon a wider issue than just our interpretation of the Heidegger of the 1930s.

In discussing Heidegger's emphasis in "The Origin of the Work of Art" upon the way in which art first makes things what they are and Heidegger's identification of art as a beginning, origin, and primal leap, Julian Young observes that it is these elements which have "...led to 'The Origin's' being read as affirming the, as I shall call it, 'Promethean' view that art *creates* world."<sup>187</sup> In connection with this perspective Young

---

<sup>187</sup> Young, p. 29



then makes a historical claim about the road from *Being and Time* to “The Origin of the Work of Art”:

“Though, as I shall shortly show, fundamental positions worked out in *Being and Time* demand the rejection of Prometheanism, certain passages in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* as well as, as Jacques Taminiaux shows, earlier drafts of ‘The Origin’, seem to affirm it. My view is that, almost certainly as a response to the spirit and rhetoric of Nazism, Heidegger flirted with Prometheanism from about 1933 to 1936, half-forgetting fundamental commitments established in *Being and Time* (1927). By the time of the final draft of ‘The Origin’, however – here again I am in basic agreement with Taminiaux – he had, I believe, seen the error of his flirtation and returned, decisively, to the insights of *Being and Time*.”<sup>188</sup>

According to Young, then, we can interpret the opening of a world by a work of art in one of two ways. Either great art creates a world, meaning it brings into being a new cultural framework of meaning, or it simply brings to our attention the world that we always already inhabit, but which generally exists in the background of all our comings and goings. The first view Young labels the Promethean view. The second view might be compared to the role that anxiety plays in *Being and Time*. It is a breakdown that reveals the structures of both Dasein and the world that we usually do not notice because they are too near to us. This second view we might label the revelatory interpretation. Young interprets art as revelatory but not Promethean, the creation of a world he places on the shoulders of a shared language and the cultural conversation from which such a language grows: “If, it might be asked, the artwork does not create its world, what does? Heidegger’s answer to this question is clear: not the artwork but rather ‘language’ creates world.”<sup>189</sup> In this focus upon art as revelatory but not Promethean we can avoid what

---

<sup>188</sup> Young, p. 30

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. p. 34

Young takes to be the dangerous, and potentially fascist, image of a great world-creating artist.

From the Heideggerian perspective, Young's interpretation of language is perfectly right, but when one considers how closely and often Heidegger equated language to poetry the clear lines between Promethean creation and simple revelation become murky again. Young appreciates this, but wants to argue that in equating poetry with language we need not summon forth the image of some original poet creating a language, which again is what he takes the Promethean view to necessity.<sup>190</sup> Here is at least part of Young's mistake. Nowhere, in speaking of the happening of truth in art, need we be concerned with the creation of the image of some Promethean *artist* or originating *poet*. It is precisely this mistaken focus on either the work or the creator, these echoes of the subject/object distinction, which Heidegger goes to such great pains to avoid in discussing art as a happening of truth and not some intending of a genius. Art can be understood as the worlding of a world, an event in which both art work and artist themselves first come to be. This worlding of a world can play both the role of creating new frameworks and horizons of meaning and of revealing previous such frameworks.

Julian Young is direct about his concern that the Promethean interpretation of art lends itself to an interpretation of Heidegger's work which sees it as "...a thinly disguised plea for the overcoming of European nihilism through a coming into being of a brave new world to be established by the Hitler-created artwork, by, in a word, (a refined

---

<sup>190</sup> Ibid p. 34

version of) the Nuremberg rally.”<sup>191</sup> As already mentioned, I locate his mistake at least partially in missing the fact that the Promethean power of art does not necessitate a Promethean artist, indeed it does not allow for such an artist, and in missing the larger goals of Heidegger’s project. In connection with this, however, it will be seen that the concept of a withdrawing sheltering earth which, as Heidegger presents it, necessarily accompanies the setting up of a world brings into “The Origin of the Work of Art” the issues of *Gelassenheit* and openness to the mystery, or the reservoir of the undisclosed, both of which further invalidate any possibility of a totalitarian art work giving rise to a monolithic world. As Guignon observes: “A work that dictates how one *must* live is not art; it is propaganda or didacticism. What is distinctive about an authentic work of art is that it leaves its own significance open-ended, and therefore demands a response from its audience as to what it means.”<sup>192</sup> Beyond this limit on the potentiality for art to be a monolithic world construction or propaganda, Heidegger’s concern with openness to the mystery, indeed the very role which the releasement of *Gelassenheit* is supposed to play in his work, suggests the possibility and centrality of the self-disclosure of the new and unknown which is counter to the strictly revelatory role to which Young would limit art. In a sense, then, so long as art is not understood as potentially Promethean, *Gelassenheit* can not play the role we understand it to play in relation to the earth in a work of art.

In connection with his argument concerning the rejection of the Promethean view, Julian Young points to the work of Jacques Taminiaux, specifically his paper “The Origin of ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’”, as demonstrating that Heidegger did toy with the

---

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. p. 29

<sup>192</sup> HAM. p. 99-100

Promethean view in early drafts of his work before he "...saw the error of his flirtation and returned, decisively, to the insights of *Being and Time*."<sup>193</sup> In confusing the concepts of Promethean art with that of a Promethean artist, Young mistakenly locates a rejection of the idea that the artwork creates a world in Taminiaux's assertion that the artist does not create a world. As Taminiaux states:

"The word *decision*, to be sure, is still used [in the final version of "The Origin of the Work of Art"]. But the decision now belongs to Being, no longer to Dasein.... As for the creator, what he sets-into-work is still a striving, the struggle of world and earth, but he himself is no longer a struggler. Creating, Heidegger says, is "receiving and borrowing within the relation to Unconcealment" (OWA, 62). Indeed, such verbs contain nothing Promethean."<sup>194</sup>

Perhaps Young has been confused by Taminiaux's use of the term Promethean, but Taminiaux here is interested in rejecting the Promethean artist which does not at all go along with a rejection of what Young calls the Promethean view that "art creates world." Taminiaux demonstrates the shift from a decisionism in the earlier drafts of "The Origin of the Work of Art" to an openness to the concealed in the final draft, which will be seen to coincide with my own interpretation that art, and not artists, can indeed be seen to create worlds while also suggesting that Young's motivating concerns, and interpretation of Taminiaux, are fundamentally misdirected.

It should be clear from the preliminary discussion thus far that a proper understanding of what Heidegger is trying to do in "The Origin of the Work of Art", and the relation of this work to Heidegger's earlier path of thought, is precisely what is at stake in the debate concerning the meaning of setting up a world which Young has

---

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. p. 30

<sup>194</sup> Taminiaux, Jacques "The Origin of 'The Origin of the Work of Art'" from *Poetics, Speculation, and Judgment* p. 168-169 henceforth cited as [Tam.]

himself set up. In the course of discussing this point we will also clarify what I have previously referred to as two different possible understandings of the undisclosed. An alternate view to Young's concerning Heidegger's transition in the 1930s is that presented by Guignon when he discusses the limitations of Heidegger's understanding of commitment in *Being and Time*:

“To make a commitment is not just to leap one way or the other for the sake of leaping; rather, becoming committed to something is most often experienced as *answering a call* or *responding* to something outside ourselves, something that makes a demand on us. It would seem, then, that any picture of resoluteness that ignores this dimension of being called will fail to capture what is most fundamental about our actual experience of being committed. For this purpose, some account needs to be given of *what calls us*, and this requires a move beyond the descriptions of Dasein's own projections and disclosedness to an account of something that can exert a pull on us from outside ourselves. One way to understand the shift that occurs in Heidegger's writings in the mid-thirties is to see these works as addressing this problem. In the 1935 essay, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” for example, truth is described not just as a matter of what Dasein does, but as something that happens to Dasein through Dasein's being in a relation to a particular entity – a work of art – which ‘sets truth to work’ and thereby discloses a world.”<sup>195</sup>

This particular concern harmonizes nicely with Heidegger's statement quoted at the opening of this section from his 1936-38 *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* to the effect that previously we have mistakenly attempted to ground beings and Being on the particular being of human-being. It is hard not to read in Heidegger's condemnation of the urge to ground Being upon human-being a criticism of his own attempt to understand Being through *Being and Time*'s analytic of Dasein. Indeed, the very project of arriving at Being through some representative or prioritized particular being, a strategy which looms so large in the opening of *Being and Time*, seems fundamentally

---

<sup>195</sup> HAM. p. 92-93

problematic to Heidegger following. Here we have precisely the “distressing difficulty, which has been clear to me since *Being and Time* and has since been expressed in a variety of versions”<sup>196</sup> which Heidegger mentions in the addendum to “The Origin of the Work of Art”. It seems that to properly understand Dasein, let alone to understand Being itself, we must have recourse to something beyond Dasein itself. The reading we have presented of *Being and Time* should already suggest this point. For example, if we are always already caught in a larger unfolding event it is the event, and not ourselves, which must ground our understanding of both ourselves and our world.

It is worth pausing here to note the way in which this precise point represents another break between my own view and those of scholars such as Crowell. In the infamous concluding section of *Being and Time*, infamous because it seems to call into question everything the book had attempted to accomplish, Heidegger asks whether an ontological foundation for the possibility of ontology is adequate or if, rather, an ontic grounding for ontology is necessary: “This thesis, of course, is to be regarded not as a dogma, but rather as a formulation of the problem of principle which still remains ‘veiled’: can one provide *ontological* grounds for ontology, or does it also require an *ontical* foundation? and *which* entity must take over the function of providing this foundation?”<sup>197</sup> We can see here an echo of the beginning of *Being and Time* when Dasein, because it is the type of being which has an understanding of being, is taken as the *clue* to be followed in uncovering Being itself. There is, however, a fundamental change being proposed here. The analytic of Dasein seeks to ground ontology in the

---

<sup>196</sup> Hof. p. 86

<sup>197</sup> SZ p. 487

being of Dasein, in its ontological characteristics. Now, as we suggested earlier, it is necessary to read these ontological characteristics in terms of a temporally unfolding essence but, even granting this, it is still an attempt to ground ontology in the ontological, though historical, make up of Dasein. What would it be for there to be an *ontical* foundation for ontology? Crowell suggests that Dasein will also be the ontic ground for ontology, even as in *Being in Time* it had been the ontological ground.<sup>198</sup> In Heidegger's new vision, however, Dasein as ontic ground will be looked at not in terms of its ontological structures but rather the ontic ways in which it finds itself oriented to the world. In other words, Dasein's attunement or mood (*stimmung*) becomes the determination and ground of ontology. For Crowell, this is the heart of Heidegger's turn away from transcendental phenomenology although Crowell claims that, in a sense, the turn is never complete. But, I would suggest, this was clearly already the case in *Being and Time* as well. Indeed, as Crowell seems to suspect, if we focus upon the determining power of *stimmung* in *Being and Time*, consider for example the necessity of anxiety, our access to the transcendental becomes historically situated and, arguably, so does the nature of the transcendental itself. This, indeed, is what we have already suggested with our anti-transcendental reading of *Being and Time*. But, granting this, then Heidegger's suspicion at the end of *Being and Time* that the entity it had taken to ground ontology, namely Dasein, is inadequate can lead us to a different understanding of where Heidegger's analysis goes following *Being and Time*. Heidegger turns his eyes not to Dasein ontically, rather than ontologically, understood but rather to that which attunes

---

<sup>198</sup> SM p. 239-240

Dasein. This, I claim, is the worlding of the world. The event nature of history in which we find ourselves attuned in given ways to what is. In other words, the ontic foundation of ontology are the events of history and, specifically, those in which worlds rise and fall. This, in turn, will mean that the ontic foundation of ontology will include the event of worlding which is art. But, to ground ontology and our access to the ontological structures of Dasein on *stimmung* and to ground *stimmung* on events such as art is to stop thinking Being in terms of Dasein and is, instead, to consider Dasein in terms of Being. This, however, is only the case when we see Being *as* the event. Art, then, as the opening of a world is the *event-ing* of Being.

Now, it is possible to focus on moments of *Being and Time* which allow for a subjectivist decisionist understanding of disclosure which misses the extent to which we are always already caught up in the events in which we are constituted. When looking at the passages in *Being and Time* dealing with the setting up of a sign which then discloses the equipmental totality that is a world we might be tempted to think that this setting up is something we ourselves do on our own. In contrast, in “The Origin of the Work of Art”, the art work and artist alike arise from art. The prioritizes can seem to have shifted, but we have already suggested the way in which the movement of *Being and Time* already points towards a constant grounding of particular actions in large ongoing events and social-historical contexts. In this sense, then, *Being and Time* is already on its way towards “The Origin of the Work of Art”. This is especially true when *Being and Time*’s more traditionally transcendental seeming moments are read from a more careful anti-substantist and anti-subjectivist light which takes away the grounding assumptions from the transcendental tradition. It is important to note that we were able to read *Being and*



*Time* in the light we have, stressing where we could the determinations arise from beyond Dasein himself through reference to the material determination of form and the historicism this necessitates, because of the reading we have already given to Heidegger's earlier projects. The shift which Heidegger in *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* states must occur is the one he was already involved with in his earliest work, a shift to the matters themselves and away from imposed human determinations. We see this stressed in Heidegger's own repetition of the idea that what *Being and Time* seems to be doing, and what it is actually doing, are two different things especially when it comes to the issues of subjectivity, the a priori and transcendental, "With *idea* the *a priori* is transformed into *perceptio* i.e., the *a priori* is attributed to the *ego percipio* and thus to the 'subject'; it leads to the priority of *re-presentation*. What in *Being and Time* gets started as 'understanding of being' seemed to be merely the extension of this priori representation – but it is something entirely different..."<sup>199</sup> The very need to ground our understanding of Dasein beyond Dasein, to understand Dasein through Being and not vice versa, is in a rather potent sense a continuation of the debate with Natorp. It seems, then, that this issue had slid out of focus to some extent in *Being and Time*, although our interpretation of the text attempts to bring it back into centrality, but comes back into focus following. The famous "turn" then is more a "return" than anything else.

One of the ways in which this shift of focus or strategy occurs following *Being and Time* is in the shifting of weight from one understanding of what untruth or the undisclosed is to another understanding. Both senses were present to some extent in

---

<sup>199</sup> Cont. p. 155

*Being in Time*, but which one was given priority alters from 1927 to 1936. We can see this best by looking at how untruth is understood in *Being in Time* in contrast with how it is understood in the 1930 essay *On the Essence of Truth*. The distinction will ultimately be between what is concealed, undisclosed or withdrawing *within* the clearing of a given world and what is undisclosed insofar as it lies *outside* of a given world.

Within Heidegger's discussion of equipment and the structure of worldhood in *Being and Time* he pauses to stress that the very structure he is extracting from everyday experience, and which anxiety completely discloses, is precisely that which generally is hidden in the background of our undertakings. In point of fact, any given piece of equipment, and remember that everything we experience at all is ultimately going to be understandable along the lines of equipmentality, is characterized by a tendency to be unnoticed when fulfilling its role smoothly: "The ready-to-hand is not grasped theoretically at all, nor is it itself the sort of thing that circumspection takes proximally as a circumspective theme. The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness to hand, it must, as it were, withdraw in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically."<sup>200</sup> We, of course, should be struck by the use of the term "withdraw" here insofar as it will be a central characteristic of the earth when we come to Heidegger's later work on art. This withdrawal of the ready-to-hand, and more importantly the entire structure of references which makes the ready-to-hand possible which we understand as the world, can provide us one possible understanding of what will later be understood as

---

<sup>200</sup> SZ p. 99

the strife between world and earth. The very elements that disclose entities themselves resist disclosure.

Later in Section Six of Division One of *Being and Time* Heidegger will again stress the primordial nature of the undisclosed by identifying Dasein's being in the truth, insofar as it is the clearing of disclosure which alone allows anything to show up, with Dasein's being in the untruth. This moment, quoted at the opening of this section, appears following Heidegger's identification of the ready-to-hand's tendency to withdraw with Dasein's tendency to loss itself in becoming dispersed in its world and the They, a characteristic called falling: "Proximally and for the most part Dasein is lost in its 'world'. Its understanding, as a projection upon possibilities of Being, has directed itself thither... *Because Dasein is essentially falling, its state of Being is such that it is in 'untruth'*."<sup>201</sup> This untruth, as Dasein's dispersal and the withdrawal of worldhood and its ready-to-hand entities, is something very much present within the world itself. As Heidegger discusses the presence of the concealed in terms of semblance and disguise:

"It is therefore essential that Dasein should explicitly appropriate what has already been uncovered, defend it against semblance and disguise, and assure itself of its uncoveredness again and again. The uncovering of anything new is never done on the basis of having something completely hidden, but takes its departure rather from uncoveredness in the mode of semblance. Entities look as if... That is, they have, in a certain way, been uncovered already, and yet they are still disguised."<sup>202</sup>

An observant reader should find this passage particularly damning towards the overall argument I am attempting to build. Clearly here we have presented the idea that the rise of anything new into history must occur from previously present elements within the

---

<sup>201</sup> Ibid p. 264

<sup>202</sup> Ibid. p. 265

world. This position would give us some grounds to presume a consistency between worlds and thus a way in which to build towards a form of a-historical, or perhaps trans-historical<sup>203</sup>, knowledge. At this moment in *Being and Time*, at least, Heidegger does indeed seem willing to foreclose the irruption of the radically new into history. I take this point, however, not only to change later on but to already have been different before *Being and Time* and in tension with other tendencies of *Being and Time* itself.

What is the other possible sense of the undisclosed, concealed or untruth? We can begin to see it if we give thought to certain hermeneutic observations with which Heidegger was concerned throughout his life, which we have already discussed in his early work. You will recall that, in chapter one, we had discussed Heidegger's presentation in the *Introduction to Phenomenological Research* of the point that every care structure necessarily conceals something even as it discloses as well. Similarly, with Heidegger's early insistence, in *The History of the Concept of Time; Prolegomena*, that the relation between intentional relations are themselves intentional in the back of our mind we walked through Heidegger's revealing of the structure of worldhood as made up of ever larger contexts of care. The world itself, then, is just the care structure of a community. But this care structure, like any other, will itself conceal and neglect something even as it discloses. In other words, the clearing of disclosure which is world rests within the forest of the concealed. It is this precise image which makes little sense in *Being and Time* if: "The uncovering of anything new is never done on the basis of having something completely hidden, but takes its departure rather from uncoveredness in the

---

<sup>203</sup> This concept has been borrowed from Charles Guignon's *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*. It will be discussed more fully in section three of this chapter.

mode of semblance.”<sup>204</sup> However, this image is going to become central following *Being and Time*. As Julian Young himself nicely describes this point as it occurs as earth in “The Origin of the Work of Art”: “Earth is the area of ‘unfathomable’ (PLT p. 128, compare p. 180) darkness which constitutes the other ‘side’ of the ‘clearing’ that is world, ‘the side of... [Being] that is averted from us, unilluminated by us’ (PLT p. 124). Being is thus ‘world’ and ‘earth’ taken together... it resembles the moon: behind the side illuminated by and for us lies an immeasurable – ‘ungraspable’ (Ister p. 136) – area of unperceived darkness (PLT p. 124).”<sup>205</sup> The irony of this passage is, of course, that I agree with Young’s depiction of untruth, or earth, here but it would be problematic to locate it completely in *Being and Time* for reasons I have already pointed out. This identification of the concealed with that outside of the clearing of the world, like onto the dark side of the moon, is not an insight from *Being and Time* but rather a move back towards earlier insights.

This new conception of, or at the very least shift of focus in understanding, untruth appears strongly in Heidegger’s 1930 essay “On the Essence of Truth”. In this work the undisclosed is characterized as older and more primordial than any given disclosure, and indeed disclosure itself, identified with a letting-be that brings into accord, is described as dependant upon concealment: “However, what brings into accord is not nothing, but rather a concealing of beings as a whole. Precisely because letting be always lets beings be in a particular comportment that relates to them and thus disclosed them, it conceals beings as a whole. Letting-be is intrinsically at the same time a

---

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Young p. 40

concealing.”<sup>206</sup> Here we have a repetition of the point we had already gleaned from Heidegger’s early hermeneutics, namely that any disclosure is always also a covering over. Heidegger goes further, however, and insists that this hermeneutic point about the partiality of any given perspective or disclosure is insufficient to really appreciate the primordial nature of untruth: “The concealment of beings as a whole does not first show up subsequently as a consequence of the fact that knowledge of beings is always fragmentary. The concealment of beings as a whole, untruth proper, is older than every openedness of this or that being. It is also older than letting-be itself, which in disclosing already holds concealed and comports itself toward concealing.”<sup>207</sup> In this sense, then, untruth as that upon which all disclosure depends must, in a sense, be beyond world taken as the ultimate clearing or disclosure. We can drive home this point by contrasting Heidegger’s assertion in *Being and Time* that untruth is always experienced as some sort of dissembling within our experience with his assertion in “On The Essence of Truth” that mysteries derived from day to day life itself are never essential in the way that primordial untruth itself, as the concealment of beings as a whole now characterized as The Mystery, is:

“However, to reside in what is readily available is intrinsically not to let the concealing of what is concealed hold sway. Certainly, among readily familiar things there are also some that are puzzling, unexplained, undecided, questionable. But these self-certain questions are merely transitional, intermediate points in our movement within the readily familiar and thus not essential. Wherever the concealment of beings as a whole is conceded only as a limit that occasionally announces itself, concealing as a fundamental occurrence has sunk into forgottenness.”<sup>208</sup>

---

<sup>206</sup> BW. p. 129-130

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. p. 130

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. p. 132

This holding to what is already revealed, even when revealed as dissembling or mysterious, is characterized by Heidegger as a flight from the real mystery of primordial concealment, a flight which he calls erring. This precise failing is then identified by Heidegger with the mistake he took himself to have made to some degree in *Being and Time* when he sought to arrive at Being through Dasein:

“He persists in them [the latest needs and aims] and continually supplies himself with new standards, yet without considering either the ground for taking up standards or the essence of what gives the standard. In spite of his advance to new standards and goals, man goes wrong as regards the essential genuineness of his standards. He is all the more mistaken the more exclusively he takes himself, as subject, to be the standard for all beings.”<sup>209</sup>

Here we have an identification of erring, or fleeing from The Mystery which is primordial untruth, with the desire to take man as the standard for all beings or even Being itself. The failure to take into account “the essence of what gives the standard” should particularly remind us of Heidegger’s early renovations of categorial intuition. Searching for a source for the categories with which we were to conceptualize the matters of our concern, categorial intuition was transformed into pre-ontological understanding, or the disclosedness in which we always already find ourselves insofar as our collective activities have already opened up the world to us. As I have repeatedly asserted, however, for pre-ontological understanding to maintain the promise Heidegger saw in categorial intuition the disclosure which arises through our activities must take its origin from the matter with which these activities are concerned. The source of standards, then, is to be understood as outside of Dasein and, as this later piece suggests, outside of any given

---

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

disclosure, clearing, or world. What arises from this discussion is that, with our new sense of untruth clarified, openness to the concealed is an openness to the possibility that new standards can indeed arise within the context of a given world. We begin to see why there can indeed be an irruption of the new into history or even the rise of a new world from out of the mystery which is the undisclosed resting beyond the limits of the finite clearing that is any given world.

We should be cautious of oversimplifying the period between *Being and Time* and “The Origin of the Work of Art”. Changes in any thinker’s positions are rarely smooth and rarely hold constant during the periods of experimentation and change. There are moments, for example, in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* of 1935 which seem to remind one of both the mistaken focus on Dasein as the standard of Being Heidegger sometimes saw himself as moving away from and the focus on the power of something beyond Dasein having a determining force upon it. Here we see a tension between a view that individual Dasein has the power to assert itself and thus determine world and history with the view that we are constituted in the context of larger ongoing historical events, or worldings. The first position is a radicalizing of a tendency in *Being and Time*, although a tendency that gives rise to what I have been calling a subjectivist misreading of *Being and Time*. The second position is a deepening of Heidegger’s earliest anti-subjectivist commitments which is found in 1930 but then gets balanced, or even overpowered, during the period of 1933-1935. This tension of the 1930s is perhaps seen best in the contrast between the “overwhelming sway” of primordial strife in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* and the violence with which individual man escapes from this sway:



“The polemos named here is a strife that holds sway before everything divine and human, not war in the human sense... struggle first projects and develops the unheard, the hitherto un-said and un-thought. This struggle is then sustained by the creators, by the poets, thinkers, and statesmen. Against the overwhelming sway, they throw the counterweight of their work and capture in this work the world that is thereby opened up.”<sup>210</sup>

In tracing the changes in Heidegger’s thought during this period Taminiiaux summarizes the Prometheanism of the *Introduction to Metaphysics* in this way:

“Being itself is ‘an intricate struggle’ (EM, 81) between powers, Being is an over-power requiring a ‘creative self-assertion’, that is, a ‘separation in the togetherness of being between unconcealment and appearance, Non-Being’ (EM 84). Such a decision is the way man is called to be responsive to the over-power of Being. And because this over-power is violence, he can rise to its challenge by being himself *the* disrupting and *the* violent one. The issue for him is to operate ‘a taming and ordering of powers by virtue of which beings open up as such when man moves into them. This disclosure of beings is the power that man must master in order to become himself amidst beings, i.e., in order to be historical’ (EM, 120). In the context, ‘himself’ means ‘the wielder of power,’ the one ‘who breaks out and breaks up, he who captures and subjugates’ (EM, 120).”<sup>211</sup>

What is interesting about the perspective we find at this moment in Heidegger’s work is the presence of both the aberrant subjectivism of the Nazi period and the anti-subjectivism drawn from his earliest work and pointing towards “The Origin of the Work of Art”. We have both the overwhelming sway in which man is caught, and the radical determinative power of the creator or statesman which, in taking on a counter role to the violent force of the overwhelming sway, gives rise itself to a world. Here we have both a resistance and power discovered beyond Dasein and the Promethean power of Dasein to react in the face of this force. We should be struck here by the difference with what we will find in “The Origin of the Work of Art”. The struggle here is seen in terms of the

---

<sup>210</sup> Heidegger *Introduction to Metaphysics* p. 65 henceforth cited as [IM]

<sup>211</sup> Tam. p. 161

actions of subjects in response to the overwhelming sway. This is Heidegger at his most subjectivist. Statements, thinkers and poets open worlds by throwing the counterweight of *their* work against the sway. Faced with this view, we can understand how Heidegger might have felt himself called to lead, as thinker extraordinary, the academics of Germany against the nihilism that he saw as a threat. In “The Origin of the Work of Art” however, artist and artwork both are derivative from the event of worlding which is art. The event of disclosure or the opening of a world constitutes artist and work, and neither themselves open a world. Furthermore, the struggle in “The Origin of the Work of Art” is the struggle between world and earth, between disclosure and the vast expanse of the concealed. However, as our discussion of “On the Essence of Truth” should suggest, at other moments Heidegger was also concerned during the same period to insist upon the dependence of all disclosure upon the mystery of the undisclosed, and Dasein’s equal dependence upon this. Eventually these tensions settle into the final version of “The Origin of the Work of Art” where, as Taminiaux puts it:

“Formerly, aletheia was connected with the There that a people is entrusted to take upon itself, thus making the Dasein of a people the locus of truth. This characterization now disappears. Dasein is no longer the locus of truth. Unconcealment is now taken to be a clearing in the midst of beings, a clearing to which humans belong and are exposed, rather than one instituted by them...By the same token, truth itself is no longer a matter of human decision between being and not-Being, or between unconcealment and mere appearance.”<sup>212</sup>

By “The Origin of the Work of Art”, then, we are well on our way to discovering in the rise of a world the activity of something beyond Dasein itself, something we might call

---

<sup>212</sup> Ibid p. 168

Art, or the worlding of the new world, or the working of Truth which is Being as ongoing historical event.

### Section Two: The Example of “The Origin of the Work of Art”

“The temple-work, standing there, opens up a world and at the same time sets this world back again on earth, which itself only thus emerges as native ground. But men and animals, plants and things, are never present and familiar as unchangeable objects, only to represent incidentally also a fitting environment for the temple, which one fine day is added to what is already there. We shall get closer to what is, rather, if we think of all this in reverse order, assuming of course that we have, to begin with, an eye for how differently everything then faces us... The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves.”<sup>213</sup>

“The working of the work does not consist in the taking effect of a cause. It lies in a change, happening from out of the work, of the unconcealedness of what is, and this means, of Being.”<sup>214</sup>

At this point one might ask why the path we have followed has led us to the need to interpret “The Origin of the Work of Art” as an example of realist historicism. In other words, one might wonder how we motivate and justify this section of the work as a whole. This entire project began in the simple attempt to discover what influence Heidegger’s early interest in Husserl’s categorial intuition had upon “The Origin of the Work of Art”. The development of that attempt, however, soon revealed the a sufficient understanding of Heidegger’s dedication to categorial intuition and Emil Lask’s principle of the material determination of form throughout the course of his work demanded a rather different interpretation of all the works leading up to “The Origin of the Work of Art” than had previously been offered. In fact, using these two early influences a new

---

<sup>213</sup> PLT. p. 41-42

<sup>214</sup> PLT. p. 70

coherence began to appear in Heidegger's career where others had seen dramatic reversals and rejections. This is not, of course, to project a constant unchanging monolithic Heidegger. Like all thinkers, Heidegger is neither totally consistent nor constant in all his commitments. Indeed, as Ralph Waldo Emerson observes, "The voyage of the best ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks. This is only microscopic criticism. See the line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency."<sup>215</sup> This is my understanding of Heidegger's realist historicism. It is the motivation, the deep commitment, which informs the many ways and footpaths of his life's thought. At times even it fades from view, as the general course of a ship may be lost in a storm, but always to re-emerge at a point further along the journey.

The role, then, of my interpretation of "The Origin of the Work of Art" in the larger project of tracing Heidegger's realist historicism rests in this work's unapologetic concern with dramatic historical world change. It is possible to see from Heidegger's earliest commitments and the lacunas contained in *Being and Time* that realist historicism necessitates an extensive engagement with historical world change, and it is only in the works which constitute Heidegger's turn-away from his subjectivist Nazi period that we really see this problematic coming into focus. Specifically, it is in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning)*, the Nietzsche lectures, and "The Origin of the Work of Art" that historical world change becomes the focus of his thought through the idea of a history of Being. It is at this point that Heidegger begins to explicitly understand this history as made up of the historical epochs which are constituted in

---

<sup>215</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson "Self-Reliance"

Being's own self-disclosure as various specific frameworks of meaning. This large goal of mapping the history of Being is only touched upon in "The Origin of the Work of Art", but the main problematic of the work becomes an analysis of the actual nature of the event whereby epochs open and close within the history of Being and, at the very limits of such a history, how histories themselves begin and end. In other words, the work of tracing the history of Being which dominated much of Heidegger's post-*Being and Time* thought requires "The Origin of the Work of Art" as a necessary prolegomena. Although we don't have the time or space here to flesh out the interpretation of the middle and late Heidegger this gives rise to, it is sufficient for our purposes to suggest that understanding "The Origin of the Work of Art" will be central to understanding Heidegger's tracing of the history of Being throughout the rest of his career. The realist historicism interpretation of "The Origin of the Work of Art" provides, then, a realist historicist understanding of the rest of Heidegger's later work. Indeed the particular relevance of "The Origin of the Work of Art" for the rest of Heidegger's later thought can be seen in the growing dominance of reflections upon art, and often within the context of poetry, within Heidegger's work and the connection between the role of art in 1936 and its role in Heidegger's much later "Question Concerning Technology".<sup>216</sup>

We will begin our use of "The Origin of the Work of Art" as an example of realist historicism by first recalling one of the points I made in the introduction to this work concerning Hubert Dreyfus' ungrounded assumptions in his debate with John McDowell. There I had stated that Dreyfus seems to believe that coping can occur in an a-social

---

<sup>216</sup> Dreyfus has done a particularly good job of illuminating this connection, for example in his "Heidegger on the Connection Between Nihilism, Art, Technology and Politics" found in CC.

context, perhaps as some sort of bodily relating to a world of stable physical objects. This, I argue, is really just a minor variation on the subjectivism and substance ontology of modernism and fails to take into account the radicality of Heidegger's departure from such a tradition. My previous discussion of the generally unacknowledged assumptions which ground the transcendental tradition, specifically the assumption of a stable structure within subjectivity which can be seen itself to only be justifiable given a deeply buried substance ontology, already makes clear how widespread the influence of substance ontology is. I would like to recall these hidden assumptions, which have now been uncovered in both Dreyfus and the Kantian-Husserlian transcendental tradition, in preparation for discussing yet another role they play in Dreyfus' thought. Specifically what I have in mind is what I will call Dreyfus' causal interpretation of "The Origin of the Work of Art".

The causal interpretation of Heidegger's thought on art is presented by Dreyfus in his "Heidegger on the Connection Between Nihilism, Art, Technology and Politics"<sup>217</sup> and *Disclosing New Worlds*. There, the power of art to change or set-up a world is understood in terms of its power to re-organize the practices that constitute a world. For example, practices which were previously marginal can be highlighted and become more central, practices which have faded from memory and importance can be returned to prominence, and practices from other cultural worlds can be imported into the new context. The important point here is that the event which is art is understood in terms of its manipulating pre-existing social and historical practices. This interpretation is

---

<sup>217</sup> Found in CC.

powerful primarily because it is so easy to understand and, as such, is very plausible. It leads, however, to two conclusions which realist historicism cannot allow and which are ultimately, I would argue, unjustified. These conclusions are, first, that the event of world change arises from the activities and organizations of practices in a previous world and secondly that for this reason all new worlds are meaningfully connected to old worlds such that there are no complete ruptures or breaks in history. I call this the causal interpretation of “The Origin of the Work of Art” because the change that the work of art effects is understood in terms of its being caused by certain changes in practices and, in turn, its causal alteration of various existing practices. But if, as realist historicism asserts, practices are self-disclosures of reality they need not be grounded in any previously existing practices. Further, if these disclosures are always finite we cannot justify the assumption that the realm of the undisclosed will not contain the apparently radically inconsistent or the as-yet unconnected. Future worldings may make previous worlds cohere, or they may not, but we cannot close the question from the start. Indeed, the claim that worlds will always cohere in certain ways and that history will be continuous can only be grounded in unstated substantialist assumptions about structure like onto those for which we have already criticized Dreyfus and the transcendental tradition. Why should we think worlds will be connected? Well, only because we think that what they disclose is somehow stable and unified. As we have already made clear, Heidegger goes to great pains to avoid this assumption.

At this point it is useful to consider for a moment how we are going to understand Heidegger’s discussion of earth in relation to the work of art. Ultimately our understanding of the nature of earth in the work of art precludes Dreyfus’ causal

understanding of the work of art. This will be so insofar as we understand earth in terms of Heidegger's growing appreciation that the undisclosed is to be understood not simply as what is concealed within a given world but rather also as what lies entirely outside the limits of a given world. Insofar as this is so, the new worlds which can arise from the earth found in a given event of art can potentially take their origin from that which lies beyond the boundaries of a given previous world or historical epoch.

Now, then, we shall put aside the causal interpretation of the event of art and turn to our actual reading of "The Origin of the Work of Art". I would like to propose, as an interpretive fulcrum for our attempt to read "The Origin of the Work of Art" as an example of realist historicism, that idea that the key to understanding Heidegger's great work on art lies in connecting his discussion of Van Gogh's painting of shoes in the first lecture to the discussion of the temple in the second lecture. This is so insofar as these two discussions offer us two very different models of what the event of truth which happens through art is. In the first case, Van Gogh's shoes, the art work plays the role of traditional phenomenology. It makes apparent the basic structures of worldhood which normally escape our notice as we live our lives. In this case it specifically makes apparent the way in which reliability makes the equipmental being of worldly items possible while never itself showing up explicitly in our use of tools. Here we have art playing the role that moments of breakdown and anxiety played within *Being and Time* and this role is to disclose what was always already implicit within our world. When we move to the temple, however, it is not strictly a revelatory role that art plays but rather the role of constituting the entire world-structure which makes a historical epoch possible. Here we have art as Promethean playing the role of beginning a history. The challenge of



connecting Van Gogh's shoes to the temple is the challenge of connecting one understanding of the concealed to another and the challenge of uniting the phenomenology of *Being and Time* to the history of being which the unwritten second half of *Being and Time* was to consist in.

We have found that one of Heidegger's earliest concerns was how phenomenology was to be capable of fulfilling the Husserlian dictum to return to the matters themselves. How, it was asked, can philosophy disclose a being as it is while also letting it be as it is? This challenge, which we have referred to as the problem of *Gelassenheit*, can be raised in several different forms. One manifestation of it was the challenge to Husserlian phenomenology offered by the Neo-Kantian Paul Natorp in his two pronged attack as discussed by Heidegger in the first lecture course contained in *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*. First Natorp pointed out that philosophical reflection distorts the matters upon which one reflects through an atomizing and "stilling of the stream" of lived experience. Then he claimed that, even were this not so, phenomenological description must occur in language which is always already removed from experience insofar as language is based upon a process of abstraction and universalization which must inevitably distort or destroy the particularity of any given experience. Heidegger's answer was seen to rest in his rejection of the false dualisms hidden at the heart of both Natorp's claims and the entire modern epistemic tradition of philosophy in general. In other words, for Natorp's claims to get off the ground one must conceive of reflection and speech as external impositions on existence or isolated activities of a disconnected observer. Heidegger's counter claim, found articulated throughout his early lecture courses, was that reflection and language were both elements

of life and existence itself. In other words, philosophy is an activity of “the matters themselves” and, as such, properly understood, it represents a privileged access to their nature and not a distorting view. It is clear, however, that the weight of Natorp’s objection has simply been shifted to the phrase “properly understood”. The challenge becomes, how can we ground philosophical activity in existence so that it can avoid being accused of imposing structures on the subjects it investigates.

The young Heidegger admitted that existence has the tendency to dissemble and that we have a tendency to deceive ourselves. Philosophical speech can degenerate to empty talk and traditions can be covering over rather than letting things be. Philosophy properly understood must, then, dedicate itself to something like the principle of the material determination of form insofar as the matters themselves which are of concern must be allowed to dictate how they are to be conceptualized and discussed. To use a Kantian formulation, our concepts must be derived from the things themselves, understanding now the “things themselves” as always already engaged in self-reflection and speech. One way that we might understand this idea of the things dictating their own conceptualization, a formulation very foreign to a tradition following Kant, was what Heidegger found so exciting in Husserl’s categorial intuition as presented in his *Logical Investigations*. Here we have a dismissal of Kant’s division of the active and passive elements of the human mind and a location of categorial conceptual elements in intuition itself. Heidegger’s growing sense, however, that the subjectivist tradition dominating philosophy since Descartes was itself primarily distortive required him to reformulate Husserl’s insight into a form not dependant upon consciousness and other mentalistic assumptions. We might say that categorial intuition becomes, in Heidegger, categorial

engagements insofar as our lived activities in the world, with no reference to consciousness as their primary medium, are what provide us with the categorial elements through which matters are known to us.

In this move from Husserl to Heidegger, it is possible for us to mistakenly lose the very potency of Husserl's original position. Categorial intuition was exciting because it placed the dictation of form or concepts in the hands of the things themselves. Categorial engagement must maintain this structure or else we have lost the very goal we were concerned with at the start. This is why we insist that Heidegger maintains a realism in which our enworlded engagements, which include the totality of our cultural practices and traditions, must have their origin in the matters with which they are concerned. They must arise from existence itself. This is in contrast to the fairly common sense idea that Heidegger understands practices pretty much as well all do, as human creations which are successful or unsuccessful in relation to reality. This perspective provides us with something like a social-constructivism in which social construction is nonetheless open to various forms of failure. Realist historicism is opposed to this in the commitment to a rejection of any understanding of the origins of practices which sees them as subjective or cultural constructs imposed upon what is. This, of course, does not foreclose the possibility of practices drifting from their origins and becoming distortive later. Indeed, it is even possible that most traditions and activities are deformed precisely in the sense that they have come to cover over rather than disclose the things with which they are concerned. For this reason Heidegger's practice of de-structuring becomes important as a way of freeing up the matters themselves from distorting traditions, practices, and language in order to allow them to dictate new ways in which we can be engaged with

them. This very story, however, should raise a question we do not seem to have addressed, and which I believe Heidegger himself felt he had not fully addressed until *The Origin of the Work of Art*. How do matters themselves give rise to disclosive practices? If we are to find a moment of origin for a given way in which things have shown themselves in practices, what would this origin look like? When we understand world as the interconnected structure of such disclosive traditions and practices, the question becomes what the origin of a world looks like. These questions lead to Heidegger's investigation of art. It is for precisely this reason that considering the setting up of a world by art to be just a disclosure of the already present but implicit world structure (Young) or just a new gathering of previously existing but perhaps scattered practices (Dreyfus) is going to disconnect *The Origin of the Work of Art* from the way in which it is an extension of Heidegger's earliest concerns.

The first section of "The Origin of the Work of Art", entitled "Thing and Work", focuses extensively on the conceptions of form and matter. It should be clear by now that when we use a phrase such as "the material determination of form" we are rather far removed from, say, a traditional Aristotelian understanding of the terms. When we say "form" we intend to bring into view all the various connected concepts we find associated with this word in Heidegger including, for example, a Kantian use of the word "concept", a Husserlian and also medieval scholastic use of the term "category", as well as a properly Heideggerian discussion of "disclosive practices", "clearings" and finally even "worlds". Similarly, in talking about "matter" we intend to bring to mind the Kantian "thing in itself", the Husserlian "matters themselves", and Heidegger's "existence", "life" and even "Being". Speaking of the material determination of form, then, can mean

anything from “things conceptualized should themselves dictate the concepts used to understanding them” to “the world should (or perhaps always does and must) arise from Being”. Between these two extremes is a spectrum of various formulations of connected issues, all of which share a common structure to which we refer in terms of the principle of the material determination of form.

At this point we would do well to revisit the third section of our first chapter. There it was discussed how Heidegger, perhaps above all else, was concerned to avoid the hidden assumptions and distortions that any of these previously mentioned concepts, even those which are Heidegger’s own, bring to any given philosophical encounter when not derived authentically from the philosophical encounter itself. It was this very concern which was central in Heidegger’s own critiques of the epistemic model of philosophy derived from Descartes and carried on through Kant into Neo-Kantianism. By importing the epistemic model of the human condition we make ontological assumptions not necessarily justified by the matters of concern themselves. The Husserlian revolution out of which phenomenology was born was, in good part, the transformation of the scheme/content dualisms into intentional form from which it could be stated that subject and object arise, as secondary and derivative, from a more primordial medium of intentionality. Similarly, categorial intuition dissolved the boundary between the passive and active, or intuitive and conceptual, which was central to Kant. These are all lessons Heidegger learned well along with positions that he himself wished to get beyond or beneath. Thus, we have his reformulation of the theoretical assertion/knowledge model of intentionality into the lived engaged-practice model of care, his transformation of categorial intuition into pre-ontological understanding, and his reformulation of truth as

correspondence into a focus on disclosure. The important point for us right now, then, is to make clear that when we discuss “form and matter” we certainly do not intend to suggest some naïve return to Aristotelian dualisms; rather we have used it as a short hand for Heidegger’s constant reinvention and re-overcoming of past dualisms long since grown stale. If, then, we seem to be moving towards an interpretation of the world-earth dualism as a reformulation of Aristotelian form-matter it must be understood in terms of an uncovering of the more primordial lived experiences out of which the abstract form-matter dualism alone ever arose as meaningful to begin with and from which it has wandered.

It is certainly important for us to make this point insofar as Heidegger dedicates much of the first section of *The Origin of the Work of Art* to pointing out that the form/matter dualism is a distortive formulation which art works, and things in general, have falsely been forced to fit. Indeed, he goes as far as to make the point we have just made, though in a rather more negative tone. Namely, he points out that under the concepts of form and matter the entire conceptual structure of Western epistemology and ontology can be contained:

“Form and content are the most hackneyed concepts under which anything and everything may be subsumed. And if form is correlated with the rational and matter with the irrational; if the rational is taken to be the logical and the irrational the alogical; if in addition the subject-object relation is coupled with the conceptual pair form-matter; then representation has at its command a conceptual machinery that nothing is capable of withstanding.”<sup>218</sup>

---

<sup>218</sup> Hof. p. 27

In enquiring as to the proper origin of the form/matter conceptual apparatus Heidegger comes to the conclusion that it first arose not from an encounter with art works or mere things, but rather from the nature of equipment. Form and matter are going to be grounded in the usefulness that is an inherent characteristic of something experienced as equipment. Form originally, then, is to be considered as arising from the idea of formative activity and matter from some choice of the appropriate material for some specific thing being formed. Thus, form and matter come into view as ways to distinguish how and why something is, or fails to be, useful.

In the very preliminary and clearly inadequate formulation available at the very beginning of the essay, equipment is presented by Heidegger as standing in an intermediate position between the mere thing and the work of art. The mere thing is characterized primarily in terms of being self-contained and self-subsistent; it does not require being made or being useful in order to be what it is. Equipment, on the other hand, must be produced and can come to fail in its usefulness. Art, in contrast, at this point at least, is considered to have the self-sufficiency of a mere thing insofar as it seems to require no use or even usefulness and yet will have come to be through some sort of relation to production. As intermediate, it is in terms of equipment that the being of things and works have come to be conceptualized. This, in conjunction with a faith in a creator God, gives rise to almost the whole of western ontology:

“The idea of creation, grounded in faith, can lose its guiding power of knowledge of beings as a whole. But the theological interpretation of all beings, the view of the world in terms of matter and form borrowed from an alien philosophy, having once been instituted, can still remain a force. This happens in the transition from the Middle Ages to modern times. The metaphysics of the modern period rests on the form-matter structure devised in the medieval period, which itself merely recalls in its words the buried natures of *eidos* and *hule*. Thus the interpretation of

‘thing’ by means of matter and form, whether it remains medieval or becomes Kantian-transcendental, has become current and self-evident.”<sup>219</sup>

It is worth pausing here to note something odd which should have begun to jump out at an observant reader. A good portion of our discussion of *Being and Time* was dedicated to discussing equipmental being as the being which all things encountered through care, therefore all worldly things, have. The very structure of worldhood understood in terms of a totality of involvements points to the necessary equipmental being something must show up in terms of in order to show up at all. The discussion, then, of the present-at-hand as a derivative and privative experience of the ready-to-hand, i.e. the equipmental versus the mere-thing, seems to be undergoing some sort of extension or change here at the very beginning of *The Origin of the Work of Art*. Heidegger will still assert that: “As a rule it is the use-objects around us that are the nearest and authentic things.”<sup>220</sup> Yet there is also the key implication that in the talk of the world almost entirely in terms of the equipmental something fundamental has been left out: “Nevertheless, in its genuinely equipmental being, equipment stems from a more distant source. Matter and form and their distinction have a deeper origin.”<sup>221</sup> Heidegger will seek this deeper origin of both equipment and matter/form in his attempt to come to know the being of the work of art.

The path already sketched out in seeking the appropriate origin of the form/matter structure, and the further path needed to uncover the connection between the thing, equipment and art work, both consist in a Heideggerian strategy we are already very familiar with. Heidegger will seek to reverse the movement of universalizing and

---

<sup>219</sup> Ibid p. 29

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. p. 28

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. p. 34



abstraction which has allowed both words and the general ways of engaging with existence with which they are associated to wander far from their source and become empty traditions covering over the matters they once served to disclose: “But perhaps this characterization in terms of matter and form would recover its defining power if only we reversed the process of expanding and emptying these concepts.”<sup>222</sup> This process will, then, require a reengagement with equipment, and eventually art, in a way not predetermined and obscured by traditional abstract determinations.

We have, however, gotten ahead of ourselves. Heidegger does not focus the entirety of the first section to a discussion of form and matter. Rather, form and matter themselves only enter the conversation following a previous discussion of two other ways in which the thinghood of the thing can be conceived. This discussion itself has arisen from the rather simple insight that in order to understand the being of the work of art we shall have to get clear on the being of the mere thing such that we might see what differentiates the two. Reading *The Origin of the Work of Art* in isolation it is possible to see this first section as a detached from what is to follow. The later presentation of the nature of art and art works does not depend necessarily on any of the discussion that came before except, perhaps, for a glance in the direction of the form/matter issue. Indeed dwelling on the thingly nature of the thing seems to serve, at best, a purely negative purpose in the rest of the work. In other words, it points out misconceptions so that we can avoid them. For these reasons Heidegger himself, at the end of the section, calls all of what had come before a detour. When we think about the first section, however, in light

---

<sup>222</sup> Ibid. p. 27

of the path Heidegger's own thoughts have taken since 1919 we begin to see in it a recapitulation of previous insights and concerns as well as a desire to clarify them further. Let us look a bit closer and see in what sense this is so.

The three traditional ways a thing has been conceived, as discussed by Heidegger, are as a bearer of traits, as the unity of a manifold of sensations, and finally as formed matter. The conception of the thing as a bearer of traits is explained in terms of substance ontology wherein a thing is conceived as an underlying substrate in which various properties adhere as accidents. The very opening of the "The Origin of the Work of Art" in which art work and artist alike are grounded in terms of art, which clearly is not conceived as anything like a substance, already points to the event nature through which art will later be conceived and through which truth as disclosure has already been conceived throughout Heidegger's previous work. The rejection of substance ontology, then, is the return of an old concern and its discussion raises another old concern which will, nonetheless, loom largely in the background of what Heidegger is up to in "The Origin of the Work of Art". In discussing substance ontology, Heidegger almost immediately brings up the support substance ontology derives from the structure of language itself, a point strongly made previously in the work of such thinkers as Nietzsche:

"Who would have the temerity to assail these simple fundamental relations between thing and statement, between sentence structure and thing-structure? Nevertheless we must ask: Is the structure of a simple propositional statement (the combination of subject and predicate) the mirror image of the structure of the thing (of the union of substance and accidents)? Or could it be that even the

structure of the thing as thus envisaged is a projection of the framework of the sentence?"<sup>223</sup>

The seemingly natural next step, then, is to propose that humanity imposes its way of speaking and thinking onto the things themselves of the world. It is precisely this possibility which Heidegger entertains next. At this point, however, we should be aware enough of Heidegger's concerns to face with great caution the suggestion that linguistic structure can be understood fundamentally as an imposition alone. Were we to accept this position we would be identifying Heidegger with a linguistically savvy Kant, someone who believes our access to reality itself is denied or deeply distorted by the veil and limitation of our language. Language for Heidegger, however, is disclosive and it is primarily through it that anything is disclosed at all. Further more, language use as a form of practice must be understood according to Realist Historicism as arising from the things it brings to disclosure. If there are distortions due to language, as indeed for Heidegger there are, it cannot simply be that language is just imposed upon a nonlinguistic Being. As Heidegger's reply to Natorp makes clear, language itself must have a deep primordial connection to what comes to be seen through language. Here in "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger makes a similar assertion: "Actually, the sentence structure does not provide the standard for the pattern of thing-structure, nor is the latter simply mirrored in the former. Both sentence and thing-structure derive, in their typical form and their possible mutual relationship, from a common and more original source."<sup>224</sup> The appropriate reply, then, to the claim that the substance/accident structure is central to

---

<sup>223</sup> Ibid. p. 23

<sup>224</sup> Ibid. p. 24

language will be a more complex movement of pointing out other ways of speaking which have been covered over through time, citing perhaps elements of old German or Ancient Greek, while also tracing the supposedly “natural” subject-predicate formation to a rather unnatural origin in mistranslation and reformulation of concepts in the move from Greek to Latin. We have already discussed this type of argument in our presentation of the verbal form of the German word for essence, “*wesen*”, as the basic understanding of essence which allows Heidegger to escape from the transcendental tradition. In this case, like so many others we have discussed, ways of speaking which once originated from things themselves have drifted from that origin and become distortive traditions. All of this is a side note to the most important point for us, which will be that this “more original source” from which language and thing structure alike derive will be the key background concern of “The Origin of the Work of Art”. Putting aside the drifting of traditions from their roots through history, how do these traditions originate to begin with? How, it might be asked, do we first come to speak of and come to experience anything in the given way that we do? Heidegger’s discussion of substance ontology and language in this first section serves, then, to introduce the issue of the origin of ways of speaking of things as important for the work that is to follow.

The second conception of the thing plays a central role in empiricism, namely the idea of the thing as a unity of sensations. This conception need not presuppose substance ontology but it does represent another major philosophical prejudice in the history of western philosophy. Often, if we are to reject substance, it is in terms of the deceptive nature of the sensory access we have to things themselves. In some forms of skepticism, for example, it is precisely because we only know sensations that we can never know

things themselves. If we accept this position an adequate reformulation of our concept of thinghood would be in terms of sensations alone. We have already familiarized ourselves with Heidegger's response to this position, and indeed it is a response he shares with the Neo-Kantians, namely that we never actually just experience sensations at all. Experience is actually, in almost all cases, some form of experiencing *as*. Thus we don't hear some sound, we hear a car horn. Even the experience of something we don't recognize is an experience that stands out amidst the meaningful background *as* the sound of something that we do not recognize. Sensations are, then, never just experienced *simpliciter* but rather are always experienced as part of the meaningful structures which make up our world: "Much closer to us than all sensations are the things themselves. We hear the door shut in the house and never hear acoustical sensations or even mere sounds. In order to hear a bare sound we have to listen away from things, divert our ear from them, i.e. listen abstractly."<sup>225</sup> This, of course, simply serves to direct our attention to the fact that we always already find ourselves within a meaningful world. Once more we find ourselves coming back to the question which "The Origin of the Work of Art" will attempt to address, namely, how a world comes about in the first place.

The first conception, Heidegger says, holds things too far away from us while the second causes things to press in on us with too great an insistence. The third, then, will hopefully present the thing in a way such that it will be "allowed to remain in its self-containment. It must be accepted in its own constancy."<sup>226</sup> We have already discussed this third way, the form/matter structure, and its shortcomings. However, it seems worth

---

<sup>225</sup> Ibid. p. 25-26

<sup>226</sup> Ibid. p. 26

noting that despite its incorrectness, it is the starting clue, or formal indication, which will guide the process of reverse abstraction through the return to the particular experiences from which the thinghood of the thing, and indeed the workliness of the work, will finally be conceptualized. Form and matter, then, provide us a way into the essence of art while the previous two concepts of the thing simply point us to the problem of the origin of language and the origin of world that alike shall be answered through the discussion of the being of art.

We find, then, that it is not possible for us to read the first section of the work without recalling such past concerns as Heidegger's previous attempts to answer Natorp's challenges to phenomenology. For this reason alone we might be wise to read what is to follow as a continuation of Heidegger's previous answers to these challenges. But this means, as the appearance of the problem of the origin of language and its connection with the nature of worldhood should suggest, that the real question in this work will be deeper than simply enquiring how any given world transforms into another but will rather also concern the fundamental nature of world origin in general.

Having discussed the three traditional and mistaken ways in which thinghood has been conceptualized, it remains for us to trace the path Heidegger takes into a discussion of the origin and nature of art. The key shift which moves the reader into the second major section of "The Origin of the Work of Art" is one away from the talk of appropriate conceptualization which dominated the sections we have already discussed and towards the reliance on a disclosive event as foundational for the investigation. I will briefly map out this movement.

With the attempt to arrive at an understanding of the thinghood of the thing having repeatedly run into a dead end, Heidegger suggests that it may be precisely this tendency of the thing to resist thought which is most proper and characteristic of it:

“The unpretentious thing evades thought most stubbornly. Or can it be that this self-refusal of the mere thing, this self-contained independence, belongs precisely to the nature of the thing? Must not this strange and uncommunicative feature of the nature of the thing become intimately familiar to thought that tries to think the thing? If so, then we should not force our way to its thingly character.”<sup>227</sup>

Here, in this rather odd redirection of the investigation, we have a definitive foreshadowing of the withdrawing and self-refusing nature that will later be thought so strongly as the nature of earth. In this sense, then, the thingness of the thing will fail to be richly dealt with until the later sections concerning earth and world. For now, however, this observation serves to justify Heidegger’s turning to an attempt to think through the equipmental being of equipment since form and matter, the most promising of the previous distortive views, originates from a thinking concerning the being of equipment. Having failed repeatedly to think the thing, however, how are we to go about appropriately thinking equipment. This time around Heidegger explicitly states the need to avoid the imposition of previous interpretive frameworks, in order to do so he attempts to make the phenomenological turn to simply describing equipment as it is experienced.

In order to “facilitate the visual realization”<sup>228</sup> of a piece of equipment in the service of phenomenological description, Heidegger has chosen to concern himself with shoes, he turns almost as a side note to consider a painting of shoes done by Van Gogh.

---

<sup>227</sup> Ibid. p. 31

<sup>228</sup> Ibid. p. 32

The visual description moves pretty swiftly into a discussion of the usefulness of equipment, a concept we have already encountered. Thinking about usefulness then provokes the realization that a piece of equipment is only useful within the setting of its proper use, which also means it is most fully a piece of equipment when it least draws attention to itself by working precisely as it should: “The peasant woman wears her shoes in the field. Only here are they what they are. They are all the more genuinely so, the less the peasant woman thinks about the shoes while she is at work, or looks at them at all, or is even aware of them.”<sup>229</sup> This last point, that equipment is most fully equipment when dependably and unnoticeably doing precisely what it is useful for, is described by Heidegger as reliability.

It is precisely the nature of reliability, the way in which equipment recedes when most fully equipment, which seems to suggest that we cannot gain access to the being of equipment. Indeed, even recognizing reliability as the central nature of equipment would be denied to us had something not intervened to disrupt the self-concealing nature of equipment. This is a point with which we are very familiar from *Being and Time*'s discussion of the way in which equipment and the structure of worldhood of which it is a part naturally withdraw from view if not brought into focus through fairly extraordinary means. Notice, for example, that we notice the shoes when the heel falls off. But then it is precisely when the equipment has lost its equipmentality that we notice it. We may from this come to note the centrality of usefulness for equipment but we will not, it seems, come to notice self-secluding reliability itself. What, then, has allowed us to notice

---

<sup>229</sup> Ibid. p. 32



reliability? In Heidegger's text it is the intercession of the work of art that brings it to our attention, not unlike the way the sign in *Being and Time* was characterized as a special piece of equipment useful for bringing other generally concealed parts of the equipmental totality into view.

Were we to encounter a pair of shoes resting on the floor we would not, Heidegger claims, come to see the reliability on which their nature depends. We might see some equipment not currently in use. If the shoes are worn out and broken we might see equipment which is no longer useful, we might even consider them at that point to be mere things. The painting, at first, seems to offer us even less than if we experienced the shoes resting in the corner:

“From Van Gogh's painting we cannot even tell where these shoes stand. There is nothing surrounding this pair of peasant shoes in or to which they might belong – only an undefined space. There are not even clods of soil from the field or the field-path sticking to them, which would at least hint at their use. A pair of peasant shoes and nothing more.”<sup>230</sup>

We can go even further with this privative description and claim that we don't even know that the shoes are shoes of a peasant. We might, taking the lead from critics of Heidegger who claim it to actually be the case, suggest the possibility that the shoes are Van Gogh's own.<sup>231</sup> We might, perhaps more carefully, simply note that from the painting itself we have no knowledge of whose shoes they are. “And yet-”<sup>232</sup> At this point follows the much maligned passage in Heidegger's text where the nature of equipment speaks forth, as it were, from the painting revealing the nature of the world of the peasant woman. A wiser

---

<sup>230</sup> Ibid. p. 33

<sup>231</sup> For a particularly interesting discussion of the debate between Heidegger and Schapiro, triggered by Schapiro's critique in “The Still Life as a Personal Object” of Heidegger's interpretation of Van Gogh's shoes, see Jacques Derrida's “Restitutions of the Truth in Pointing” in his *The Truth in Painting*.

<sup>232</sup> Hof. p. 33

commentator than myself might choose to give in at this point to the history of objections this passage has triggered, objections generally based upon the claim that, even if the nature of art is to disclose truth, the painting of the shoes can have nothing to say about the world of a peasant woman insofar as they are actually Van Gogh's shoes. We might note that this early description of the disclosive properties of art is not necessary for what follows after and leave it at that. I suspect, however, that objections such as these have fundamentally missed the point of the view of art Heidegger is suggesting. I hope to be able to say briefly how and why this is so.

Let us first ask why, without the key elements that will be developed later in the text to explain the nature of art, we might be tempted to think for even a moment that something like Van Gogh's painting of the shoes might tell us more about equipment than staring at a pair of shoes in the corner. We have already stressed the way in which the painting offers us less to go on than even our own experience might. It seems, however, that it is precisely this point which Heidegger uses as his first real foray into the nature of art. We first stress the way in which the painting takes the shoes, in some sense, out of their everyday context in a radical way such that we don't even know anything about the room in which they are depicted as resting. We then notice that, deprived of their place in the totality of involvements, which is the life and world of he or she who owned the shoes, the shoes themselves summon forth the totality of involvements from which they have been taken. We are well prepared to understand why this would be so, for we have already discussed in the context of *Being and Time* the fact that there is no, and cannot be any, singular piece of equipment. The nature of equipment is to always already be involved in a structure of practices, goals, roles and concerns. As such, it is

impossible for the piece of equipment that is the shoes to stand-alone as they at first appear to do in the painting. Their very lonesomeness there is extraordinary and summons forth, now noticed as if itself extraordinary, the entire life in which they ought to fit. In this way the painting calls forth what usually recedes, the totality of involvements in which equipment is always present and with which it always recedes into obscurity. Note that everything we have just said, all of which serves precisely to bring to our attention the equipmental nature of equipment, is entirely unaffected by whether the shoes belong to a peasant woman, Van Gogh, or anyone else. It is the nature of shoes, and ultimately equipment, which is of concern.

There is one more thing to note about this subject, and it is precisely the key point that Heidegger draws from the work's ability to provide us access to the truth of equipment: "If there occurs in the work a disclosure of a particular being, disclosing what and how it is, then there is here an occurring, a happening of truth at work. In the work of art the truth of an entity has set itself to work."<sup>233</sup> The point we wish to focus on, then, is the event nature of this disclosure of truth that occurs through this preliminary encounter with Van Gogh's painting. What has occurred in the painting is an event of truth, and not some action of the observer or artist: "This painting spoke. In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be."<sup>234</sup> The speaking of the painting, truth setting itself to work, is something in which Van Gogh, Heidegger, and ourselves are alike caught up and not something determined by any one of us. Thus, in a sense, it really doesn't much matter what Van Gogh intended to paint. It is very possible

---

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. p. 35

<sup>234</sup> Ibid

that, in the course of painting his own shoes, he created a work in which the truth of equipment was disclosed and that, in the course of this disclosure, the event caught Heidegger up in the imagery concerning a female peasant. None of these aspects of the event invalidate any other.

Something else has occurred in this move to discussing the truth event which occurs through the work of art. We have rather dramatically moved away from the first inclination which brought Van Gogh's work to mind to begin with. Heidegger's first use for the painting had been to provide some visual example on which to practice phenomenological description. Now, however, we have found that it is precisely what was not represented, precisely what was not visually available, in the work which was central to the event of disclosure that was the work. It is precisely because the painting lacks context, in this one example, that the equipmental nature of the equipment comes conspicuously to light. Representation, and all the talk of adequation and correspondence which representation brings to mind, has been demonstrated at this point to be a deeply inadequate way of characterizing the nature of the work of art. With it the conception of truth as correspondence has also been dismissed.

The one final point to note is the lesson to be drawn from the structure this first section has taken. We had assumed the thinghood of the thing to be primary, but our failure to find a way to think our way into this thinghood drove us to shift our attention to the equipmental being of equipment. This suggests equipment as primordial, a perspective we are familiar with from *Being and Time*. Thinking about equipment also, however, was found to be impossible without the intercession of the work of art. The event of truth that is art, then, is that upon which our access to thinghood and

equipmentality depends: “The art work opens up in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, i.e., this deconcealing, i.e., the truth of beings, happens in the work. In the art work, the truth of what is has set itself to work. Art is truth setting itself to work.”<sup>235</sup> It is, then, the self disclosure which is the event of truth upon which thinghood, equipment and work depend in the same way as art work and artist.

The structure of this first section is, as we have mentioned, preparatory, in some sense in a negative way, but also is primarily backward looking to previous concerns and issues meant to be recalled in order that the reader might appreciate the extent of what “The Origin of the Work of Art” attempts to achieve. This observation, however, brings out a specific aspect of the discussion of art which does occur in this first section that we would be wise to note. As we mentioned earlier, the example of Van Gogh’s painting of the shoes stands out, once one has read the entirety of the work, as a rather different type of art work than much of what follows after. Starting in section two Heidegger will claim that “great art” is the only art he intends to consider in his work.<sup>236</sup> With a full discussion of earth and world it will become clear what great art is and it will also become clear that, while Van Gogh may have been a great artist and perhaps with great hesitancy a piece of his might be considered great art in Heidegger’s sense, the painting of shoes certainly will not be so considered. Noting this point is important for at least two reasons. First, it allows us to appreciate the spectrum we are dealing with. All true art, we might suggest, will be an event of truth setting itself to work but not all true art will be great art in the sense of setting up a new world. Similarly, while Realist Historicism commits us to the

---

<sup>235</sup> Ibid. p. 38

<sup>236</sup> Ibid. p. 39

idea that some art at least must be great to the extent of setting up a new world, not even all great art must be so understood. Secondly, the very discussions we have offered of Van Gogh's shoes should make clear how dependant this section has been on the insights of *Being and Time*. I would assert that we could derive the entire discussion of Van Gogh's shoes from *Being and Time* alone. It is our contention, however, that this dependence ends with section one. An example of this can be found in the nature of the self-secluding we have found in this first section. Here it is the reliability of equipment and the totality of involvements of which this reliability is a part that most prominently resists disclosure and is found to be self-concealing. This corresponds to the way in which the structures of a specific world in *Being and Time* also conceal themselves. However, we shall find that Heidegger's later discussions of earth go beyond this form of self-concealing and bring us in touch with the second sense of the concealed, namely the concealed as that which lies beyond the limits of a given world. What is most provocative about this relation between types of works which are events or truth in the style of Van Gogh's shoes and other works which are events on the scale of the temple is the suggestion that the basic concern of phenomenology to come to see things as they are in themselves is on a scale contiguous with the primordial event of world disclosure that opens up new historical epochs. Heidegger's later discussions, for example in "The Question Concerning Technology" of almost entirely distortive worlds and what ability we do or do not have to escape from them will, when understood from the perspective offered by the relation between the shoes and the temple, be the discovery of phenomenological problems and concerns at the level of world historical events.

The central move of “The Origin of the Work of Art” is to think art in terms of disclosure. This, indeed, is at the heart of the transformation of form and matter into world and earth. We have already begun building up to this understanding through our concern in the last chapter to distinguish the undisclosed or concealed understood as those things implicit or hidden within a world from the more primordial sense of the undisclosed or concealed as that which lies outside the limits of a specific world and which that world often does not allow to appear at all. There is a continuity between the statements that every care as care conceals something, as we discussed in chapter one, that every clearing or lighting ultimately depends upon the darkness in which it exists as a disclosure, as we discussed in chapter two in terms of the undisclosed as the mystery in “On the Essence of Truth”, and finally that claim that world limits what can appear as much as it allows anything to appear at all. This limitation of any particular world is not just the self-concealing tendency of the structures of worldhood as seen, for example, in the concealment of the reliability of equipment which we have already discussed. Rather, every world as primordial disclosure itself is limited in the sense expressed in the hermeneutic insight that for something to appear *as* a specific thing or from a specific angle forecloses its simultaneous experience as something else or from another angle. Further, some of the ways in which a thing can be disclosed may be in contradiction to other ways in which it might be disclosed such that a thing’s involvement in a given totality of involvements might keep it, while still located within those relations, from appearing in any number of other ways. These other ways of its appearing would not, then, be implicit possibilities of the given world or totality of involvements. Quite to the contrary, these other possibilities are literally impossibilities within the given world.

Part of what makes the causal interpretation of Dreyfus appealing may be the implicit assumption that something is not able to appear, without some form of dissembling, in two radically conflicting ways. If this were so, then each possible authentic disclosure of an entity might be assumed to have some sort of structural connection to any other possible disclosure. In this case we are positing an underlying structure ordering all disclosure such that the very plural use of the term “world” begins to look like little more than a literary idiosyncrasy. Of course, there is some basis for this view. What has all our talk about the material determination of form been meant to suggest if not that things can determine the way they show up to us, if properly allowed to, and that ultimately they can determine the entire structure of the world itself. This does not, however, allow us to help ourselves to the assumption that the things themselves can not reveal themselves in several apparently contradictory ways in the contexts of different worlds. Insofar as any given standard of consistency or rationality is part of the structure of a given world, assumptions about what can or cannot happen from the fall of one world to the rise of another is an attempt to impose the specific elements of a given world onto the entirety of Being. There are only standards of consistency within a world framework, and the assumption that some standard or continuity unites worlds can only ground itself in the, I would claim unjustified, supposition that these standards are to be found outside the structures of particular worlds. In other words, it is to assume that certain facts are true of the undisclosed mystery, or earth, which is precisely to miss the extent of the finitude of any given disclosure. There are no facts about earth. At this point it may be useful to note some precise problematic elements of the terms we have been using throughout the course of this work. Repeatedly we have spoken of ‘things’ and



‘matters’ which determine conceptualizations, language, or forms. Having moved from discussing specific disclosures to the entire disclosive structure of world itself, it should be clear that presuming that outside of a given world, or all worlds, there are discrete entities, things, or matters is to objectify the mystery or earth. ‘Things’ arise because of the structure of a world, and what lies outside a world is best understood as the determining mystery or unknowable ground from which worlds arise. This means, of course, that we can not be assured of any consistency between worlds without assuming we know more about the mystery than we do. A claim to the effect that there are meaningful commonalities between all worlds, or that two worlds apparently occurring one after another must be continuous in some sense, can ultimately only amount to little more than a statement of faith.

If we understand world as the most basic clearing of disclosure amidst primordial concealment then the understanding of earth towards which we have been driving is of this primordial concealment on which any finite disclosure is dependent and yet which all disclosure must thrust from sight. This, then, would be the understanding of world and earth as they are encountered in the phenomenon of truth in general. However, we must heed Heidegger’s concern to ground our understanding of earth and world in the phenomenon of art itself and not in our broader considerations of the nature of disclosure. These considerations have provided us a good foundation for our look at earth and world but they hardly touch upon the more difficult details of these elements as they appear in art.

We must turn now to think earth as it appears in the particularity of the art work. Heidegger's engagement with earth takes its real start from a reflection on the different way in which the material substrate appears in the case of equipment versus the art work:

“In fabricating equipment –e.g., an ax – stone is used, and used up. It disappears into usefulness. The material is all the better and more suitable the less it resists perishing in the equipmental being of the equipment. By contrast the temple-work, in setting up a world, does not cause the material to disappear, but rather causes it to come forth for the very first time and to come into the Open of the work's world. The rock comes to bear and rest and so first becomes rock; metals come to glitter and shimmer, colors to glow, tones to sing, the word to speak. All this comes forth as the work sets itself back into the massiveness and heaviness of stone, into the firmness and pliancy of wood, into the hardness and luster of metal, into the lighting and darkening of color, into the clang of tone, and into the naming power of the word.”<sup>237</sup>

What we notice, then, is that rather than disappearing into usefulness as occurs with equipment, and indeed even to equipment itself as a whole, that out of which the art work is made first comes to really be experienced as what it is in its being part of the art work. This, however, calls for a renovation of the sentence we have just written, for art understood more primordially as an event of truth comes to disclose for the first time as what it is what our previous sentence seemed to assume was already laying about present-at-hand. The temple is not, then, made of rock but rather makes rock accessible to us as rock. We are skirting what I consider the greatest difficulty in interpreting “The Origin of the Work of Art”, namely the question of how to unite the understanding of earth and world we have modeled on disclosure to the understanding in terms of art which is generally modeled on work material and completed form. In other words, how do we think something like “the massiveness of stone” in terms of the concealed such that we

---

<sup>237</sup> Hof. p. 44-45

are not just dealing with an inventive analogy? It will help us to say a bit more about the nature of earth in the art work.

Heidegger provides an example of the nature of earth through discussing the pressing downward which manifests the heaviness of stone. This pressing downward, we are told, “denies us any penetration into it”<sup>238</sup>. If we break open the stone the heaviness retreats into the pieces; we do not find it hidden within. If we weigh the stone we have translated the pressing downward into a mathematical form, but we have not captured the heaviness. In fact, at that moment, we have lost the heaviness entirely. In reading, say in a scientific report, the weight of something there is precisely no experience of that weight. We could go even further and attempt to capture the stone’s pressing downward in terms of gravity and the warping of space-time created by mass as conceived by Einstein, and then we would have truly lost any experience of weight in the very heights of a theoretical abstraction the phenomenological attestation of which, almost by definition, we can have no experience.

Similarly, Heidegger states: “Color shines and wants only to shine. When we analyze it in rational terms by measuring its wavelengths, it is gone. It shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained. Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate into it.”<sup>239</sup> The nature of this remaining undisclosed is very obviously here not strictly a remaining entirely concealed. The color shines, it just cannot be disclosed further than that. In this way, then, the work of art which allows the color to shine lets the earth be an earth insofar as it discloses, not necessarily the essence of the being of color,

---

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. p. 45

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

but the way in which it alone allows anything to appear to us and yet remains ultimately a mystery. As noted, we can come to understand the phenomenon of color and light in various frameworks, such as that of the physical sciences, but these never really tell us anything more about the shine of color but rather translate the sheer thatness of it into a different language. This shining forth of the mystery that there is color is a restatement in a new form of the fundamental question of the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, namely why are there beings at all rather than nothing? We might ask why there is color at all rather than nothing, but the sheer fact of color is that upon which all visual phenomenon, at least, rests and behind which we ultimately cannot get. However, the art work may place us before this particular experience of color as color, this startling experience of the mystery that it is at all in a way behind which we can not get. In this way the art work lets an earth be an earth. How are we to connect this understanding of earth to the one which we have been modeling on a hermeneutic understanding of the event of disclosure in general?

I believe the answer lies in the way in which remaining true to the event nature of art forces us to rethink something as simple as the experience of the weight of a rock or the shine of color. If we really do attend to the experience of the weight and hardness of stone in the Greek temple we come to see not that these characteristics are that upon which the temple depends in a sense analogical or parallel to the way in which any specific disclosure depends upon the undisclosed amidst which it arises. Rather, in the event which is the temple, the weight and hardness of stone is both that out of which the temple emerges and that which only appears as what is depended upon. We are, then, dealing with different manifestations of the same type of event, namely the event of

disclosure. In coming to experience something *as* something, it is only from amidst everything which is not experienced and can not be experienced in that given event of disclosure that the first experience is possible. The finitude of disclosure means that it is dependent upon and delivered over onto all that it can not disclose even as the finitude of the painting or temple rests in their inability to present anything more of that upon which they depend than the sheer shine or weight, and the very characteristic that the shine and weight can not be gotten behind. What we see here, however, is that the self-concealing of earth goes quite a bit beyond the way in which the reliability of equipment is never normally itself noticed. The withdrawal of reliability, and indeed that of the entirety of involvements, will indeed be part of the self-concealing of earth. For this reason the art work will, as in the case of Van Gogh's shoes, bring reliability and the totality of involvements into sight as those elements which are self concealing as is asserted in Young's interpretation of Heidegger. However, it is also the sheer "that it is" and the broad darkness in which rests all the other ways in which it could be which shelter under the rubric of earth: "Beings refuse themselves to us down to that one and seemingly least feature which we touch upon most readily when we can say no more of beings than that they are. Concealment as refusal is not simply and only the limit of knowledge in any given circumstance, but the beginning of the clearing of what is lighted."<sup>240</sup> The very dependence of world upon earth, however, would therefore suggest that the rise, tarrying, errancy and/or fall of a world is dependent upon all those many ways of experience and addressing things which it precisely does not have access to. The very fact that we can

---

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. p. 52

not get back behind the shine of color, that we can not master its origin or understand its being, points out that we are always delivered over to the way in which it currently shines which, quite beyond our power to add or detract, could always have been, or come to be, different:

“Things are, and human beings, gifts, and sacrifices are, animals and plants are, equipment and works are. That which is, the particular being, stands in Being. Through Being there passes a veiled destiny that is ordained between the godly and the counter-godly. There is much in being that man cannot master. There is but little that comes to be known. What is known remains inexact, what is mastered insecure. What is, is never of our making or even merely the product of our minds, as it might all too easily seem.”<sup>241</sup>

At any moment the color could fade, the hardness of the stone dissolve, the “*es gibt*” stop giving<sup>242</sup> and the world of the work, or the world in which we work, could end. This is clearly connected to our claim, in chapter two, that the main challenge to transcendental philosophy is always going to be to explain their assurance of the future constancy of what seems transcendental necessary today. Even as the “*es gibt*” could stop giving, so too could Husserl’s transcendental ego stop behaving in the way which up until now has been its tendency. This, of course, opens us up to the view of essence as whiling and tarrying, a tendency over time rather than a stable structure somehow escaping from time.

It is worth pausing for a moment to consider the specific form of the earth in poetic art and to ask how this form of the earth connects up to everything we have been

---

<sup>241</sup> Ibid. p. 51

<sup>242</sup> We refer here to the interesting characteristic of the German language that the statement comparable to our English phrase “there is” is literally formulated in German as “it gives” (*es gibt*) in a usage similar to our phrase “it is raining”. We rarely ask what is raining, but Heidegger often points to the alternate sense where we might precisely ask, in the face of the sheer fact that anything is, “what gives, and why?”

saying so far. We have already read a formulation for the earth in poetry as “the naming power of the word”, elsewhere we are also given reason to think of the earth in a poetic or theatrical work of art as the common folk sayings and, perhaps, myths of a people:

“In the tragedy nothing is staged or displayed theatrically, but the battle of the new gods against the old is being fought. The linguistic work, originating in the speech of the people, does not refer to this battle; it transforms the people’s saying so that now every living word fights the battle and puts up for decision what is hold and what unholy, what great and what small, what brave and what cowardly, what lofty and what flighty, what master and what slave (cf. Heraclitus, Fragment 53).”<sup>243</sup>

Later, in section three of the work, Heidegger will go on to say that all real art work is poetic in nature. What he will mean by this is not that art should be thought of in terms of communication or linguistic or discursive elements but rather that the being of language and art alike are both most originally thought of in terms of disclosure and that, insofar as a people’s world is most fundamentally tied to its language, all true art can be valuably thought through in terms of the way in which language opens up a world poetically. Now much of what we have said throughout the course of this work has involved the relation of language to the things of which it speaks. How might we attach Heidegger’s reference to the earth in language as the naming power of the word or the sayings of a people to our previous considerations of language? In thinking about that in language beyond which we can not go, that upon which linguistic art or any use of language at all depends, we might notice first that, much as Heidegger suggests that any traditional understanding of truth as correspondence depends upon an already existing space of meaning or clearing, language itself depends upon that sheer fact of meaning and that things can come to be disclosed

---

<sup>243</sup> Hof. p. 42

through language. Before we can speak of anything it must first be the case that language has meaning, in other words that language brings things into disclosure. Thus we might contrast working language with the danger of idle talk and empty intending with which Heidegger is so concerned. It is indeed possible for the word to lose its naming power, for language to spin like a wheel disconnected from the machine, to borrow an image from Wittgenstein. In that case language becomes something else, and less, than authentic language. It becomes a diversion, a distracting haze. We might, then, consider the naming power of words to refer to the power of language to derive from, and bring into disclosure, the matters itself with which it is concerned. In this sense, then, language depends at its heart upon what we have been calling the material determination of form.

What we have said suggests that the earth in language or poetic art might be correctly taken in two senses. First, there is the earth found in the common and traditional sayings of a people. This is indeed the basis upon which a current language depends and from which poetry will arise while, all the same, the richness of the language will resist being entirely appropriated or brought into clarity by the work of art. The old legends will always have more to say, and will never submit to complete reformulation. This is so because the common sayings of a people harkens back to an original encounter with the matters of concern from which meaningful speech arises. The dependence of poetry on the sayings of a people is, then, the dependency of it upon an original experience of Being. This nicely joins up with Heidegger's interest in the process of deconstructing to return to the authentic origins of language. This, however, is only one possibility. The other understanding of earth in language is the deeper one of the naming power of the word itself which might arise as easily from a new disclosure of Being as an old one.



Language, once born from a disclosure of Being, can just as easily be born anew not through a return but rather through a new encounter. We can see, then, that poetry may both harken back or leap forward and in each case, if it is truly great art, arrive at the disclosure of Being from which the word derives its naming power.

There is one last point concerning the way in which the art work lets an earth be an earth which we should stress before moving on. Clearly we find here a rather unique formulation and deeper understanding of *Gelassenheit*. Previously *Gelassenheit* was mainly understood as the necessity to keep artificial or distortive ways of relating to matters from being imposed upon them; rather matters themselves had to be left to give rise to their own practices, etc. With the withdrawing characteristic of the earth, however, we come to see that those things we might understand as the earth in any given circumstance are not just prone to distortion but rather actively resist being forced into frameworks in which they do not belong. The earth must be allowed to be an earth because, as was pointed out with the downward thrust of the stone or shine of color, the more we attempt to grasp it the more we lose it until we are left with a series of numbers or a lofty abstraction alone. Color only is color when it is allowed to shine. The very concept of earth, then, might be considered a particular reformulation of the problem of *Gelassenheit* which brings into sharp focus a further understanding of the principle of the material determination of form and all the many issues we have found connected with it.

The world and earth are presented by Heidegger as existing in a constant state of strife. This strife is the tension between the disclosure that is world and its own finitude in the sense both that it is dependent upon that which it can not surmount and also that in

each disclosure it conceals as much as it reveals. The world is a closing as much as an opening and each disclosure is a denial as well:

“The nature of truth, that is, of unconcealedness, is dominated throughout by a denial. Yet this denial is not a defect or a fault, as though truth were an unalloyed unconcealedness that has rid itself of everything concealed. If truth could accomplish this, it would no longer be itself. *This denial, in the form of a double concealment, belongs to the nature of truth as unconcealedness.* Truth, in its nature, is un-truth. We put the matter this way in order to serve notice, with a possibly surprising trenchancy, that denial in the manner of concealment belongs to unconcealedness as clearing.”<sup>244</sup>

One of the characteristics of Dasein’s falling, however, is the tendency for disclosure to cover over not just those things it does not disclose or forecloses from being disclosed but rather also the concealing of this very fact about itself. Disclosure as it occurs in our everyday lives presents itself precisely as neither an achievement nor as tentative; this is partially the meaning of so much of the talk in *Being and Time* about Dasein losing itself in the objects of its concern. We forget, or cover over, the very finitude of our position and the partiality of all disclosure. This, indeed, is what the transcendental tradition does when it takes what is unimaginable *now* for what must necessarily be unimaginable universally. The uniqueness of art, and part of what makes it potentially the primordial event of truth in which a clearing as a whole is opened up, is the fact that it is not just a setting up of a world but also a disclosing of an earth as an earth. In other words, a true artwork always presents its own finitude. The world set up by a work of art, because of the presence of its earth, reveals the finitude of the world whereas we usually lose ourselves in taking our world to be final and absolute. It is questionableness which the art work insists upon even as it occurs as the setting up of a world.

---

<sup>244</sup> Ibid. p. 53 The italics are Heidegger’s own.

In closing this section there are a few central characteristics of world disclosure we find in the discussion of art that we would do well to dwell upon. One of these is clearly the finitude of all worlds, but connected to this is the fact we have stressed that art opens a world while revealing the limits of that world. It is possible to connect this point to Heidegger's interest in the de-structuring reading of history which eventually becomes his *History of Being*. This connection becomes particularly important if we look ahead to Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" and his confrontation with "enframing" which can be understood as a framework of disclosure, possibly even an entire world framework, which denies the existence of its own limit. If we take the basic characteristics of world disclosure as found in art to be not specific to art, but rather characteristic of the historical events in which new epochs and worlds open themselves up, we notice that finding the origin of a world is, at the same time, finding an adequate disclosure of its limitations and failures. It is only as practices, and the worlds out of which they are formed, become distorted through degeneration into mere repetition of traditions that monolithic worlds arise. The interest in tracing practices to their origins, then, can have two motivations. First, this tracing brings us back to what the practice original brought to appearance. However, second, this tracing can bring us to a confrontation with the limits of the practice in question. This, in turn, opens us to the place from which a leap out of this practice or world can occur. This, indeed, seems to be the sense of Heidegger's discussion of the "first beginning" and "other beginning" in his *Contributions to Philosophy: From Enowning*. Any true engagement with a beginning in history will always be, at the same time, an opening up of the way in which this beginning could have led elsewhere or been other than it is. Faced with the dominance of

technological enframing in his later work, then, Heidegger will offer us two specific possibilities for hope. First, we might trace the history which led to enframing and in doing so come to see its ultimate limits. This, indeed, is the project of Heidegger's *History of Being*. Alternatively, we may find that art once more takes up the role of fundamentally disclosing new basic practices or even a new historical epoch.

### Section Three: The Inescapable Circle and the Kantian Arrow

“Thus we are compelled to follow the circle. This is neither a makeshift nor a defect. To enter upon this path is the strength of thought, to continue on it is the feast of thought, assuming that thinking is a craft... every separate step that we attempt circles in this circle.”<sup>245</sup>

“Of course, common sense sees in this kind of refutation a very effective procedure. It is called ‘beating the opponent with his own weapon.’ Yet one overlooks the fact that with this procedure one has not yet torn away the weapon from one’s opponent at all; nor can one tear it away, because one has renounced grasping it, that is, first comprehending what the statement wants to say... Such refutations assume the appearance of the sharpest consistency. Yet the consistency comes immediately to an end, lest it be valid for the refuter. While appealing to logic as the highest instance of thinking, one claims that this logic should be valid only for the opponent.”<sup>246</sup>

I would like to dedicate the final section of this chapter to a discussion of several issues that distinguish the reading of Heidegger I have presented from that of other readings that have been importantly influential on my view. Specifically I will discuss the interpretation of Heidegger as a “transcendental historicist” presented by Charles Guignon and Steven Crowell, the idea presented by Iain Thomson that Heidegger only holds the position which Thomson calls “ontological historicity” following his realization in the late 1930s that his transcendental ambitions in *Being and Time* must fail, and

---

<sup>245</sup> Hof, p. 18

<sup>246</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche Volume III The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics* p. 26-27

finally the possibility that my argument against the transcendental tradition in philosophy can be answered through reference to various “regulative ideals” in the Kantian sense. Each of these issues can be oriented within the circumference of a larger concern with the problem of reflexivity.

The problem of reflexivity, most simply put, arises when a philosophical position’s own claims undermine the authority with which it makes such claims. This happens, most commonly, with various forms of relativism that assert the relativity of all truth claims to specific contexts while not seeming to accept the relativity of the proposition of relativism itself to a specific context. Within the path we have tread the problem of reflexivity arises when we ask whether realist historicism is itself to be understood as historically situated and as thus not a-historical. It is easy to slip into the claim that realist historicism presents various claims which the realist historicist asserts to be true for all times and places. If this is the realist historicist’s position it is clearly self-undermining and we must either reject the a-historicity of its claims or give up on some of its claims and assert instead that the principles of realist historicism are the only transcendental a-historical truths to which we have access. On my understanding the realist historicist does not, however, claim a-historicity for her or his claims. Rather, it is my position that Heidegger offers all of his positions as presenting what has come to disclosure within the context of specific investigations and, as such, as asserted only within the limits of that specific investigation. Indeed, one only makes assertions from the context of given concerns and projects and, I suspect Heidegger would assert, the true philosopher is always careful to make clear the investigation from within which she or he is making claims. To place this all in more direct language, the assertions of the realist

historicist should be couched within the phrase “based on how things appear to me thus far and from the work in which I am engaged”. Certainly this is a fallibilism similar to what any philosopher or scientist who admits to the possible of being wrong would accept, but it is a fallibilism which asks whether we have any demonstrable reason to think we can ever get out of this hermeneutically limited position. I speak of hermeneutical limitation here because, of course, what I am suggesting is the inescapability of the hermeneutic circle. Every investigation is oriented by certain concerns and projections which themselves must be open to change based upon the investigation while, in turn, the outcomes of the investigation are limited by the specific concerns and projects which opened it up in the first place. For the realist historicist, then, it is sufficient to observe that every practice he or she has ever engaged in has been historically situated with there seeming to be no reason to suspect it will ever be otherwise. From this perspective the transcendental project is a rather odd one insofar as, when honestly evaluated, we are never sure of having achieved its end and we seem to have no reason to think such an end is even coherent let alone achievable. The transcendental search, from our perspective, is the search for a practice that is not a practice.

It is at this point that one is tempted to appeal to Thomas Kuhn’s conception of incommensurability, for from within the substantialist transcendental tradition of philosophy knowledge claims are always understood to be oriented within a universal context of a-historical truth claims. Even when I contextualize a knowledge claim, take the claim “For me here and now this coffee seems hot”, it can still be asked from a wider perspective whether that claim is in fact true universally, i.e. is it an a-historical truth that

“for you here and now...” etc. Although the coffee being hot or not has been contextualized, the truth or falsity of my statement that it appears so to me now has not been. This, it seems to the dominant tradition, is always the case we find ourselves in. We make particular claims that rest on the back of claims to universal truth. However, from the perspective of the realist historicist, such an understanding of our practices of language use seems wildly implausible insofar as it grounds everyday language use on an outright unimaginable entity such as a view from nowhere. The transcendental philosopher can’t imagine how one could not be making universal truth claims all the time while the realist historicist can’t imagine what a universal truth claim means. This is literally true when we recall that meaning, for the realist historicist such as the Heidegger I have presented, just means that something has a place within the totality of practices which constitute a world. The a-historical, which could just as easily be called the unworldly, is literally meaningless.

Of course, as the repeated and almost unintentional appearance of phrases like “to rest on the back of” and the use of terms like “ground” should suggest, the real issue is one of foundationalism. Hidden within the dominant discourse of the substantialist-transcendental tradition is the assumption that there must be something constant, i.e. continually present, which provides the ground for all knowledge. Here we are back to Descartes foundationalist project and, according to Heidegger, back to the identification of Being with continual presence and *ousia* or *idea*. But if the ground is *wesen*, a tarrying amidst appearing and disappearing, our claims need not be understood within some bottom line assumption of something a-historically universal but rather within the limits how things appear now and have appeared previously. Of course, in either the case of

grounding knowledge on the meaningless a-contextual or grounding knowledge on how things have come to appear within the shifting panorama of becoming, the ground of meaning is ultimately the meaningless. For Heidegger, however, this meaningless is the *region of untruth* which grounds our finite clearing and not the *god's-eye-view* towards which we are presumed to be perpetually aiming or which we are assumed to already occupy at the most basic level.

The dominant reading of Heidegger sees him as aiming at transcendental knowledge during his early work and *Being and Time* and then giving up on his transcendental project in favor of a more radical form of historicism in his later work. The early period is often characterized as transcendental historicism<sup>247</sup> and the later period can be characterized as ontological historicity.<sup>248</sup> Transcendental historicism, generally derived from a transcendental reading of *Being and Time*, seeks to avoid the problem of reflexivity either by asserting that Heidegger intends his claims to rest on two levels or by claiming that Heidegger is not concerned with the a-historical but rather the trans-historical. The first claim is Crowell's and the second Guignon's. Crowell characterizes his interpretation of Heidegger in relation to concerns such as the ones we have raised thus:

“At the limit of Heidegger's ontological phenomenology of the human being, then, is a kind of transcendental historicism: Historicity belongs to Dasein – hence to the very constitution of meaning – and selfhood itself has a narrative structure. Heidegger does not think that this sort of historicism implies thoroughgoing historical relativism, for if transcendental historicism recognizes relativity of meaning at the ontic level of particular historical and cultural traditions, as a phenomenological philosophy it also uncovers ontological

---

<sup>247</sup> See, for example, Guignon's PK. p. 197 or Crowell's SM. p. 211

<sup>248</sup> See Iain Thomson *Heidegger on Ontotheology* p. 9 henceforth cited as [OT.]



structures that condition or account for such ontic relativization. The ultimate cogency of this distinction has been disputed, and Heidegger later seems to distance himself somewhat from it, tending toward a more radically historicized conception of philosophy.<sup>249</sup>

This interpretation builds on Heidegger's own distinction between the ontic and ontological to locate some of his claims on one level and others on another. This is precisely the position we ourselves would be in if we claimed the realist historicism represents the only transcendental knowledge we can have. And, it is worth recalling, our reading of *Being and Time* understands the ontological essential level as anything but a-historical. For our purposes, the difference between the ontological and ontic can be captured in the difference between how one engages in a specific practice and what the practice actually is. For example, one can play chess aggressively or defensively and this is an ontic distinction within chess while the nature of chess itself is ontological. Of course, the nature of chess will itself be ontic when looked at from another level, for example the question of the nature of the practice of playing games in general. What is ontic in one sense can, then, be ontological in another. This understanding of these terms finally avoids the specter of two world dualism which has been with the philosophical tradition since Plato and which has continued to haunt the Kantian tradition, as if the noumenal and phenomenal occupied different realms, no matter how hard the followers of Kant have fought against it. This perspective is, in turn, prefigured in Emil Lask's own understanding of form and matter where what is formal on one level can be understood as material on another. For example, concepts which arise as form from given matters of

---

<sup>249</sup> SM. p. 211

concern can themselves provide the matter for an investigation of the formal characteristics of all concepts.

Guignon presents his understanding of Heidegger's transcendental historicism in terms of the transhistorical rather than the suprahistorical, which I have been calling the a-historical. On this conception the transcendental or essential is arrived at through an uncovering of those elements of human existence which have remained the same throughout the course of history. This position pays careful attention to Heidegger's focus on historical origins and understands the transhistorical as what arose from those origins and remained, often covered over or hidden, throughout the history that flowed from these sources. As Guignon characterizes this,

“We noted that Heidegger believes that there are sources, springs, and roots of our understanding of Being which have originated in the dawn of Western history and which continue to flow through history as a deep, underlying current.... Heidegger's choice of words and means of expression are historically determined, but the deep grammar of the concept expressed in this way is drawn from the transhistorical content of Western thought.”<sup>250</sup>

Guignon goes on to characterize this position as an attenuated sense of the transcendental in which the transcendental structures uncovered are only transcendental insofar as they are the necessary conditions for the content of Western thought. From this perspective it makes sense, then, that as Heidegger began to push his inquiry back to the wellsprings of Western thought, a point at which his investigation must necessarily come in contact with that which is in some sense previous-to or next-to Western thought, the problematic of how universal the transcendental really is should have become more and more clear to

---

<sup>250</sup> PK. p. 215-216

him. From here we then read Heidegger's growing interest in the History of Being as progressing hand in hand with a concern for other histories and other ways in which our own history might have gone. Guignon's commitment to the transhistorical in contrast to the suprahistorical, in contradiction to Crowell's own understanding of Heidegger's transcendental historicism, can clearly be read as in-line with our own understanding of the essential as what character a thing's tarrying has taken as long as we keep in view the fact that there need, in fact, be no actual transhistorical. What appears transhistorical, or what indeed has been so up until now, cannot be presumed to be grounded in any maintaining structure from which we can presume the necessity of the transhistorical. Tarrying is not standing presence.

The reading I have offered concerning the understanding of the changes in Heidegger's thoughts following *Being and Time* which we can derive from Guignon's transcendental historicism leads nicely into the interpretation of this transition offered by Iain Thomson. As mentioned, the prevailing view is that the Heidegger of *Being and Time* had transcendental ambitions he later rejected in favor of a more extreme historicism. As Thomson puts it, "Nevertheless, the idea that even humanity's most fundamental sense of reality changes, and so needs to be understood in terms of its history, is indeed the later Heidegger's doctrine of *ontological historicity*, a controversial doctrine the truth of which Heidegger himself had yet to recognize in his early magnum opus, 1927's *Being and Time*."<sup>251</sup> Thomson characterizes, then, the Heidegger of *Being and Time* as understanding fundamental ontology as that one unchanging ultimate sense

---

<sup>251</sup> OT. p. 9

of reality and the later Heidegger as coming to realize there is no one fundamental ontology but rather a series of historical alterations to such a sense. It should be clear that ontological historicity is perfectly in line with realist historicism, but our main disagreement concerns the point at which Heidegger committed himself to it. The interpretation I have offered is one in which ontological historicity is grounded in Heidegger's earliest concerns and is not something, as in Thomson, he only comes to see as he undertakes a transcendently inspired project which drives him, instead, to realize the necessity of a more basic historicism. My, perhaps idiosyncratic, claim has been that Heidegger's early realism conjoined with his anti-mentalist, anti-subjectivism and critique of the theoretic standpoint derived from Paul Natorp necessitate a thoroughgoing historicism as far back as the early lecture courses and seminars. My chain of reasoning has been thus: if one is committed to the realism expressed in categorial intuition and the material determination of form but one wants to take away from these principles the subjectivist/mentalist theoretical excesses one locates the categorial and formal in practices; these practices, in turn, come to be understood in line with realism as arising from *what is*; but it was subjectivism which allowed for us to justify the continuity and Being of stable transcendental structures, or it was justified by a substance ontology which does not arise from the viewpoint of the primacy of practice; therefore we can not justify the assumption that *what is* is to be understood in terms of unchanging structures or truths since whatever we know of *what is* appears through particular, historical and contextual practices which themselves change over time. This entire chain of reasoning is available from Heidegger's earliest thoughts and, indeed, seems to inform his earliest projects and so ontological historicity can be read all the way back into the beginning of

his thought. Were Thomson to accept this view he would be forced to rework his reading of how Heidegger's philosophical commitments informed his politics in the 1930s.

Where Thomson sees Heidegger's ambition to re-organize the university as based upon the promise of arriving at a fundamental ontology which can re-vitalize and unify the regional ontologies of the sciences, an ambition which Thomson admits could still be motivated from the view of ontological historicity,<sup>252</sup> I would suggest his academic politics derives rather from the subjectivism into which Heidegger fell for a time during 1930s.

There are two particularly potent objections to realist historicism, beyond the problem of reflexivity, which I would like to end by discussing. The first is directed primarily at the realist historicist's criticism of the transcendental tradition. Faced with the claim that Husserl has failed to provide us with actual apodicticity and universal knowledge because what is unimaginable need not remain unimaginable, the Husserlian can respond much as we suggested earlier when discussing fallibilism. Of course, every possible transcendental process is presented provisionally and open to failure. Of course, the process of phenomenological analysis of the processes of transcendental constitution is performed against the background of an infinite horizon. We get clearer and clearer on what is going on at the transcendental level, but the coherence of the project need not depend on its having been completed. In other words, we aim at total clarity about the

---

<sup>252</sup> See, for example, OT. p. 120 "...Heidegger's later views could indeed have justified the formal *structure* of the politico-philosophical research program he advanced in the Rectorial Address... I believe the later Heidegger would modify this program primarily by *refining* it..."

structures of the transcendental ego as a goal or, to use the Kantian terminology, as a regulative ideal which we infinitely approach.

As Kant well knew, a regulative ideal has to be justified immanently by the constant and necessary contents of our cognitive activities. For Kant, regulative ideals are forced upon us by reason's pushing of the categories of the understanding to their ultimate conceivable limit beyond the boundaries of experience. Thus, for example, we conceive of the totality of the universe as a community of inter-related causes and effects although we will never have the universe as a whole before us as a possible object of experience. The ideal arises, as it were, from the internal tendency of the categories which we in fact use in all our thought and practice. The same argument can be made from the Husserlian perspective. The horizons of meaning our intentional activities project point towards ever more unified, more general and more basic levels of analysis of consciousness. Thus, each moment of experience directs us to, and presupposes, a further level of unification. The final transcendental level, then, arises from this internal tendency of all consciousness as a necessary directing idea.

An argument much like the one just presented for Husserl has been made for Heidegger as well. Crowell, for example, talks of the necessary illusion of the transcendental thus: "If philosophy can never constitute itself as absolute, infallible, secured, unrevisable – a fixed system of permanent possessions – the reflection on something like transcendental conditions of meaning is nevertheless inseparable from the project of philosophizing, a necessary "illusion", as Heidegger comes to call it."<sup>253</sup>

---

<sup>253</sup> SM. p. 241

Crowell suggests, then, that the actual practice of philosophy contains, as an ontological rather than ontic aspect of philosophy in the sense in which we have used the term, the regulative ideal of achieving clarity about transcendental conditions.<sup>254</sup> A similar claim can be derived from the role that contextualization and holism play within Heidegger's work. Guignon, in a footnote on the two main elements traditionally attributed to historicism, states that Heidegger can not possible hold that history must be understood only in terms of its individuality since "...to say that his historicism is 'transcendental' means that history is woven into a unified flow in which the individuality of agents, periods, and epochs gains its meaning only within a greater totality."<sup>255</sup> I have myself stressed the structure of *Being and Time* as a constant movement of locating given phenomenon within a large context from which alone they can be understood. Indeed, the very nature of worldhood is that of a teleological totality of practices wherein each element or practice points to others which make it possible. Can't we, then, justify an ongoing never completed transcendental project based upon this interconnectedness of practices? This seems to be what Guignon has in mind with the transhistorical understanding of transcendental historicism.

My response to this idea is that there are two key elements to teleological holism and, similarly, two key characteristics of worldhood and the regulative ideals we might derive from it. The teleological holism of Heidegger's conception of world, and the related conception of history derived from it, does indeed justify us in presuming that any

---

<sup>254</sup> One is tempted to respond "so much the worse for philosophy thus narrowly conceived" and to suggest that Heidegger, in his shift away from speaking of philosophy and towards talk simply of "thinking" may have agreed.

<sup>255</sup> PK. p. 216

given practice or entity will rely upon other entities and projects for its coherence. This, in turn, points us to the totality which these practices constituted and which reveals the second main element of the teleological holism of the world, namely that it is limited. As we have often stressed, every world is finite. This means that, like all teleologies, the chain of practices grounds out. For the Heidegger of *Being and Time* it grounds out in something like our concern for what type of person we want to be. What this suggests, then, is that the regulative ideal that lets us know that any given practice will be related to a totality of others is mirrored by a regulative ideal that any such totality will always be finite and, as such, non-universal. This, similarly, can be derived from the view of history as flowing from origins. Certainly, any given practice will be able to be traced back to more primordial origins but, similarly, no origin will be conceivable for all histories. In other words, what can be said of entities within a world or a history cannot be said of all worlds or histories precisely because worlds and histories are understood by Heidegger and the realist historicist as finite in a way that specific entities are not. The response I have just suggested can be wed to my earlier objection to those who insist upon the necessity of making universal truth claims. We can find within our lived experience the way in which our practices refer to each other, and thus why it is necessary for us to contextualize our statements in terms of other statements, but we can also find within our lived experience the finitude of each case of disclosure and, if we are convinced by Heidegger's analysis of anxiety, the totality of disclosures which is world. What we can't find within our lives is any experience of the a-historical transcendental.



### Conclusion: Reality's Resistances

At the conclusion of this work I would like to return to a key element of the Dreyfus McDowell debate. It is worth noting that the central concern of both Dreyfus and McDowell is to develop a philosophical understanding of our situation in the world which allows for the possibility of our getting things wrong. McDowell justifies his model of perception as thoroughly conceptual through a claim that this is the only way that our assertions about the world can be right and wrong rather than simply based on the brute deliverances of something like meaningless sensory inputs. For McDowell, then, the concern is to walk a line between the myth of the Given which bases human judgments on brute experiences which are not themselves within the space of reasons and the Davidsonian coherentism that gives up entirely on judgments being answerable to experience. McDowell's answer is the claim that all perception is conceptual with concepts being used either actively or passively. What we had previously presumed to be brute experience actually involved and passive use of concepts.

Dreyfus' response focuses on skill acquisition precisely because it is in the realm of skill that it seems most obvious we can get things right and wrong and, at the height of skill, the idea of actually or potentially linguistically organized rules seems highly improbable. It seems unlikely that the master chess player either consciously or implicitly has access to a system of linguistic rules which organizes her playing. Skill acquisition is, then, a training of the body and perceptual organs and not a building of cognitive

organizing categories or rules. Since most of what we do day in or day out can be understood along the model of skill acquisition this gives us a robust “primacy of practice” which rejects the mind in favor of a body which has been fine-tuned through practice.

At the start of this work I have objected to Dreyfus for smuggling the subject/object model of our human condition back into his philosophy despite Heidegger’s opposition to this position. Dreyfus’ subject/object takes the form of body/environment and takes an artificial neural-net learning to alter its outputs in response to positive and negative inputs from its environment as its most basic model. What this model provides Dreyfus is an understanding of skill acquisition as a progressive reorganizing of parts rather than as a coding of rules. As should be now clear I reject this model, as I claim Heidegger would, as materialist or substantist. It presumes the world and the body to be made up of basically stable physical stuff in various relations.

It is my intention now to reflect for a moment on the real heart of the Dreyfus/McDowell debate which I have not adequately addressed from the standpoint of the Realist Historicist. As mentioned, the heart of the debate is the question of getting things wrong and, thus, the question of normativity. The interesting idea that Dreyfus derives from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty is the claim that the level of basic bodily orientation is already normative while McDowell’s concern with understanding the space of reasons as conceptual grounds all normativity on conceptualization. As discussed by Dreyfus, someone possessing the skill of phronesis just *sees* what is right. The world appears in a certain way. In this sense, then, perception is normative for both McDowell

and Dreyfus with the main disagreement being whether this means perception, and bodily orientation in general, are conceptual.

The position I have presented claims that the body and its environment is derived from the collective social practices in which they are discovered and through which they are formed. The environment-body relationship is not the origin of skilled practice and normativity but rather a product of these. If this is so, however, from whence does the Realist Historicist derive normativity? How do we tell truth from falsity? How do we distinguish between more or less disclosive practices? Indeed, how do we distinguish between disclosure and concealing themselves? In seeking to address these questions I will take the following steps. First, I will present two powerful objections to Heidegger that touch upon this point in order to clarify what is at stake in this topic and what problems need to be taken into account. Then I will discuss the issue of epistemic criteria on what I believe are the three main levels on which we might request epistemic principles. The first of these levels is what we might call the intra-practice level. At this level the question is, given the framework of practices that constitute the world and one practice within that framework, what are the criteria for truth and falsity? This is the least interesting of levels but one that Heidegger has discussed extensively in terms of seeming and deceptive appearance in relation to disclosure. The second level might be called the inter-practice level. At this level the question is, given the history of a collection of practices, how do we tell more disclosive from less disclosive practices or alternately, given the history of one practice amidst others, how do we tell that a practice has degenerated and drifted from its original disclosive power? This level will concern, for example, Heidegger's criticism of empty philosophical talk and his concern over reified

traditions versus something like a living heritage as discussed in *Being and Time*. The final, and most fundamental level, could be considered the inter-world or historical inter-epoch level. Here the question might be, is it possible for an entire world framework itself to fail in some sense? Are there standards external to given worlds by which worlds themselves could be judged? Is it possible to have something like a primarily falsifying or concealing world? This level will concern the fundamental nature of disclosure itself and Heidegger's later concern with technological enframing and nihilism.<sup>256</sup>

The two powerful objections to Heidegger I would like briefly to orient my discussion in relation to are those of Earnst Tugendhat and Robert Pippin. Both objections are admirably addressed by Steven Crowell in his paper "Conscience and Reason, Heidegger on the Grounds of Intentionality"<sup>257</sup> from which I will draw much of my discussion here. I do not, however, intend to deal explicitly with Crowell's own answer to the objections. I will also be drawing on Tugendhat's own "Heidegger's Idea of Truth".<sup>258</sup> Both of these objections rest on the claim that Heidegger's work has failed to take account, in some way, of the full nature of normativity. Tugendhat's argument is that Heidegger's equation of truth with disclosure fails to explain, and indeed actively conceals, the normative sense in which truth is not just the appearance of something but rather its appearance *as* how and what it actually is. Disclosure, in other words, can be

---

<sup>256</sup> Perhaps not unexpectedly, the work of Thomas Kuhn on the history of science as found, for example, in his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* serves as a very useful example of my three levels. The first level roughly corresponds to the issue of theory and experiment evaluation during periods of what Kuhn calls paradigm driven "normal science". The second level concerns the period of crisis when an entire scientific practice comes to seem insecure by those within the practice itself without reference to another paradigm. Finally, the third level corresponds to paradigm shifts and the problem of comparing paradigms. This should not necessarily be taken to mean, however, that the conclusions Kuhn is forced to draw because of his view of history and scientific practice are also binding for either Heidegger or my own position.

<sup>257</sup> See TH. chapter 4.

<sup>258</sup> See Wachterhauser, Brice (ed.) *Hermeneutics and Truth* chapter 5 henceforth cited as [HT.]

both true and false.<sup>259</sup> Pippin's objection, similarly, asserts that in Heidegger's conception of social practice the distinction between acting *in accordance with* norms and *in light of* norms is lost.<sup>260</sup> The distinction here would be between mindless conformity with social practice and reflective self-awareness of the practices one has adopted for given reasons. The connection between these two objections should be clear insofar as we conceive of practice as the primary form of disclosure from which all others are derived. If disclosure is primarily practice and Heidegger can't make sense of the distinction between mechanical following of practice versus taking up practices for good reasons then clearly he has also lost the idea that disclosive practices can be evaluated. While Crowell provides an analysis of the call of conscience and resoluteness as an effective answer to Pippin, our concern will be with Heidegger's insight that the way in which one practices a practice has consequences for the extent to which that practice reveals or distorts. Before we can get to this point, however, we will have to work our way to the level at which such a discussion is appropriate.

On the surface Tugendhat's objection is ridiculous, and he knows it. Clearly Heidegger is willing to distinguish all kinds of cases of truth and falsity. If I state, for example, that the painting across the room is crooked when, in fact, it is not hanging crooked then I have indeed engaged in falsehood. My statement "that painting is crooked" has disclosed, or attempted to disclose, the painting as it is not.<sup>261</sup> The

---

<sup>259</sup> Ibid. p. 91

<sup>260</sup> TH. p. 46

<sup>261</sup> For many of my early examples in this paper I will be using statements in language. This is not, however, to suggest that this is the base level for disclosure as, indeed, my insistence on the primacy of

possibility of this situation rests on the nature of a specific practice of, say, verbal description and visual fact checking. Granted this practice there will be criteria internal to the practice which allow for given moves in the game to be right or wrong, true or false, and so on. To provide another example, given the practice of describing various events in my day based upon how they were experienced, it may be perfectly true to state that I was awake and watching when the sun rose this morning. Given the practice of modern scientific astronomical description, stating that the sun moves around the earth such that it can rise at all is false. Each practice has its own internal normative standards and the difference between moves in the two games only becomes strange when we assert that there is one privileged practice, say modern scientific description, and that what a thing is and does is ultimately what it is and does from within the standards of this one practice. In his seminar *Introduction to Phenomenological Research* Heidegger dedicates a large percentage of the early part of the course to discussing how the disclosive nature of language itself allows for the possibility of falsehood, mistakes and deception. In that context he states, “We see things in terms of the circumstances in which we have something to do with them. This *circumstantial character* of the state of affairs allows for many *logoi* that speak of them.”<sup>262</sup> This circumstantially derived plurality of ways of speaking about things, none of which are necessarily wrong in their appropriate context, provide for the possibility of falsehood when we misapply what is appropriate in one practice or circumstance to another. This circumstantial nature of disclosure places, for

---

practice should make clear. Language use itself can be seen to be secondary to non-linguistic or even pre-linguistic practice.

<sup>262</sup> IPR. p. 25

Heidegger, elusiveness and deception in the very fabric of the world.<sup>263</sup> On top of these considerations, we can also always make simple mistakes ruled out by a given practice. Ultimately, however, the fact that Heidegger's concept of disclosure is based on the primacy of practice, and the fact that practices are by their very nature norm governed, should make clear that on the most common level everyday truth and falsity needs no special philosophical criteria to be determined but only the criteria available in the practice in question.<sup>264</sup>

The explanation we have just given is far from satisfying, as indeed it should be. The most commonplace use of truth and falsity within a given practice will only be philosophically satisfying when we are assured of the reliably disclosive nature of the practice itself which is in question. How, then, do we address the inter-practice level at which we may want to know whether or not a given practice is disclosive? One way to read Tugendhat's objection is as a refusal of the level distinction I am attempting to make, and which Heidegger makes in a slightly different way. For Heidegger truth or falsity at the most commonplace level is founded on the more basic disclosure that has to have already occurred in order for anything like the correspondence of statement and state-of-affairs to be conceivable. In this sense, then, Heidegger also suggests that falsehood and deception remain, nonetheless, disclosive in the deeper sense. Bringing something to light as it isn't is still a disclosing. My statement "the painting is crooked"

---

<sup>263</sup> Ibid. p. 28

<sup>264</sup> It is worth noting that this is the level at which much philosophical debate will engage. For example, in providing a phenomenological description the criteria for correctness will be something like "does the description match the experience of the recipient or, alternatively, can the recipient be brought to experience the attestations upon which the description rests" if this is not the case then, generally, the description is to be put aside.

still brings certain aspects of the painting into focus, as indeed the entire practice of description and visual fact checking does, while nonetheless failing to show the painting as it really is from within the framework of the practice in which I am engaged.

Tugendhat denies, in a sense, that we are dealing with two levels here and instead insists that, just as in everyday practice statements can be true or false, we must also be able to give normative bite to the sense in which a falsehood can also be both concealing and revealing, “The covering up of the false assertion does not exclude a certain uncovering. But then, in what sense does the false assertion uncover and in what sense does it cover up?”<sup>265</sup> On this point I feel Tugendhat is making a mystery where there is none. To state that the painting is crooked when it is really straight nonetheless uncovers the painting as existing and as the type of thing that can be crooked or straight, about which we can speak, and presumably about which we can check descriptive statements through perceptual experience or something of the sort. When we say that something is false we always mean that it is false in a certain respect and the practice, generally construed, provides that sense.

What if, however, I state instead that “an African slave is one third of a person”? There was at a given time a social practice of slave owning with its own internal criteria of correctness according to which the specific fraction of personhood in an individual slave could be debated and, presumably, determined. We might indeed wish to say that there is something wrong with this statement that has nothing to do with either its correspondence to the criteria of correctness used within the borders of its own practice

---

<sup>265</sup> HT. p. 89



or its being applied outside the boundaries of its original practice. We might want to say that the disclosure of a human being in terms of that person's ability to be owned or ability to have its degree of person debated is wrong on a different level than our previous examples. The practice, and indeed a web of inter-related practices, is seen here to be fundamentally distortive. What epistemic criteria can we offer here for the rejection of the way in which the victim of slavery is disclosed in this practice? While any schematic criteria is likely to be too flat-footed to be of interest, there are at least four methods we can use in determining that the practice is distortive in this case, none of which need be exclusive. First, the practice can be evaluated in relation to the other practices that make up the world of which it is a part, and perhaps in reference to the largest goals and purposes around which the practices of that world are organized. Second, the practice can be evaluated in relation to its history and origin.<sup>266</sup> Third, the practice can be evaluated, as it were, phenomenological and internally through a comparison of the assumptions on which it is based and what it, in fact, discloses. Fourth and finally, the practice can be evaluated based upon the *way* in which it is practiced.

The first method is based on the assumption that practices are not independent and incomparable. Indeed, if we pay attention to Heidegger's description of worldhood in *Being and Time* we see that the practices that make up a world are holistically connected in a teleological framework made up of ever more fundamental goals and purposes. A given practice, then, can be seen to be out of joint with the practices amidst which it occurs or, alternatively, out of joint with the shared goals towards which these practices

---

<sup>266</sup> The first and second of these criteria is derived, at least partially, from Charles Taylor's paper "Philosophy and its History" in Rorty, Schneewind and Skinner (eds.) *Philosophy in History*.

are aiming. We can connect this method to our realist claims through the assumption that the world as a whole, at least, will be generally disclosive of what-is even when given practices within it are not. This assumption will itself be questionable when we move to the third and final level of our overall discussion but, granting this assumption, the method of evaluation should be fairly clear. Indeed this seems to be very much what did, to some extent, occur. Slavery was seen to be in sharp contrast to many of the goals, purposes and practices that people found to be both fundamental for American civilization and more in line with how human beings actually are. Arriving at this point, and the complex arguments used to aid others in seeing the point, is of course a messy process demanding that we attempt to make articulate much of our inarticulate sense of what matters and what is or is not the case.

The second method, though it was not very heavily used by abolitionists, can be just as firmly based in our realist perspective and should be as equally promising as the first. This method is, similarly to the first, based on a basic assumption. This assumption is that practices at their origin were disclosive in some fundamental way. When we fear, as Heidegger often did, that many of our practices have drifted from their origin we fear that they have moved away from the ways in which they once made sense and, by becoming unjustified reified traditions, now conceal more than they reveal. This conception of practices becoming concealing after drifting from an originally disclosive origin can be fleshed out in terms of the later Husserl's concept of sedimentation and reactivation as presented in "The Origin of Geometry".<sup>267</sup> It is also useful to look to his

---

<sup>267</sup> Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* appendix VI.

earlier concept of empty intending versus meaning fulfillment, ideas which can be seen as both precursors of his later ideas and influences on the early Heidegger. In the case of empty intention a thought or meaning is entertained, as it were, without that which would be the fulfillment of the intention's meaning being provided. For example, I might emptily intend the statue of liberty, perhaps by speaking of it, without actually summoning an image of it to mind. It is important to notice that language and embodied practice is what provides the possibility of this empty intending. Similarly, a practice such as geometry is supposed to have arisen as a specific historical accomplishment at a given time, an accomplishment that served specific goals and purposes. However, over time the practice of geometry which is embodied in both common language and its own formalized language becomes sedimented, i.e. the original purposes and meanings are no longer kept in mind or even known when one follows through the motions of the practice. Reactivation consists in a rediscovery of the original meaning and purpose of the sedimented practice, and thus a sort of historical meaning fulfillment for an intention long held in an empty fashion through reified practice. In our specific example, one would look back to the earliest interactions between Europeans and Africans and would attempt to trace the origin of the unique practice of enslaving the peoples of Africa. Although I have not done the history here, it seems likely that one would find a history of religious and cultural paternalism which, while certainly still reprehensible, is likely to have disclosed the peoples of Africa in a way which is in contradiction with the later practice of slavery. One might, for example, reach the conclusion that the missionary practice of conversion is in conflict with the assumption that the convert is less than human. One might then trace even the abhorrent practice of conversion back to its origin in a deeper

concern for the well being of others that has drifted to such an extent as to allow terrible abuses of others. One might, alternatively, borrow a move from Hegel and suggest that the very psychological motivation for mastery contradicts the claim to see the mastered as less. Despite the perhaps dubious nature of this historical analysis, the method at least should be clear. It is important, however, to recall our comments at the beginning of this paper to the effect that not all practice change need be considered negative. By itself practice change over time, aside from being inevitable, need not be taken to be negative. But to determine whether or not a change has been positive, negative or of mixed value will depend upon a rediscovery of the practice's original nature as well as a cross practice reflection upon our overall sense of what matters and what is. At this point it is worth pointing out that there is something slightly mistaken in attempting to provide static epistemic criteria for disclosure insofar as any such criteria will themselves be part of the ongoing event of revealing and concealing which is history. The value of such criteria, and indeed the value of any given practice or collection of practices, can only get ascertained provisionally in the flux of the event of our ongoing attempt to become clear about what matters to us and thus, ultimately, about what-is and what it is to be.

I have called the third method the most phenomenological method because it requires us to turn a careful eye to what exactly we find showing up from within the disclosive framework of a practice. It is precisely not generally the case that what a practice explicitly claims to disclose is actually what it does disclose. It might be the case, then, that the practice of slavery attempts to disclose a group of human beings as property and not as people, and in many ways and cases it may do so by concealing key aspects of the humans on which it is imposed. However, by turning a careful eye to what

else the practice discloses it is very possible that, as a disclosive framework, it gives rise to contradictions that fight against its most explicit commitments. In this sense the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* could be read as a careful phenomenological investigation of what slavery discloses, and as such a discovery of the extent to which slavery's attempt to conceal the humanity of the slave fails. Much as in the case of crisis for Thomas Kuhn, this method draws our eyes to the anomalous elements of what shows up through the practice.

The fourth and final method is built on the distinction between the implicit way in which practices disclose, which we can connect to Heidegger's concept of pre-ontological understanding, and the process of expressing, articulating and making explicit how the world shows up for a practice and what the practice assumes. The second level will indeed be derivative from the first, but it will also be a level of greater disclosure. The move from our general unstated sense of things to an articulated sense of things serves to bring more into the clearing of disclosure, for example our practices themselves, and also serves to clarify what was already previously disclosed in an obscure way. We can, then, suggest that a clear-sightedly taken up practice will be more disclosive than one that only works at the basic level of an implicit sense of things and know-how. Of course, and this is one reason why for Heidegger we will never arrive at Hegel's end point, some of what we know implicitly may not be able to be articulated at all and each articulation will itself rest on a deeper level of implicit practice.<sup>268</sup> However this doesn't change the fact that a key part of Heidegger's interest in authenticity rests on what we

---

<sup>268</sup> For a rich discussion of this point see William Blattner's "Ontology, the A Priori, and the Primacy of Practice" in TH.

might want to call an epistemic concern for the greater level of disclosure that occurs when we are aware of the practices that constitute the clearing of disclosure which we both are and occupy.<sup>269</sup> This point is connected to our earlier discussion of Husserl's concern with the sedimentation of practices and indeed is the basis of Heidegger's distinction in *Being and Time* between tradition and heritage. In addressing slavery, then, we might ask whether, in general, it is explicitly taken up by its practitioners in a clear sighted way such that they overtly endorse the claims it makes about the victims of slavery and generally the way in which it discloses what-is. Clearly this method will generally be useful on a much smaller scale than the previous three, but it is the method that Heidegger often uses in relation to tradition bound philosophy. This alone suggests that we might have reason to think that goading the followers of a practice into themselves reflecting on whether their practice is meaningful, or just the repetition of empty motions, and whether they accept the claims and disclosures their practice either makes or claims to make may be useful even on a large scale. Although it is hard for us to say from our current perspective, it may have been that this method would have revealed that most supporters of slavery gave very little thought to the practice and indeed followed through the motions of the practice for economic and/or traditional reasons. As such, the very lack of explicitness of the practice and even, perhaps, its inability to be consciously and overtly re-activated in all its meaning by most of its practitioners offers us a level at which we might suggest it serves more to conceal than reveal.

---

<sup>269</sup> For a discussion of this insight see "Philosophy and Authenticity: Heidegger's search for a ground for philosophizing" in HAM.

We must note here that it is in this method that the issue of openness and acceptance of finitude most overtly come into play. Clear-sightedly following a practice will mean an overt awareness of the nature of practice itself in general. This will mean possessing an awareness of the extent to which all practices reveal things in a partial way and also contain a level of concealing. As such, clear-sightedly taking up a practice will amount as well to an openness to the limits of that practice and towards other ways in which things can show up. In general the evaluation of clear-sightedness and openness will rest rather heavily on the ability of a practitioner to give an account of what she or he does and why they do it. Openness will be evaluated on the basis of how aware the practice is of its own status as one practice amongst others and its own nature as both revealing in a certain sense and concealing in another. It is also at this point that our ability to answer Pippin's objection concerning the difference between acting in accordance with norms versus in light of them should be clear. Generally and for the most part we act in accordance with norms without really having them explicitly in sight. However, it is both possible to make the transition to acting in light of norms and both our, and Heidegger's, perspective allows us to motivate such a move on a hermeneutic/epistemological level. It is also worth noting that the achieving of a clear-sightedness in relation to our practices will itself involve something like the three methods we have just discussed, specifically an awareness of how our practices cohere with one another, what their historical origin and development has been, and how they specifically disclose what-is. It is these elements, and perhaps others like them, we would look for in the account of a practice that is claiming clear-sightedness.

We can now briefly discuss the final, and most primordial, level at which we might wish to evaluate disclosure. At this level we might ask how we know that a world overall is disclosive? This question itself is raised by Heidegger in his later concern with nihilistic technological enframing. In Heidegger's analysis of enframing, then, we may find the model of how a world itself might be evaluated for disclosiveness. We can use the four methods of evaluation we have already discussed as our rough guide here. First, in contrast to Kuhn, we must leave open the question of whether different worlds or historical epoche's are commensurable. I suspect some will, and some will not, be comparable. This, then, leaves open the chance of cross-world comparison although it is unclear upon what basis such a comparison could be made. There is, recall, no point outside of some world and so, even without incommensurability, we still face the impossibility of a neutral god's-eye perspective. The latter three methods seem the ones most heavily used by Heidegger in addressing enframing. For example, in *The Question Concerning Technology* Heidegger, amongst other things, seeks to trace technological enframing historically back to its origins in the dominance of efficient causality, and thus of a specific conception of cause, over the other three forms of causality. A historical analysis of cause, however, brings the nature of disclosure, and disclosure's finitude and dependence on a larger giving, more and more into focus in contrast to enframing's claims to absoluteness. Furthermore, even a generally concealing world framework will still have some disclosive elements. Thus, the instrumental conception of technology contradicts enframing's own tendency to do away with anyone who might be understood as the "user" or "beneficiary" of this instrument. Finally, if enframing is to be understood as the potential death of a previously disclosive world, that death has come about through



a dominance of one practice over all others. This issue was foreshadowed in our earlier discussion of the standards of individual practices. As such, however, it becomes impossible to clear-sightedly take up enframing insofar as enframing's claim to absoluteness requires a denial of the finitude of practice that is in contrast with the nature of practice itself.

Ultimately it is the conception of practices as disclosive which sets off the understanding of practices found in Heidegger and Realist Historicism from the way that practices are generally conceived. When we understand that reality shows up in a certain way through practices and that the way things show up in a practice can overtly contradict the claims made by the practice itself, one practice's disclosures can be compared to another, and practices can fail to bring to appearance that which they once revealed we have ample ground for the origin and nature of normativity.

At this point we can return to the issue of skill acquisition and ask what it can mean to get better or worse at a given practice. It seems that one of the distinctive aspects of expertise and skills is that we can have knowledge of what is involved while yet being unable to perform the skill effectively. It is repetition that provides skill. Why, however, should this be the case from the position of the realist historicist? If we cannot appeal to something like the need for the brute body to be trained to the skills needed for a practice, if instead the resistance which must be overcome in skill acquisition must be understood as interior to practices themselves, how are we to make sense of our experience of developing skills? The answer is going to rest, much as in the previous discussion of how to evaluate the truth of practices, on the interplay between practices. Learning a new skill will involve fitting that skill into the totality of the practices in which we already engage.

This will, at the earliest points, involved translating what we can of the new foreign practice into practices which are familiar to us. This will eventually lead to an attempt, once familiar with the translated version of the new practice, to figure out what was lost in translation and so progress closer to the practice independent of the limitations of our particular practice-context. What this involves is a re-organizing and prioritizing of various practices in relation to each other. This can be understood in terms of progressively coming to understand what the practice is and what it discloses, and this is always an ongoing process. To steal an example from Dreyfus, where previously the normal level chess player practiced chess as a process of fitting a limited number of possible moves into the moves being made by the opponent, the master chess player practices chess as a process of feeling out the strengths and weaknesses of various formulations of the pieces on the board. It is as we develop expertise in a practice that we come to realize what the practice actual is and what it reveals. This is always an ongoing process and also one that may eventually end in the collapse of the meaningfulness of any given practice or the opening up of a new one.

## References

- Steven Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001).
- Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas ed., *Transcendental Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).
- Hubert Dreyfus, "Overcoming the Myth of the Mental: How Philosophers Can Profit from the Phenomenology of Everyday Expertise" (APA Pacific Division Presidential Address, 2005).
- Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Heidegger's Ways* John W. Stanley trans. (Albany: State University of New York Press 1994).
- Charles Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983).
- Charles Guignon and Derk Pereboom ed. *Existentialism; Basic Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995).
- Charles Guignon ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics; Lectures on Fine Art* T.M. Knox trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* James Churchill trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962).
- Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson trans. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962).
- Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* Albert Hofstadter trans. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971).
- Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time; Prolegomena* Theodore Kisiel trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).
- Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche Volume One and Two* David Farrell Krell ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).
- Martin Heidegger, *Martin Heidegger Basic Writings* David Farrell Krell ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).
- Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

- Martin Heidegger, *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity* John van Buren trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).
- Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
- Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* Gregory Fried and Richard Polt trans. (Yale University Press, 2000).
- Martin Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* Ted Sadler trans. (New York: Athlone Press, 2000).
- Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle* Richard Rojcewicz trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).
- Martin Heidegger, *Supplements* John Van Buren ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).
- Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research* Daniel Dahlstrom trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).
- Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1970).
- Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations Vol 2* J.N. Findley trans. (New York: Routledge, 2001).
- Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* Paul Guyer and Allan Wood trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998).
- Theodore Kisiel, *Heidegger's Way of Thought* (New York: Continuum, 2002).
- John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).
- Robert Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity; On the Kantian Aftermath* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- Richard Rorty, Schneewind and Skinner (eds.) *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- Jacques Taminiaux, *Poetics, Speculation, and Judgment* (Albany: SUNY Press 1993).
- Iain Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005).
- Brice Wachterhauser ed., *Hermeneutics and Truth* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994).
- Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas ed. *Heidegger, Authenticity and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus vol. 1* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).
- Young, Julian *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001).

### About the Author

William Koch received his Bachelor's Degree with a major in philosophy and a minor in classical civilization from Boston University in 2003. He began attending the University of South Florida in 2004 and received his Masters Degree in Philosophy from the University of South Florida in 2008.

While a graduate student at the University of South Florida, William Koch taught classes in philosophy as a Teaching Assistant and Adjunct. He also taught aesthetics and the Ringling College of Art and Design.